

Long-awaited OTR distillery, concert venue sets opening to be December-18th.



Image: Cincinnati Business Courier

By [Andy Brownfield](#) – Senior staff reporter, Cincinnati Business Courier Nov 30, 2021

An Over-the-Rhine distillery, brewery and concert venue that has been in the works since 2017 is getting ready to welcome the public. The OTR Still House, home to the Knox Joseph Distillery, will open its doors at 2017 Branch St. in Over-the-Rhine on Dec. 18.

The OTR Still House is a project of [Michele Hobbs](#), the founder of pet food retailer Pet Wants, which now has more than 100 locations. Hobbs told me OTR Still House came from a desire to elevate the city of Cincinnati and her neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine.

"I lived in the city core since 1996, and I just remember when I got out of high school everyone went away for college, and I didn't," she said. "Back then everyone sent their kids away because Cincinnati had not a lot to offer." Now that she's a parent herself, Hobbs wanted to be a part of elevating Cincinnati to be the kind of place where her kids would want to stick around after they graduated. In fact, the distillery – Knox Joseph – and its products like Wyatt Jack golden gin or James Scott blended whiskey are all named for her children and those of her co-workers and employees. "This city is so well known for food and entertainment, it's part of what makes Over-the-Rhine so attractive," she said. "To build something that doesn't exist is what keeps this going." Hobbs dreamed big with the OTR Still House when she came up with the plans for it in 2017. For one, the distillery is just one aspect of it. Though it has yet to open, its James Scott blended whiskey has already won multiple gold medals, with its Glacial Gin silver and Wyatt Jack golden gin landing bronze. In addition to those, the Still House will open with Pearl vodka and its bourbon is nearing four years in the barrel. The bottles themselves are designed to look like a canteen, inspired by the aquifer underneath the distillery (more on that in a moment), but when lined up beside one another they look like books in a bookcase, with the labeling convention of releasing different products in volumes.

[Steve Swartz](#), director of operations for the OTR Still House, told me the cocktail menu is meant to highlight the spirits without covering them up. "We want you to know you're drinking a blended whiskey; it's won awards, so we want you to taste it," he said.

The spirits are served in cocktails named for famous people with ties to Cincinnati, like:

- A vodka cocktail made with lemon-rosemary shrub & orange bitters, garnished with dehydrated candied lemon
- A blended whiskey drink with Montenegro Amaro, orange juice and pumpkin orgeat, served with shaved nutmeg and dehydrated orange
- A gin drink made with yellow chartreuse, honey hibiscus simple syrup and green tea, garnished with dehydrated lemon and candied hibiscus
- A vodka drink made with strawberry-vanilla syrup and topped with house cream soda, garnished with dehydrated strawberry

The OTR Still House isn't just about spirits. Hobbs hired [Chris Mitchell](#) as her head of production, a former head brewer in Cincinnati, as well as [John Funcheon](#), another alumnus of the local craft brewing industry, as lead production assistant. As such, the team has deep brewing experience. When the OTR Still House opens, it will have 11 of its own beers on draft, including a hazy session IPA, German Kolsch, German Pils, imperial stout, American brown ale, Vienna lager, Berliner weisse, porter, American wheat beer and a honey amber ale. In addition to beer, the OTR Still House will debut with four of its own wines made with grapes from California and Washington, with a rose, red blend, cabernet sauvignon and sauvignon Blanc. The venue will also pour its own sodas – a root beer and cream soda – as well as four varieties of house-made hard seltzer.

All of the beverages are made with water [sourced from an aquifer directly beneath the distillery](#). In the late 1800s, the Standard Ice Manufacturing Co., which used to sit near the same property, tapped into that aquifer to supply Cincinnati with ice. Hobbs is a strong believer the water used to make whiskey – or any beverage – makes a difference in the taste. She's backed up by science: Björn Karlsson and Ran Friedman of Linnaeus University in Sweden published a paper in December 2017 that found water changes spirits at a molecular level. Greg Metze, master distiller of the MGP Ingredients distillery in Lawrenceburg, Ind., home of George Dickel rye and Bulleit 95 rye, told *Cincinnati Magazine* in 2016 great whiskey starts with great water, and MGP sits on top of an aquifer similar to the one tapped by OTR Still House.

If all of those beverage options leave you feeling hungry, there's something for that too.

OTR Still House is partnering with Chef [Josh Campbell](#) to open Sqr – pronounced "skewer" – a play on Japanese street food with Southern influences, cooked over a robata atop coconut charcoal with some white oak thrown in to lend a smokiness to it. Sqr will serve meats and vegetables cooked on skewers over the robata, like chicken thighs, pork belly, Sakura Farms wagyu meatballs, lamb, shishito peppers and mushrooms. A smoker will sit on-site for things like smoked bones to do a smoked bone ramen. The Southern influence is also exhibited through items like dashi-boiled peanuts and smoked brisket and collard green steamed dumplings with bourbon barrel soy sauce. Campbell told me he will work closely with Mitchell and Funcheon on events like beer dinners and bourbon dinners. "This is going to be something special," he said. It all comes together in the Still House itself, which takes place across an indoor-outdoor space with a custom-built combined pot and column still made by the Vendome Copper & Brass Works out of Louisville.

