

**FOOD AND DRINK**

# Atwater spends \$1M to brew more complex beers

Brewery nets upgrades, fermentation scientist

BY JAY DAVIS

Atwater Brewery this year marked 25 years in business, and the company is working to ensure the next 25 are even stronger for Detroit's largest brewery.

Atwater is wrapping up \$1 million in capital improvements that have been underway for more than a year, according to President Katy McBrady. The updates include adding state-of-the-art keging and packaging lines, she said.



McBrady

"The improvements will allow us to produce more beer at a faster rate, package more," McBrady told Crain's. "We'll be able to send more of a variety of beer into the market, too. Our intent is for us, over the next 25 years, to make the best beer possible."

The improvements could also bring new jobs. Atwater currently has a staff of about 65 employees. The company has done some hiring to fill vacant positions, McBrady said.

"Hopefully we'll sell more beer, bring more people in," said McBrady, who took over as president of Atwater in April.

Selling more beer is the ultimate goal, McBrady said. Atwater, which has taprooms in Detroit, Grosse Pointe and Grand Rapids, has plans to add more IPA options, following the 2020 release of the Pog-o-licious IPA. The company is also working on an easy drinking lager.

Atwater is best known for its traditional German-style lagers, along with boutique brews Dirty Blonde and Vanilla Java Porter, which are the company's best sellers.

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**NONPROFITS**



Jill Woodward is the president and CEO of the nonprofit Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum. | CYDNI ELLEDGE / CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

# Henry Ford's Piquette Plant changed the world. This nonprofit is fighting to preserve it.

BY SHERRI WELCH

Restoration efforts at the birthplace of the Model T are taking another leap forward, spurred by the redevelopment of the former Studebaker sales and service building next door.

Power to the nonprofit, Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum — currently drawn from the attached Studebaker building — will be cut in February, President and COO Jill Woodward said, as developer The Platform LLC moves forward with its \$37.3 million plan to turn the Studebaker building into workforce apartment.

A \$500,000 grant from the National Park Service (its third to Piquette) and \$1.4 million in grants



Details of a 1915 Model T at the Piquette museum in Detroit.

| CYDNI ELLEDGE / CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

and contributions from the nonprofit museum's board — which includes Henry Ford III, the largest individual donor to the campaign to date — will fund a temporary power shift for Piquette, followed by rewiring of the 1926, cloth-covered wiring at the former auto plant and a new switch or power box that will take 40-60 weeks to secure, due to supply issues.

Reportedly one of the few surviving early automobile factories in the world, the museum is working with Detroit-based architecture firm Albert Kahn Associates on the design for the new electrical system and other restoration projects for the historic site.

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The new Huntington Bank headquarters in downtown Detroit is made up of 10 floors of parking space, 10 floors of office space and a rooftop deck. | QUINN BANKS/CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

**BANKING**

# Huntington Bank opens new Detroit HQ

21-story parking, office tower consolidates metro area offices

BY NICK MANES

The development timeline for a new bank headquarters in downtown Detroit has been through two merger deals and a global pandemic. But on Wednesday morning, the doors finally opened.

Initially announced in the summer of 2018 as a new headquarters for what was then Chemical Bank, some \$9.5 billion in dealmaking has ultimately led to the grand opening of the 21-story parking and office tower for what is now a Detroit base of op-

erations for Huntington Bank.

A total project cost for the development done by an entity called GPC Adams LLC was not disclosed.

The Columbus, Ohio-based Huntington vastly expanded its presence in Southeast Michigan and elsewhere in the Midwest and Great Lakes regions via its \$6 billion acquisition completed just more than one year ago of TCF Bank, which had acquired the previously Midland-based Chemical Bank in 2019 for \$3.6 billion.

Huntington Bank now stands as the 21st largest bank in the country

with about \$178 billion in assets, according to the U.S. Federal Reserve.

The new tower in Detroit, located just south of the Fox Theatre on Woodward Avenue at Elizabeth Street, has been touted as a "dual headquarters" alongside Huntington's presence in Ohio's capital city.

The new Detroit building represents a consolidation of multiple offices Huntington has had across metro Detroit and features 10 floors of parking on the lower levels plus

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# PIQUETTE

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Piquette will issue a request for proposals for the temporary electrical system work next week and the RFP for the permanent electrical upgrades within the next month and a half, trustee and past board president Steve Shotwell said Monday.

The Platform, whose owner Peter Cummings was chair of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra during Woodward's long stint as public relations director there, has been a very good neighbor, Woodward said.

The developer donated the easement behind Piquette to the museum for possible use as a future site for HVAC equipment. And it has offered to donate some electrical equipment, she said.

"They meet with us regularly to let us know how quickly they are moving forward and what to expect. I do think they've tried to hold off to give us as much time as they possibly could," Woodward said.

The plant-turned-museum is located in Detroit's Milwaukee Junction area, once home to well-known car makers including Brush Motor Car Co., Cadillac, Dodge, Hupp, Packard and Regal, among others, and a junction for several railroads at the turn of the 20th century.

It's located in the middle of two projects planned to turn historic buildings into housing: Studebaker and the nearby Fisher Body No. 21 plant slated for a \$134 million housing, retail, commercial and co-working space development led by Black business leaders Gregory Jackson and Richard Hosey, and Kevin Lewand, the son of Mayor Mike Duggan's former top economic development lieutenant, F. Thomas Lewand.

Electrical updates were already at the top of the museum's list of plans, following a 2016 fire sparked by threadbare wiring at the junction between Piquette and the Studebaker complex.

