



Urban Family Brewing Opens Ballard Expansion

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The New School
By: Ben Keene

No two families are alike, but all families have one thing in common: they tend to grow over time. That has certainly been true for Urban Family, the 8-year-old Seattle brewery that opened its new home to the public last Friday. It's a big step for the business, but owner Andy Gundel says the timing worked out in terms of his facility needs and aspirations for the future. The relocation process started taking shape in August 2018, and Gundel hopes to be out of Urban Family's cramped current space near Magnolia's Salmon Bay Marina by the end of March. With this move, the company returns to Ballard, a neighborhood that now includes more than a dozen breweries, a fact that has led to the creation of a new Ballard Brewed Coalition.

As it happens, Urban Family's new address will put it across NW 52nd Street from Stoup Brewing and a stone's throw from Obec Brewing. "We love Stoup, and we have a beer with them coming out after we open," Gundel says. "Our last collaboration with them was called Tin Can Telephone."

A larger footprint means the company is able to divide its taproom into a family- and dog-friendly area on the ground floor, and a smaller, 21+ balcony area that can be reserved for private events—something that was long missing at the Magnolia address. Gundel is also confident that with a more accessible location and more than twice as much space for the public (2,700



square feet versus 1,100 square feet at the former facility), he can increase his tasting room business, an important piece of the pie for breweries nationwide. Meanwhile, a 20-barrel brewhouse acquired from Elysian, 8 fermentation vessels, and a pair of foeders will help Urban Family meet the rising demand for its beers. The new cellar gives the brewery an annual capacity of 3,000 barrels, or the potential to produce about twice as much beer as it did in 2019.

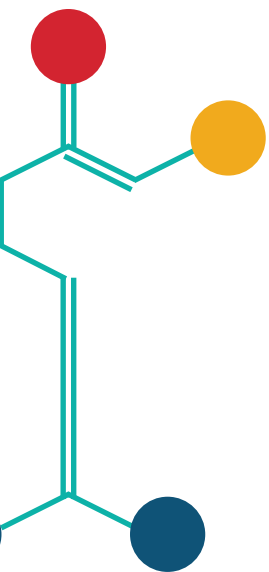
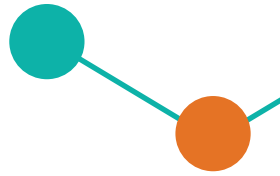
“We’re trying to make everyone happy, and I know that’s a bad idea,” Gundel says. “[But] when we were in Magnolia, the mindset was anything to save a dollar.”

Timothy Czarnetzki, David Powell, and Sean Bowman first opened Urban Family Public House in the heart of Old Ballard in January 2012. The partners initially served a range of styles from other breweries, but later devoted a few of their taps to house beers made on a 15-gallon system. Just over two years later, the renamed Urban Family Brewing traded Ballard for Magnolia and upgraded to a 7-barrel brewhouse. Gundel started helping the company with social media and logistics soon thereafter, and in 2016 became a majority owner. In the years since, his beer business has cultivated a reputation for hazy IPAs and fruited sours, winning awards for wild ales like Sacred Arrow made with raspberries, and Violet Tempest, made with blackberries and grapefruit zest.

With an indoor capacity of 183 plus close to another 50 seats around an outdoor fire pit, Urban Family’s new taproom, open daily from 12 p.m. until 10 p.m., will be one of the largest in the neighborhood. Its 23-foot ceilings make it feel bigger still. Decor is kept to a minimum, but intricate India ink drawings by local artist Kevin Astle lend visual interest to the white and gray interior. A huge 16-foot screen will keep sports fans entertained on game days, and a dedicated parking spot for food trucks like Nacho Mama’s—one of Gundel’s favorites—will appeal to people who like their sampler flights with a side of sustenance. Inside, 16 draft lines include Urban Family beers, collaborations like Lucky Family Rice Lager, made with Ballard’s Lucky Envelope Brewing Company, cider, and the occasional guest tap. Gundel also has plans to do more with the bright and spacious taproom.

“We’re looking at eventually offering wine,” he says, adding that he’s considering grab and go food, a morning coffee cart by Seattle-based Onda Origins, and further down the road, the possibility of cooking classes at the bar.

On the brewing side, Gundel isn’t planning any major changes, but expresses a desire to do more with the beer program than he could in the confines of the smaller Magnolia facility. He says





fans of Urban Family should expect more small batches of IPA, more emphasis on wood aged beer, and more frequent can releases. On opening weekend the brewery released Zeek & Destroy Double IPA dry hopped with Citra, Azacca, and Mosaic, along with a 15 percent ABV Imperial Stout called Celestial Enlightenment that it made with California's Bottle Logic Brewing and aged in Westland whiskey barrels. Eventually Gundel would like to can the company's flagship Saison, too. He also expects to add other styles to the company's lineup.

"Our head brewer Max [Peterson] is really into lager and we just haven't had the time," he explains. Yet for all of his aspirations, there's one thing Gundel is staunchly opposed to.

"I'm not doing this ever again," he says, chuckling. "This was an adventurous project."