Beside the still is a long wooden bar, made from mahogany and custom built for the old Brazenhead Irish Pub in Mason. Hobbs acquired the bar when the former pub's assets were sold at auction after its founder died in 2016. On the other side of the still is a large stage that is visible from the entire interior of the facility, as well as an expansive outdoor patio that is covered in AstroTurf. The stage is a major component of the OTR Still House. Hobbs said there are a number of musical acts that might not play at other venues in Over-the-Rhine because the historic nature of the neighborhood means it's hard to find places with amenities like dedicated load-in areas or a green room.

The OTR Still House has a gated load-in dock that can accommodate a truck, and there is a private green room with its own restroom and access to the backstage and a VIP area that overlooks the stage. The stage is visible both to the Still House, but also the outdoor patio through large glass doors that can be retracted in warm weather to allow open access to the stage. On nights that there is no music, a wall rolls into place to cover the stage.

While the Still House itself is accessed from Branch Street in Over-the-Rhine, it has a bottle shop on Central Parkway where customers can buy bottled beverages and the distillery's spirits. The bottle shop is served by its own bar, and it too has large doors that can be opened in the warm weather to a balcony that overlooks the outdoor patio. The OTR Still House's bottle shop is open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday and Tuesday with later hours until 11 p.m. Wednesday through Friday. The public house is open Wednesday and Thursday, 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., closing later at midnight on Friday. The full facility is open 11 a.m. to midnight on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday.

The OTR Still House has an agreement with OhioMeansJobs, whose Cincinnati office abuts the venue, to allow patrons to use its parking structure after 5 p.m.

StreetSide presents Socially Influenced Pastry Brown Ale... with Waffles



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PASTRY BROWN ALE
WITH WAFFLES

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9.5% ABV

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About The Release Event

What if we told you that we gathered up all of Cincinnati's most passionate creatives, put them in a room with famed local StreetSide Brewery, and let them brew a beer together? Well. It happened. Introducing a special brewing collaboration project like no other, fit for a city like no other. Celebrating one mutual bond, a place we all call home and an ode to those who go above and beyond to sing the Queen City from the top of their lungs! Conceptualized, dreamt, schemed, and 'influenced' by a hand selected group of Cincinnati's most passionate cheerleaders. "Socially Influenced is about something bigger than any one person or name. It's an ode to a community of passionate everyday people that love this incredible city and share that love with others. Presenting a special StreetSide collaboration with local Cincinnati icons: Influenced by Cincinnati, brewed in Cincinnati. It takes a more than a village, it takes the Queen City."

Braxton Brewing Releases Seltzers Inspired by Classic Graeter's Smoothies

Sunrise Sensation and Island Blast Smoothie Seltzers bring a taste of the tropics in the winter. By [Maggy McDonel](#) on Tue, Dec 7, 2021



Provided by Braxton Brewing Co. For a limited time, Braxton has released Braxton's Sunrise Sensation and Island Blast Smoothie Seltzers inspired by Graeter's classic smoothie recipe.

Cincinnati's [Braxton Brewing Co.](#) and [Graeter's Ice Cream](#) have teamed up again, this time to create a boozy seltzer. For a limited time, Braxton has released Braxton's Sunrise Sensation and Island Blast Smoothie Seltzers inspired by Graeter's classic smoothie recipe. Sunrise Sensation features notes of strawberry, banana, orange and mango, while Island Blast is flavored with pineapple, orange and mango for a taste of the tropics in the winter.

"Consumers consistently want more out of hard seltzers, and this is a unique drink experience that gives them just that. Graeter's smoothie has truly allowed us to take the consumer seltzer experience to new heights and carve out a new niche within the highly competitive hard seltzer category," says Jake Rouse, co-founder and CEO of Braxton.

Stop by any of the Braxton taprooms to try the sparkling brew or grab a four-pack at Kroger. The pack of 12-ounce cans will be available for \$14.99 throughout Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio.

Braxton says in a release that this drink has "a velvety taste and complete decadence" and suggests that it could be a great gift for the upcoming holiday season. "Our hard seltzer has such a smooth mouthfeel and is so well formulated that it gives us a perfect base with which to work. Drinkers can expect something similar to what you would drink at a scoop shop, expertly blended with the ingenuity they would expect from Braxton," says Rouse.

Braxton is located at 27 W. Seventh St., Covington, and 331 E 13th St, Over-the-Rhine. Find more information at [braxtonbrewing.com](#).

