



Developer Norm Swanson plans to turn the former Syracuse Lighting Co. headquarters, at 311 Genant Drive in Syracuse's Franklin Square neighborhood, into a beer garden restaurant, a microbrewery and a tasting room for New York beers, wines and foods. (Rick Moriarty / r Moriarty@syracuse.com)

Swanson plans 'biergarten' restaurant in Franklin Square

Apartments and office space also coming in later phases

By Rick Moriarty
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Developer Norm Swanson says he plans to begin work this fall to turn a former electric company building in Syracuse's Franklin Square neighborhood into a microbrewery, beer garden-style restaurant and tasting room featuring New York-made beers, wines and foods.

Swanson told the Syracuse Industrial Development Agency last week that he plans to start work on the former Syracuse Lighting Co. headquarters at 311 Genant Drive in September of this year and open the brewery, "biergarten" restaurant and tasting room in April of 2017.

Later phases of the \$6.6 million development will include the construction of four apartments and 5,000 to 10,000

square feet of office space. Swanson said he plans to move some of his Woodbine Group offices to the building from East Fayette Street.

He said plans for the building also include the creation of an Onondaga Historical Association museum focused on the history of the many breweries once located in Syracuse.

The red brick building, which overlooks Interstate 81, will be repainted and repairs made to its exterior. In addition, a 2,200-square-foot atrium will be built as a grand entrance to the building.

The German-style restaurant will be named Light Works in honor of the building's past use. Syracuse Lighting Co., one of the predecessor companies to Niagara Mohawk Power Co., generated electricity for the city of Syracuse from 1895 to 1915. The site was later used as an electric distribution station.

National Grid acquired Niagara Mohawk in 2002 and sold the building to Swanson for \$400,000 soon afterward. The power company continues to operate an electric substation next to the building.

Swanson, owner of the Genesee Grande and Parkview hotels, said the tasting facility will feature a large number of beers, wines, spirits, and cheeses

and other foods made in New York. Offerings will include a sampling of five beers, wines and cider for \$5 to \$10, he said.

The facility will be owned by him, but a master brewer will be brought in as a partner to run the brewery, which will include a bottling and packaging facility, he said. Swanson said he could not disclose the brewer's name yet because the contract is not yet signed.

He said he expects the facility to attract a local clientele, but also tap into the millions of visitors who come to Syracuse "benchmark" destinations, including the Destiny USA shopping mall a few blocks away.

The project has been approved for an \$800,000 state grant through Gov. Andrew Cuomo's regional economic development council initiative.

In addition, Swanson said he is in the process of having the building placed on the National Register of Historic Places, which would make the project eligible for federal and state tax credits.

He has applied to the city development agency for an exemption, worth \$136,000, from sales taxes on construction materials and an exemption, worth \$45,000, from the state mortgage recording tax. The



The Post-Standard

agency could vote on his application in May.

He is not seeking a payment-in-lieu-of-tax agreement from the agency. However, he said he plans to take advantage of a declining 12-year property tax exemption available to any project of more than \$10,000 that converts a non-residential property to a mix of residential and commercial uses.

At completion, the project will create about 50 full- and part-time jobs, Swanson said.

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