

Wachusett Brewing to anchor Canal District market

By Matthew Tota, Correspondent

Posted May 23, 2019 at 4:02 PM

Updated May 24, 2019 at 7:41 AM

WORCESTER — The Wachusett Brewing Co. will be the anchor tenant in the Worcester Public Market set to open in the Canal District in September.

Wachusett Brewing Co. will be returning to its “home city” with a brewery and taproom in the Kelley Square marketplace.

The Westminster brewery Thursday signed a 15-year lease to open a new 3,000-square-foot brewery/taproom in the future Worcester Public Market, the multivendor food marketplace at the Harding Green building.

“Worcester is our original home: It’s the first city we went to in 1994, and with our three founders coming from WPI, we consider it our home city,” said Wachusett President Christian McMahan.

The Harding Green project is a 70,000-square-foot development owned by local businessman Allen Fletcher. The \$23 million development, at 220 Harding St. and 152 Green St., will include a four-story building with 48 apartments, as well as retail space and a European-style public market.

“We’ll have a number of people cooking a wonderful variety of foods,” said Mr. Fletcher of the market. “The perfect complement is a brewery, and who better to have than Wachusett?”

The Kelley Square Lofts – Harding Green’s apartments – and the public market should open by Sept. 1, said Mr. Fletcher, who is also a Canal District resident.

Wachusett is targeting a fall opening for the new taproom, which will have 24 different beers on tap and an outdoor patio. Mr. McMahan said Wachusett is already at work renovating a 31-foot Airstream trailer for the taproom’s bar.

“They’re moving really quickly with the building,” Mr. McMahan said, “both on the retail floor and the apartments above. It’s really going to be an incredible community space.”

Wachusett’s taproom will sit on the first floor of the Harding Green building, overlooking Kelley Square and serving as the anchor business.

market. The perfect complement is a brewery, and who better to have than Wachusett.

The Kelley Square Lofts – Harding Green’s apartments – and the public market should open by Sept. 1, said Mr. Fletcher, who is also a Canal District resident.

Wachusett is targeting a fall opening for the new taproom, which will have 24 different beers on tap and an outdoor patio. Mr. McMahan said Wachusett is already at work renovating a 31-foot Airstream trailer for the taproom’s bar.

“They’re moving really quickly with the building,” Mr. McMahan said, “both on the retail floor and the apartments above. It’s really going to be an incredible community space.”

Wachusett’s taproom will sit on the first floor of the Harding Green building, overlooking Kelley Square and serving as the anchor business.

The taproom will not offer food, but patrons will be able to buy something to eat from any of the more than a dozen vendors planned for the market.

Wachusett, which produced 70,000 barrels of beer last year, has not decided what size brewing system it will install at the new space. This year, the brewery climbed to 43 on the Brewers Association’s list of top 50 breweries in the country in terms of sales volume.

Though there has been much attention to the recent development in downtown Worcester, the Canal District, a neighborhood southeast of downtown and named for the former Blackstone Canal that once flowed through the area, has also seen a surge in development. The Pawtucket Red Sox plan to move the minor league franchise to Worcester in 2021 and the team will make its home at a new stadium, Polar Park, to be built nearby.

The Harding Green building appealed to Wachusett because it represents yet another piece of the Canal District’s recent renaissance, Mr. McMahan said. That the new taproom could serve as a watering hole for the thousands of people streaming to and from the new ballpark nearby also made the site attractive.

“We almost look at (Polar Park) as a bonus; if you look at what’s going on around the district, it’s just an exciting space to be in,” Mr. McMahan said. “With or without the ballpark, this would have been a great fit for us.”

Mr. Fletcher, for his part, said he hopes his development contributes to making the district “the best place to live or visit in Worcester.”

“If you spend any time there, you know how wonderful the district is,” he said.