

A brewpub is coming to York County — Here's what Beale's is all about

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Beale's in Bedford has been around for about two years. (WYDaily/Courtesy of Waukeshaw Development)

Just a month ago, York County announced a new brewpub was coming to town, proposing to fill a vacant lot owned by the county along Route 17 with a 4,000-square-foot facility.

The plans include a brewing operation and taproom, an outdoor patio and a locally-themed food menu, but information about the plans and theme have otherwise been fairly limited.

But what is Beale's really all about?

Emily Sanfratella, chief operating officer for Waukeshaw Development, said the new Beale's, called Beale's East, will share many trademark beers with its original western counterpart in Bedford, but will also offer a local twist.

To start, the menu for Beale's East will be tailored to the Hampton Roads area.

Sanfratella said Beale's in Bedford has a "really barbecue-centric" menu, but Beale's in Yorktown will frame local seafood culture and farming.

"We want to partner with local farmers who are doing interesting stuff," Sanfratella said. "The menu, it's really the things we wanted to see. We're really interested in the different varieties of oysters in the area... We've been doing a lot of talking about it internally."

Menu aside, beer is a central focus for Beale's.

The seasonal and small-batch craft beers — served from about a dozen taps in the taproom — are designed to pair with and accentuate the items on the menu.

In addition to the craft brews, Beale's will serve some of its flagship beers, which are already being distributed in the western part of Virginia, including Lynchburg, Roanoke and Charlottesville, as well as Richmond.

Flagship beers include Beale's Gold, Beale's Silver and an IPA, and are all "high-quality but approachable."

"A lot of people are still learning about the craft beer scene, and are interested and curious," Sanfratella said. "But not everyone understands craft beer. We want to make something your dad or grandpa would drink."

Beale's distribution hasn't made it to Hampton Roads yet, but will likely infiltrate the market with both seasonal and flagship brews once Beale's in York County opens, Sanfratella said.

At this time, Beale's aims to break ground in January and open in spring 2021.

Behind Beale's

Beale's West opened in Bedford about two years ago, brightening up a traditionally small town.

"Bedford is a small community, and people said it wouldn't work," Sanfratella said. "... They said people there weren't ready for an interesting concept. We think that's dumb."

The name is based around the legend of Thomas J. Beale, a man who visited Bedford during the Gold Rush in 1820. Sanfratella said the Beale legend is part of local lore.

In the stories, Beale struck gold and silver and brought it back to Bedford, where he hid the gold in the foothills of the mountains. He left Bedford and never returned, but left behind ciphers — coded papers — as clues for where to find the gold.

The treasure has never been found.

Sanfratella said the story of Beale is a symbol for what Beale's stands for: it's a treasure in an unlikely place.



Adaptive reuse

Waukeshaw Development is the creator of Beale's West, as well as the brains behind other "adaptive reuse" developments in Virginia.

"It's converting old buildings that are sort of white elephants in communities ... and turning them into different things and giving them new life," she said. "A lot of time, we have an idea for a business ... but we just don't see a tenant, so we've said we'll just do it ourselves."

Upcoming and completed projects by Waukeshaw include an old warehouse in Clarksville, a mill in Amherst, William Byrd High School in Vinton, and one of the first high-rise buildings in Petersburg.

When the project is done, Waukeshaw doesn't offload the business onto a completely new tenant; they create a separate limited liability corporation and operate the new business themselves.

The Route 17 location in York County is unique to some of Waukeshaw's other developments — they will be building Beale's East from the ground up.

The land for Beale's, at 7120-7124 block of George Washington Memorial Highway, was bought by the county's EDA in 2017 and designated as a parcel for revitalization.

The property was connected to county water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure after it was purchased.

Sanfratella said the location along Route 17 in York County was also a comfortable fit because Waukeshaw chooses locations that may otherwise not be chosen.

Route 17 is a busy corridor with plenty of visibility for businesses, but features many chains and franchises — something Beale's is not, Sanfratella said.

Creating something different is exactly what Waukeshaw looks to do, she said.

Sanfratella added Beale's envisions collaborating with other local breweries in the Williamsburg area once the business opens in town.

"We don't take ourselves too seriously," Sanfratella said. "That applies to our food, beer, the entire vibe of that taproom. It's really laid back — it's really fun."

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