

Downtown Revitalization Initiative In Focus

From Rust-Belt to Beer-Belt: Craft Beer and Downtown Revitalization in Upstate New York



Downtown
Revitalization
Initiative
In Focus — A SERIES

Governor Kathy Hochul's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) is transforming downtown neighborhoods into vibrant communities where New Yorkers want to live, work and raise families. Recognizing that companies are increasingly seeking to relocate and invest in vibrant, walkable downtowns in an effort to attract and retain a talented workforce, DRI is an investment to improve the vitality of urban centers across New York State.



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Twisted Rail Brewing Exterior, Geneva, NY

The Booming Craft Beverage Industry in NYS

New York State has led the nation in assisting and promoting the craft beverage industry.

- *New York State now has approximately 460 breweries, 450 wineries, 180 distilleries and 70 cideries.*
- *New York State ranks second in the nation for number of breweries and fourth for number of wineries.*
- *The craft beer industry alone generates a \$5.4 billion economic impact.*

For more, go to <https://esd.ny.gov/industries/craft-beverage>

The craft beer industry in NY has exploded! And that explosion is having positive ripple effects on downtown revitalization efforts throughout the State—including several Upstate DRI communities.

But what does craft beer have to do with downtown revitalization? Quite a bit...

At first glance, we often view the benefits of craft breweries just in terms of local jobs, business development, tax revenues and, of course, good beer. But micro-breweries also serve as catalysts for neighborhood revitalization—particularly in distressed and abandoned urban neighborhoods.

It works like this: the brew-pub begins to attract people to an otherwise-blighted area; as the area becomes more active, other businesses locate nearby; and this creates a more hip and vibrant atmosphere, which in turn entices more people to live in the neighborhood—usually starting with millennials and then expanding to other demographics. This process then feeds on itself in a virtuous cycle of revitalization and economic development.

Speaking at a DRI project ground-breaking event, Governor Kathy Hochul observed that there are three signs that a city is turning itself around—walkable streetscapes; restaurants; and brew-pubs. She's spot on!

A recent article by author/urbanist Richard Florida documents the transformative effects of craft breweries on downtowns nationwide. He said: "As it turns out, the craft beer revolution, like many other urban economic phenomena, is highly clustered. The good news is that many of these clusters are taking shape in places that have been subject to disinvestment and deindustrialization." (Like Upstate NY...)

These observations have proven true in several DRIs—most notably, Geneva and Batavia in the Finger Lakes region; Olean in Western New York; and Oneonta in the Mohawk Valley.

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Geneva — Twisted Rail Brewery

The Geneva DRI re-purposed a 105-year-old Vaudeville/ movie theater into the Twisted Rail Brewery—replete with a 9,000-square-foot tasting room and restaurant and an educational venue for customers who wish to learn about brewing. This multi-faceted entertainment and education center serves as a new anchor establishment in downtown Geneva—much like the theater was before it—that will attract visitors and expand dining options in the downtown.

Olean — Four Mile Brewery

Four Mile Brewery in Olean just got a face-lift, compliments of the DRI.

The brewery opened in 2015 and was an immediate success—so successful that they soon needed to expand. Enter the DRI...

A \$1 million DRI investment has activated the long-dormant historic, pre-prohibition second building along the Allegheny River—which was originally built to be a brewery in the early 1990s. So it's got that goin' for it, too.

The expansion includes increased brewing capacity and a canning line that will enable Four Mile's beers to reach retail markets; as a result, jobs at the brewery jumped from 20 to 30. Two loft-style apartments overlooking the Allegheny River and a retail space for a kayak rental have also been developed to bring more people downtown and further expand job opportunities.

