

Craft beer rich in North Park

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By Ian Anderson



- North Park Beer Co., one of the most anticipated launches of the year, is now open for business.
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Talents converge to construct San Diego's urban brewery ideal

One of the beer community's [most anticipated](#) brewery debuts hit University Avenue at the end of June when [North Park Beer Co.](#) officially opened for business — an opening that resonates in urban culture as well as the craft beer scene. Not only did the central North Park brewery open with multiple-award-winning beer on its roster, its brewhouse was designed by an architect at the top of his field, its interior by a designer responsible for some of the city's most talked about restaurants.

Kelsey McNair became famous among San Diego craft enthusiasts when his Hop Fu IPA took gold medal three [times in five years](#) in the annual National Homebrew Competition. That all started in 2010, when he also won a Stone Brewing homebrew contest that saw his session IPA recipe released in 20 states via [collaboration with Stone and Ballast Point](#). As Stone head brewer Mitch Steele said at the time, "That's the work of a skilled brewer."

A Stone label artist's request prompted McNair to publicly use the name North Park Beer Co. for the first time. But he'd actually adopted the name a couple years prior, using it both as the name of his wifi network and the brewing space he'd set up at his North Park home.

"At that point in time I was already calling my garage North Park Beer Company," McNair recalls, "so I worked up

this logo with a craftsman font and I sent it over."

It gave McNair enough claim to trademark North Park Beer Co., a claim he's kept up over the years with continued brewery collaborations, including beers with North Park neighbors [Fall Brewing](#) and [Mike Hess Brewing](#), and a couple of Hop Fu collaborations with reigning WBC champion brewpub [Beachwood BBQ & Brewing](#), out of Long Beach.

Since early 2015, McNair's been building out an 8900-square-foot former boxing gym, tapping a pair of the city's most accomplished professionals to create an exposed below-ground brewhouse framed by oaken decor. McNair explains, "We were really just trying to create an environment where you're immersed in the fact it's a brewery, but at the same time has the sensibilities of a pub."

Dustin Hauck, aka the [craft beer architect](#), has designed brewhouses for several dozen breweries with his firm [Hauck Architecture](#), including all the [Brewery Igniter](#) turnkey breweries, [Modern Times](#), and another North Park neighbor, [Thorn Brewing Co.](#) Hauck set up North Park Beer with a 15-barrel Premier Stainless system, including a reverse osmosis filter so McNair can fine tune the composition of the water he uses to brew.

Paul Basile and his [Basile Studio](#) may be best known for designing restaurant and bar interiors such as [Ironside](#), [Kindred](#), and [Polite Provisions](#). For his first brewery tasting room he combined the neighborhood's stately Arts and Crafts architecture with a mid-century aesthetic, resulting in copper-clad doors and an elegant stained white oak bar with hammered copper detailing and etched backlit mirrors. Throughout the room, custom-cast street lamps topped by smoked glass orbs disperse low, warm light.

Basically, North Park Beer Co. is the evolutionary peak of urban tasting rooms in San Diego, with one of county's most storied IPAs on tap. Welcome to San Diego, where the craft beer rich keep getting richer.