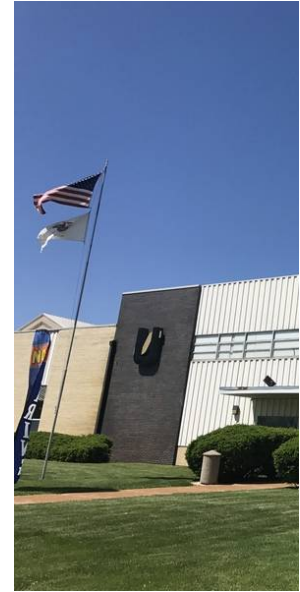


News | updated: 5/31/2017 4:14 PM

Sewing machine manufacturer seeks to open microbrewery in Huntley



The owners of Union Special LLC are proposing opening a microbrewery/taproom in the original Borden Dairy section of the manufacturing facility north of downtown Huntley. Village officials earlier this month reviewed a conceptual plan for the proposed 2,700-square-foot space located at the southeast corner of the manufacturing facility. An outdoor beer garden also is proposed next to the taproom.

Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

Union Special LLC owners microbrewery/taproom in manufacturing facility, we Huntley.

Brian Hill | Staff Photograp



Madhu Krishnamurthy

An industrial sewing machine manufacturer in Huntley is proposing opening a microbrewery/taproom on its property just north of downtown.

Huntley village officials earlier this month reviewed a conceptual plan from Union Special LLC for the proposed brewery. It would be located in a 2,700-square-foot vacant space within the former Borden Dairy section at the southeast corner of the manufacturing plant, west of Route 47 and three blocks north of Main Street.



inRead invented by Teads

With the taproom, patrons could purchase craft beer produced there for on-site consumption or take it to go in controlled containers. An outdoor beer garden also is proposed.

It would be Huntley's first microbrewery, Village Manager David Johnson said.

"It seems to be a fairly trendy thing these days," he added.

Village board members are open to the concept and have referred it for plan commission review. The village must change its zoning to allow a brewery/microbrewery as a special use within a manufacturing district. The business also would need a new liquor license classification, Johnson said.

Union Special has been operating in Huntley since 1949. Originally established in 1881, [Union Special \(http://www.unionspecial.com/\)](http://www.unionspecial.com/) is the oldest, largest and the one of the last industrial sewing machine manufacturers in the country, according to the company's website.

Owners Terry Hitpas, Tom Bartel and Lance Lamb, who have been with the company more than 35 years each, acquired the business from foreign investors in 2008.

As avid craft beer enthusiasts, the trio would be part of the owner/investor group funding building and site improvements to accommodate the brewery. They also will seek local investors to help with the project, said Lamb, a lifelong Huntley resident.

"We don't need this whole facility for our main business," Lamb said. "We thought it would be a good utilization of the old portion of the building that was the Borden milk factory. We have the space available and thought that this would bring more people into Huntley to see what we've got to offer in general."

More than 20 tenants -- including printing and engineering businesses, and wrestling, baseball and soccer clubs, currently lease space within the Union Special building.

"They have really turned some of the space in the building into (a business) incubator," Johnson said.

The brewery could serve as an anchor for future development of the southernmost portion of the Union Special site and main parking lot.

"That site is so huge there is room for an additional outlot," Johnson said. "It could start tying into what we've been doing in the downtown area."

The business initially would focus on sales in the taproom and distribution to local restaurants. While the concept plan does not include a kitchen for on-site food preparation, the taproom would offer prepackaged food items, such as breadsticks or cheese. Patrons would be allowed to bring in food for consumption.

Many such taprooms also feature guest food truck services, if allowed by local ordinances.

Though Lamb didn't provide estimates, he said refurbishing the facility won't come cheap.

"It would be kind of nice to renovate it and turn it into something the community could be proud of too," he added.
