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Craft Beer Brewers Tap More Space

If Colorado had a state beverage – numerous states claim milk, Florida touts orange juice, Indiana officially sips water – it would undoubtedly be craft beer.

Not to dismiss the growing popularity and impact of the Centennial State's vineyards, wineries and distilleries, but craft beer has spread here like foam on an upper lip. A 2012 study by the University of Colorado's Leeds School of Business (commissioned by the Colorado Brewers Guild) put the annual economic impact of Colorado's craft brewing industry at \$446 million per year.

That could be considered a drop in the bucket compared to the Beer Institute's 2013 study estimating the state's overall brewing clout at more than \$14 billion. But the craft breweries and brewpubs that have flourished in Colorado – from college towns to historic districts to suburban outposts – have become gathering places that rely on individuality to make their mark.

For Odell Brewing Company, in Fort Collins, it became apparent in 2012 that another expansion was a must. GH Phipps Construction Companies was awarded the contract to construct an expanded Tap Room and meeting space, a new brew house, a new grain handling space, and an expanded Beer Garden to the east and south of the Tap Room.

In all, the current addition project entails about 14,000



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square feet, not including the Beer Garden that wraps the facility at 800 E. Lincoln Ave. A portion of the beer garden is targeted for completion by the end of June, with space for live music; the overall project is expected to be finished in September of this year.

Founded in 1989 by members of the Odell family, the facility has been expanded several times before, most recently in 2010. But the current expansion, designed by RB+B Architects in Fort Collins, offers a competitive edge and a lot more brewing capacity well into the future. The new Cellar Charlie addition (joining Cellar Bravo) will bring Odell's capacity to about 100,000

barrels per year, up from the 70,000 barrels now being produced annually. With the new brew house, the operation with all eight new tanks in place will allow an increased capacity up to 220,000 barrels each year. That's more 90 Shilling Ale, Easy Street Wheat, and Mountain Standard double black IPA to love – and drink.

The earlier addition also was designed by RB+B, a project that added sustainable features including a 76-kilowatt solar photovoltaic array on the roof of the then-new warehouse.

A recent tour of the project site with GH Phipps Project Manager Brian Cass put the pieces of the puzzle together for a construction project where the beer must still flow.

"With a remodel and addition, it's always a challenge when you're trying to keep the business open," said Cass. "There's the unique situation of trying to coordinate construction with the installation of the owner's equipment. The building is designed around the equipment. But it's a high-profile project, and everyone is excited about it."

The existing tap room is filled with natural light, as well as patrons intent on working through a taster tray or picking up a growler. (The Odell tap room does not serve food, but food trucks and carts are frequent visitors.) This fall the current space will flow into a two-story addition designed in the Odell style: a tongue-and-groove wooden

roof and siding, with cut-stone walls. The second floor will house a party room.

Next door, a concrete slab was topped with a tall metal frame that held open rings designed to hold five tanks. The largest is a hot liquor tank fabricated in the United States; the other four are made in Germany. At the proper time, they'll be slid into the circular openings and secured. A wood over-frame will be built out from the existing building. The grain handling area is nearby. Brewing takes about three hours, then the beer needs to ferment.

In the heart of the complex is the space where the beer is held for fermentation and storage until it's ready for bottling or distribution. The recent addition of a different configuration of bottling equipment now allows Odell to create 12-packs for sale. The heady scent of hops and beer creates a fragrant atmosphere in the space where workers driving forklifts move the finished product for shipment. In a nearby room, gleaming stainless steel tanks linked by a complex series of pipes (including blue ones carrying the chilling agent glycol) seem to drop from 2-foot-thick concrete ceilings. Under the building, two sewer systems operate: one for restrooms, and one for the brewing process; wastewater from the latter must be treated to attain a lower pH level in order to be introduced to municipal facilities.