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## Microbrewery coming to Birmingham

*By Jay M. Grossman  
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Plans for a 12,000 square-foot microbrewery on Eton Road were approved at the Birmingham City Commission meeting on Monday.

"This is going to be a Michigan-made product," owner Norm LePage said of the proposed Griffin Claw Brewery at the southeast corner of Eton and Palmer.

The project calls for a brewery that can produce up to a 100 barrels of craft beer a week, a restaurant, tasting room and outdoor beer garden. It's right down the street from LePage's Big Rock Chophouse at the corner of Eton and Maple.

The buildings will sit on 1.52 acres of land nestled between the Whistle Stop Restaurant and Watch Hill Antiques. The site is surrounded by residential on three sides, an issue the commission went to great lengths to address on Monday.

Neighbors along Haynes, Hazel and Bowers streets were concerned about parking, lighting and noise. But LePage himself promised the brewery would be similar to a quiet neighborhood bar. He also noted that nearly 100 on-site parking spaces are being provided to help prevent traffic from spilling into the sidestreets.

The restaurant will stay open until 2 a.m. on the weekends, but he believes most of the crowd on Friday and Saturday will clear out by midnight. The outdoor beer garden will stay open until 11 p.m. on weekdays and until midnight on the weekends.

At this point LePage has not applied for a dance or entertainment permit.

From the conversation Monday, it appears LePage wants to focus on the sale and distribution of award-winning craft beer. He said part of the reason he's investing in a brewery is because he already has an award-winning brew master working at Big Rock. He plans to shut down the brewery operations at Big Rock and move the brew master to Griffin Claw.

The beer produced at Big Rock can only be sold to restaurant customers. LePage said he's applying for a distribution license that will allow him to sell Griffin Claw beer to other restaurants, retailers and bars.

The commission approved the project by a 7-0 vote.

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