

Brewery to close Aurora taproom

Dry Dock Brewing Co., which opened in 2005, hopes to open new location by spring

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Kevin DeLange and Michelle Reding celebrated the 20th anniversary of Dry Dock Brewing Co. last weekend at the Aurora taproom where they laid roots as one of the pioneers of Colorado's craft beer scene. Unbeknownst to fans, the party was as much as a toast to the past as it was to future changes.

In January, Dry Dock will close its long-standing taproom at 15120 E. Hampden Ave. as it prepares to open a new brewpub elsewhere in the Denver metro area, the brewery announced Thursday. Additionally, DeLange and Reding are seeking a buyer for the attached homebrew supply shop, the Brew Hut, which has operated for 30 years.

The announcement comes as Dry Dock continues to integrate its business with Longmont's Left Hand Brewing Co. The two craft beer stalwarts merged in April in a deal that has since introduced Dry Dock's products into 15 new U.S. states, Mexico and the Netherlands, DeLange said.

Relocating will allow Dry Dock, which currently holds a beer manufacturer license, to operate under Left Hand's brewpub license. The new location, expected to open in spring 2026, will serve food and "all that jazz," similar to Left Hand's newest spot in Denver, DeLange said.

The company is currently searching for real estate and will likely land south of downtown Denver, Reding said.

"We love this location and what we've built here, but at the same time there's a lot of positive energy going into the future," Reding added.

Still, the move marks the end of an era. Dry Dock opened in 2005 in what was then a 900-square-foot space, and it was among the first to add a tasting room where drinkers could seek out and try house-made beers, providing a blueprint for innumerable businesses thereafter.

Over the two decades, DeLange and Reding expanded the brewery, and they expect it will remain one. In fact, they are currently in talks to have a new startup beer maker take it over at the beginning of next year, though they declined to say exactly who is behind it.

"It's certainly bittersweet," DeLange said. "We started here 20 years ago in this strip mall in Aurora, so passing it on to someone else and having it be their brewery, it's exciting but bittersweet."

Dry Dock, of course, was not DeLange and Reding's first venture in that strip mall. The duo purchased The Brew Hut from its original owner in 2002 before opening the attached brewery three years later. They hope to find a passionate entrepreneur to take it over so it can continue being a hub for local homebrewers.

"It can be very rewarding," Reding said, recalling new homebrewers sharing their successes as they continually honed their hobby. "The homebrewing community is just a great, close-knit community. It's like no other."

DeLange and Reding, who remain shareholders in Left Hand Brewing, expect there will be a gap between Dry Dock's taproom closure and the new brewpub. But they are assuring customers that the brewery's beer will still be widely available at retail stores in Colorado.