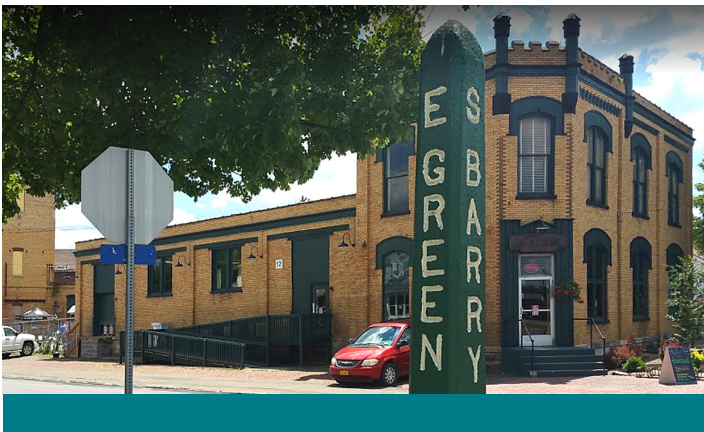
Just don't drink and kayak; save the brewskis for after your river adventure...



Top: Twisted Rail Tasting Room During Construction

Middle: Twisted Rail Tasting Room Completed

Bottom: New Lounge Area



Above: Four Mile Brewery Building Exterior

Right: Outdoor Concerts at Four Mile Brewery



Oneonta — Grain Innovation Center

Some DRI craft brewing projects are actually contained within larger, mixed-use projects. Oneonta, for example, is combining craft brewing, artist housing and academic research into one DRI project—the Lofts at Dietz Street.

The Lofts will be a mixed-use project that includes up to 64 housing units—44 of which would have a preference for those involved in artistic or literary activities; the remaining units would be middle-income housing utilizing the State’s Middle-Income Housing Program.

And beer... Hartwick College has agreed to use space in the project for their new “Grain Innovation Center,” which will serve as a regional source for testing out grains, hops, barley, and other beer brewing grains.

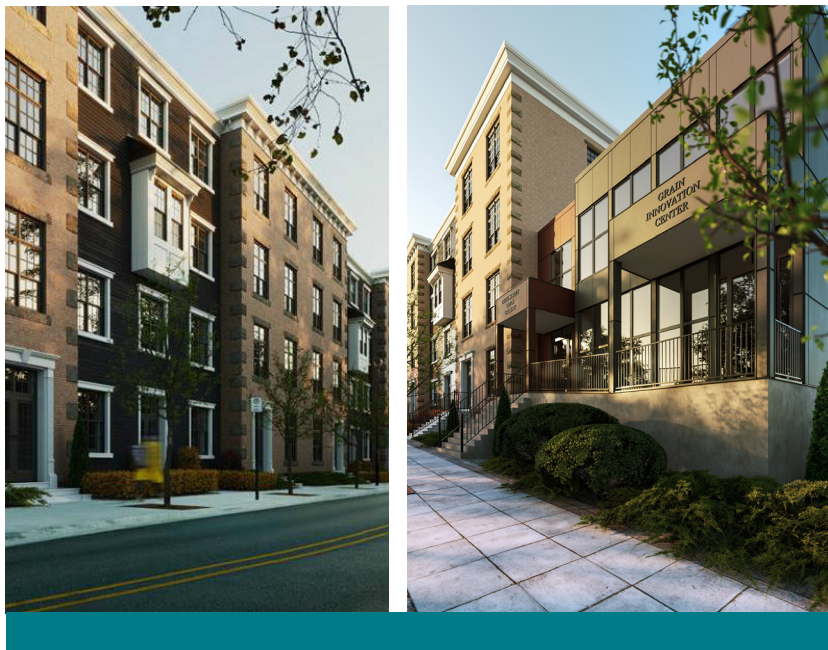
Batavia — Eli Fish Brewing

Similarly, the Eli Fish Brewing Company is located in the Newberry Lofts historic rehab DRI project in downtown Batavia. The project gets its name from the JJ Newberry Five-and-Dime store that occupied the building for over 60 years.

Now, with support from the DRI and the State’s historic preservation tax credit, this iconic building is being re-purposed for a mix of new uses. The first floor will be renovated to house the Eli Fish Brewing Company and the Fresh Lab restaurant business incubator. And four market-rate apartments are being developed on the second floor.

Beer, food, housing and history—don’t even hafta leave the building!

Downtown revitalization comes in many flavors—in these cases, it’s hops, malt and barley! □



Housing, Beer and Grain Education at Lofts at Dietz Street (Renderings)



The Eli Fish Brewing Company at the historic Newberry Building



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