HI-WIRE BREWING ANNOUNCES NEW SPOT IN CINCINNATI

[JONNY FULLPINT Beer News](#), [Hi-Wire Brewing](#)

(Cincinnati, OH) – Cincinnati-based PLK Communities announced that nationally acclaimed Hi-Wire Brewing, based in Asheville, NC, will open a brewery and taproom at Factory 52, PLK's 20-acre redevelopment on the former site of the US Playing Card factory in Norwood. "We are thrilled to have Hi-Wire Brewing sign on to be part of Factory 52," said Nick Lingenfelter, Vice President of Development at PLK Communities. "We knew that working with a top-tier brewery who could compete with the best of our region would be critical to revitalizing the former US Playing Card Facility into a first-class destination."



Since its founding in Asheville, NC in 2013, Hi-Wire Brewing has garnered numerous awards and accolades, including three Gold Awards at the Great American Beer Festival (GABF), World Beer Cups and PASTE magazine awards. They already feature local taprooms throughout North Carolina (Asheville, Durham, Wilmington, Charlotte) and in Knoxville, TN, and Louisville, KY.

Factory 52 will be its first Ohio location and was particularly attractive not only for its strategic distribution convenience across nine states, but also for PLK's commitment to adaptive reuse. "We have had a lot of success in other markets when we purposefully partner with developers that are already committed to reuse," said Chris Frosaker, Hi-Wire co-owner. "We primarily seek campus-style locations in neighborhoods that are up-and-coming; so Factory 52 is just a great fit for our organization."

Factory 52 provides tenant partners a re-purposed location in greater Cincinnati that offers many benefits to help them succeed both locally and regionally. Lingenfelter added that Hi-Wire's innovative thinking, willingness to try new things, and clear appreciation for sustainability and urban renewal are just what PLK seeks in all tenant partners to fulfill its long-term vision for the development.

The impressive Factory 52 campus will feature the Hi-Wire Brewing taproom alongside a food hall, boutique retail shops, residences, a dog park, the newly announced Aces Pickleball complex, and a grand public

courtyard. Situated in the campus's Amenity Building, this location will be a unique addition to the brewery's set of nine taprooms being the first to feature a multi-level design. The 5800-square-foot primary space will fill the building's first floor and feature a bar with twenty-four taps and a large outdoor patio, while a twelve-tap secondary bar and 3780-square-foot rooftop deck overlooking the entire property will occupy the third floor. In Hi-Wire's mission to create taprooms that cultivate community and inspire fun, the Cincinnati location will feature walls covered in vibrant murals, an assortment of family-friendly games including soccer pool, table tennis, and foosball, and a rotating selection of Hi-Wire Brewing's own beer including year-round offerings, seasonals, specialties, sour and wild ales, one-offs, and undistributed releases.

Construction of Hi-Wire Brewing Cincinnati will begin immediately, and it will open to the public in fall 2022. Both parties were represented by Melissa Ruther or Megan Fair at CBRE. For more information about the development or leasing opportunities, simply visit www.factory52norwood.com. For information on the Hi-Wire Brewing Cincinnati buildout, follow Hi-Wire Brewing on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

About Hi-Wire Brewing

Hi-Wire Brewing is known for producing approachable and balanced lagers and ales, most notably Hi-Pitch Mosaic IPA, Lo-Pitch Hazy IPA, and Pink Lemonade Session Sour Ale, and it boasts an award-winning sour and wild ale program. Founded in Asheville, N.C. in 2013, Hi-Wire has three locations in Asheville – the Big Top Production Facility, Taproom & Event Space and the South Slope Specialty Brewery & Taproom are open now and the third is set to open in November 2021 in the River Arts District – along with taprooms in Durham, N.C., Knoxville, Tenn., Wilmington, N.C., Louisville, Ky., and a Charlotte, N.C., location opening in Spring 2022. Hi-Wire Brewing's Great American Beer Festival and World Beer Cup award-winning beers can be found on draft and in cans across North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Ohio, Kentucky, Alabama, Virginia, and Indiana. To learn more about the company, visit hiwirebrewing.com.

About PLK Communities

Founded by Peter Klekamp in 2001, PLK Communities started out as a real estate management company with a focus on multifamily and industrial properties. Throughout the years, PLK evolved into owning and managing retail, office, and self-storage facilities in the Eastern United States. With the acquisition, redevelopment, and management of multifamily properties, the company focus is centered on exceptional service and distinctive living experiences for residents.

Today, PLK has over 175 full-time associates and manages over 5,600 apartment homes across Ohio and Kentucky. PLK Communities has grown into the largest owner of multifamily units in the Cincinnati Metropolitan Statistical Area while maximizing value across a diverse portfolio of properties.

About Factory 52

Factory 52 is a city within a city, offering cool urban living with historic charisma. What was once Norwood's US Playing Card Company factory is now being reimagined as a brand-new lifestyle destination for all of greater Cincinnati. Hosting breweries, boutiques, a public market, a bark park, outdoor social areas, delicious eateries, luxury apartments and creative office spaces, this hip re-development is being built around the city's iconic hundred-year-old clock tower. office spaces, this hip re-development is all being built around the city's iconic clock tower.

