

Luxco breaks ground in Bardstown

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By Randy Patrick

On a verdant farm with an 18th century stone house, red barn and large trees, state and local dignitaries gathered with members of the Lux family Monday afternoon to celebrate breaking ground for Bardstown's newest bourbon distillery.



PETER W. ZUBATY/The Kentucky Standard

Groundbreaking for the new Luxco Distillery was Monday in Bardstown, as local and state officials were among the guests helping turn over dirt at a ceremony on the Luxco property off of John Rowan Boulevard. Pictured are Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin, Michele Lux, Luxco CEO and Chairman Donn Lux, Nelson County Economic Development Agency President Kim Huston, Nelson County Judge-Executive Dean Watts, Bardstown Mayor John Royalty and Luxco COO and President David Bratcher. The distillery is scheduled to begin production in late 2017.

Luxco of St. Louis intends to spend nearly \$30 million to build the distillery and warehouses on John and Nancy Ballard's former property between John Rowan Boulevard and Filiatreau Lane. The 18,000-square-foot distillery and visitors center is expected to be operating by the end of 2017, according to David Bratcher, president and chief operating officer.

"We are so fortunate to be able to welcome a new distillery into our ever-growing bourbon family," Kim Huston, president of the Nelson County Economic Development Agency, said as she welcomed the guests to the ceremony and introduced the speakers, who included Bardstown Mayor John Royalty, Nelson County Judge-Executive Dean Watts, Luxco Chairman and CEO Donn Lux and Gov. Matt Bevin.

"It's a pleasure for me to be here representing everyone back home in St. Louis as we extend the Luxco family here to this wonderful site," said Lux, who was joined by his wife, Michele. "We looked at many sites, and when we drove up the road here and saw the trees and the scenery and the house and the barn, it really made it easy for us."

The businessman, whose family owns Luxco, a diverse wine and distilled spirits company with some 170 labels, said the new bourbon distillery has great significance for him.

"What's happening here today is a real special moment for me personally. We've been in the business for a long time, but we've never embarked on a project like this. When we started working on it a year ago, I never thought it would happen, and now here we are, so it's really exciting for me to be here sharing that with all of you."

Lux thanked those who helped with financing the project, local leaders and other members of the bourbon industry who have helped him and his company, including Max Shapira and his family, of Heaven Hill, which makes some of the company's products.

Bevin thanked everyone for coming, and in particular singled out those from other bourbon companies who were there, including Jim Beam, Heaven Hill and the future Bardstown Bourbon Company.

Bevin said that “willingness to allow other people to excel” is part of “the greatness of Kentucky” and America.

“I really believe that Kentucky is on the front of something great” in economic development.

The state approved tax incentives of up to \$1 million for the company, and the city and county are also giving tax breaks for the development, which is expected to create 34 permanent, full-time jobs.

Bevin said it is only a matter of time before Luxco is part of the Kentucky Bourbon Trail.

“We’re all going to look back on this four, 14 and 40 years from now, and we’ll all be excited about the fact that this decision was made,” he said.

The governor presented Lux with a gift of a silver mint julep cup, and then he, Lux and others on the podium donned hardhats and wielded shovels for the groundbreaking.

Afterward, the guests were invited to a reception in a tent that featured hors d’oeuvres with drinks made from the company’s Rebel Yell, Ezra Brooks and David Nicholson 1843 brands.

Paul A. Lux and David Sherman Sr. founded the company in 1958 as the David Sherman Corp., and since 2006, it has been known as Luxco.