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## **SOMEDAY, A CROP TO KICK BACK WITH**

AN URBAN ST. PAUL MAN HAS SET HIS SIGHTS ON A RURAL 35-ACRE SPREAD IN WILSON, WIS., WHERE HE PLANS TO GROW HOPS, HARNESS WIND AND EXPLORE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN HIS OWN CRAFT-BEER "BREW-FARM."

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David Anderson dreams about living on a farm.

But in his dream, it's not corn and soybeans stretching to the horizon.

Anderson envisions rows of hops surrounding a garden of herbs and spices. In the distance, a wind turbine collects energy from breezes over Wisconsin countryside.

And he isn't quaffing fresh milk in his dream barn.

From wall-mounted taps he sees golden -- or maybe caramel or amber -- flows of beer.

True, the St. Paul resident is more adept at running for pho on University Avenue than running a farm, but he's prepared for the challenge of starting what could be the first "brewfarm" in the country.

"It started out simple. I just wanted to live out in the country and brew beer," he said. "Now it's turned into this classroom -- what's possible?"

Anderson, who has brewed, sold and judged beer over the past 15 years, is selling his home and getting some bank money to finance his 35-acre model for green construction, sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship in the tiny town of Wilson, Wis., about 50 miles east of his Midway neighborhood.

He will also live there and run a small craft-beer brewery.

He plans to put up a 4,000-square-foot space -- his home and office -- and run it with wind turbines and solar power. Heating and cooling will be geothermal.

The walls will be a "sandwich" of foam between concrete, a heat-retaining technique called thermal mass.

It all will cost more than plugging into the existing electrical grid and building with wood, but over time, Anderson could recoup his costs in utility savings, he said. He might even be able to sell extra, unused electricity he captures in the future.

The water he'll need to make beer will come from a well.

"The brewery -- that's the cash flow, that's the engine," he said. "Beer is this product that everybody can understand."

He wants to open the farm to other entrepreneurs producing green products and try to show how emerging energy technologies can be incorporated into everyday living.

He's been working on the idea for so long, he said, that "a lot of times I don't see the progress or the 'wow' factor."

And it has been a long time -- almost since he first got into home-brewing beer in the early 1990s. Like most home brewers, he drank some of his beer while his friends drank the rest. They didn't just drink, though -- they told Anderson he could make a living producing the stuff.

So in 1996, he attended the Siebel Institute of Technology and World Brewing Academy in Chicago. Armed with the technical knowledge, he went to work at the short-lived Ambleside Brewery in Minneapolis.

He tried building his own brewpub from the ground up in Plymouth but couldn't get financial backing. Then he chased other jobs in the industry, working for a distributor selling specialty beers and for a beer importer. He worked at a microbrewery in Massachusetts and then started his own beer-export company, focusing on moving U.S. craft beers to Europe.

"It was a little premature," he said of the venture. "The demand was there, but the infrastructure wasn't."

He moved back to Minnesota in 2004 and got into brewery consulting, helping other beer-makers open shop abroad.

The entire time, he has also worked on and off as a beer festival judge, hitting brew competitions in the United States and abroad. He was in Belgium for a contest this March.

Still, he didn't forget his brewery plan. In 2007, he drove throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin looking for land and decided to settle east of the St. Croix River, where property is cheaper and regulatory hoops are fewer.

"Wisconsin is nicer to breweries," he said.

Just an hour east of downtown St. Paul, he found a parcel of mixed forest and fields in Wilson. He closed on the property in February.

Now, he has a permit from the town for a wind turbine, and building plans call for a two-story, live-work space partially built into a hill.

Anderson has enlisted Kelly Cain, director of the St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, to consult on land-use and sustainability issues. He'd also like to set up an intern program with the school so students can experiment with new farming techniques.

His strategy for "Dave's BrewFarm" is to start small this summer.

"Labor, distribution, marketing -- all me," he said. "Twenty kegs a week. If I do that, I'll be doing well."

As far as the green, sustainable bent goes, Anderson said he's not jumping on any bandwagons.

"The writing's on the wall with \$120 barrels of oil. I thought, 'What can I do to have this not cost more?'," he said. "Green is a business decision. I'm not trying to be part of a trend."

After so many years, he has his first crop in the ground.

Earlier this month, Anderson planted a test batch of 50 hop root clusters. They will take a few years to mature and get into a batch of beer, so in the meantime, he'll use hop imports and purchased grains to make an inaugural brew that could be available this fall.

"I'm as committed as I can be to making it go," he said. "It's a lifestyle."

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