Piquette, which has a collection of more than 60 Model Ts and other historic cars produced in the early 1900s by other automakers in the area, has a fire suppression system but doesn't have the power to operate it, Woodward said. The electrical upgrades will enable that system to be turned on and to power a new passenger elevator, along with the historic freight elevator and heat and electricity.

"We can't open our museum to the public without electricity," she said.

The electrical upgrades are part of a larger, \$8.5 million comprehensive plan that will, among other things, restore the office space behind the front door at Piquette to its original look and nearby space for museum offices. That space was previously occupied by tenant General Linen & Uniform Service.

Other projects on the drawing board for the former plant include the addition of bathrooms on all three floors, classrooms for expanded field trips, installation of centralized heating and cooling systems, expanded building security systems, new programming, additional event spaces and paving the gravel lot across Piquette Avenue for parking.

"Even though we want to revitalize, this place will never be new: we want to keep things as authentic as possible," Woodward said.

## Saving Piquette

A group of Detroit historians, automobile enthusiasts and community volunteers teamed up with the Henry



The Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum features an array of early Ford vehicles and Edison bulb lighting on the ceiling. | CYDNI ELLEDGE / CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS



The Piquette Plant is best-known for making Model Ts. | CYDNI ELLEDGE / CRAIN'S DETROIT

Ford Heritage Association to purchase Piquette in 2000, saving it from demolition. Supporters paid \$300,000 for the building, formed the nonprofit Model-T Automotive Heritage Complex Inc. to operate the museum and have spent the past 20+ years and \$3 million in public and private contributions to make incremental upgrades to convert it into a public museum.

Brick on the exterior of the building has been restored, parts of the Douglas fir ceiling and maple flooring have been replaced with the same types of wood, the roof has been repaired and windows throughout the 68,000-square-foot plant have been replaced and rebuilt where needed.

The museum opened for informal tours for insider enthusiasts around 2003-04 and to the public at large in 2010. But it didn't attain the robust collection of historic cars it now has until 2017 when it benefited from the long-term loan of a collection of rare "letter car" Ford models that led up to the Model T design from the estate of the late Ford auto dealer from Ohio, Larry Porter.

Today, it houses more than 60 antique vehicles, including some on loan from board members. They include the earliest Model Ts produced at Piquette (painted in Carmine Red, not black), a Model T fire truck, a Model T "snowmobile," commercial Model Ts used by a florist and Absopure and early cars from other makers that set up shop in the neighborhood.

Visitors can see Henry Ford's office, with a blueprint safe, vehicles on all three floors, short Model T films in the museum's theater and the secret room where Ford and his most trusted associates designed the first Model T.

When you think about Detroit and its most iconic buildings, "this is our equivalent of Preservation Hall or Independence Hall or the Alamo," Woodward said.

While other automakers were making cars for the wealthy, Henry Ford went the other direction, she said. The Model T was affordable, durable, and it came with a simple, standardized toolkit that enabled owners to fix their own cars. By the early 1920s, the Model T made up half of the cars on the planet, she said.

"The reason that we drive on the side of the road that we drive on (today) was led by a decision made by Henry Ford in this building," Woodward said.

Ford moved steering wheels to their current position on vehicles in the U.S. so that passengers could get right into the vehicle when you pulled up, and they wouldn't have to negotiate manure-strewn roads, she said.

## Rising visitors

Piquette was listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 2002 and designated as a Michigan State Historic Site the following year and as a U.S. National Historic Landmark in 2006. The United Nations Edu-



The 1919-1922 Model T Coupe Wood Frame at Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum. | CYDNI ELLEDGE / CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

cational, Scientific and Cultural Organization placed it on the tentative list to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016, (after France nominated it), pending completion of capital projects.

The museum saw a steady rise in visitors, with numbers peaking at more than 31,000 in 2018 and 2019, as it hosted sporadic field trips, Model T owner workshops, weddings and other events under the Edison-bulb-strewn ceilings each year, before they plummeted during the pandemic.

The museum lost \$1.4 million in admission and event revenue across 2020 and 2021, Woodward said.

It entered this year with \$90,000 deficit, even with a \$60,000 Paycheck Protection Program loan, but expects to close the deficit by year's end, she said, noting its current budget of just under \$562,000 is generated almost entirely from earned revenue from ticket and museum store sales, event rentals and leases with tenants including Antique Touring Co., Turner Restoration LLC, Milwaukee Junction Collective and Swanson Funeral Home, which is using its space for storage.

"If we can get to the point that we have the facilities and modern amenities that we need, we can be a very healthy nonprofit from a financial standpoint," Woodward said.

## Strengthening fundraising

The museum's board brought Woodward, former director of the

MSU Community Music School-Detroit, on in February.

"In the three years prior to the pandemic, the museum experienced significant growth in number of annual visitors and special events. While this progress (was) significant, we have a lot of work to do yet, to fully preserve this historic structure," the museum's chairman and CEO George Linker said in an emailed statement.

The board felt it was time for a professional administrator with fundraising and nonprofit management experience, he said, which led to Woodward's hiring to head up the museum.

"We are poised now for our next growth phase. Jill has been a contributor to the Detroit community for many years, and has experience in fundraising, programming, and education, all areas we seek to expand at Piquette."

Piquette is operating with about half the employees it had before the pandemic, including Woodward, an operations manager and former Union Street Owner Ginger Zauner-Barris as events manager.

"We're an American treasure that just is not well-known within our city or our region," Woodward said. "You (have) had to be an insider to know about us. We want to change that."

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