

BREWING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Maximizing Brewpub Potential in Fostering Resilient Communities

CONTEXT

While a vast majority of breweries *strongly believe* their institution fosters community (77%), trust (66%), and friendliness (78%), **less than half strongly believe their institution fosters aid and assistance.** However, breweries are uniquely positioned to foster assistance through developing social capital and resilience, thus enhancing the strength of the communities they operate within. In many cases, breweries have already adopted and implemented practices which promote social capital. These recommendations seek to **codify and formalize these best practices** to boost sharing of ideas across breweries and to build stronger communities.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

In cases of duress — whether from an environmental hazard, a violent attack, or an economic shock — research suggests that **social capital** is one of the strongest indicators in recovery and rebuilding efforts. Social Capital is a concept which captures how involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for the individual and the community. These networks are both horizontal across communities, and vertical with higher authorities and powers.

When intentionally considered in community development, social capital can help communities prepare for shocks. The following recommendations have been divided into six categories which breweries can proactively adopt and implement to promote social resilience.



SENSE OF BELONGING



TRUST & SECURITY



PARTICIPATION



VALUES & NORMS



CITIZEN POWER



RECIPROCITY



SENSE OF BELONGING

This refers to a **sense of connectedness to places and people, as well as levels of involvement in the community.** This is perhaps the most "natural" of the six categories for breweries: by offering a community space for people to gather, people feel at home and connected. However, this can go beyond patrons of the bar through:

- Building local pride through design & branding
- Creating partnerships with local organizations in special-benefit beers
- Partnering with local elected officials to host forums on public issues
- Using distribution networks to boost tourism and visibility for your community

IN ACTION: East Brother Beer Co. in California curates a bi-weekly blog where they feature local community business owners and activists. You can read some more about the blog [here](#).



TRUST & SECURITY

This refers to **feeling safe in your space, as well as feeling valued and trusted by your peers.** This sentiment is naturally facilitated given the hyper-local nature of brewery ownership.

- Offering workforce training to employees to foster transferable skills
- Establishing commercial partnerships with other businesses, including food trucks and other vendors who you can host for pop-up events
- Responding to and engaging with current events in your community

IN ACTION: Warped Wing Brewing Co. in Dayton, Ohio, jumped into action following a mass shooting in their community in 2019. From cooking food for first responders, to **holding blood drives in their parking lots**, to raising tens of thousands of dollars, they were there for their community at a critical time, in an essential way. Engaging with the current events in your town - and meeting your community where they are - goes a long way.



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PARTICIPATION

This refers to **feeling empowered to join and meaningfully contribute**. A huge part of empowering your community members to "join in" is to invite them and ask — so craft new ways and systems which might attract different crowds to foster wider audiences and participation.

- Hosting virtual concerts during COVID to offer "virtual" third spaces for communities to gather
- Using social media to engage with community members
- Partnering with local artists for paid public art projects, including murals

IN ACTION: Riverland Brewing Company has supported local musicians and artists by using their social media reach to host virtual concerts and "collect tips" for the performers.



VALUES & NORMS

This refers to **morals and common practices which are of importance**. The brewing industry is very connected with local non-profits, and there is a huge potential for deeper, more meaningful collaboration with these kinds of groups.

- Developing a clear mission statement, with intentional dedication to serving your community as more than just a brewery
- Recycling and sustainability initiatives: including finding local farmers to take spent grain, instituting a re-usable growler/deposit system
- Fostering creative collaboration with local non-profits that go beyond fundraising

IN ACTION: Fargo Brewing Company gets creative in their partnerships — from sparking a [nationwide pet adoption initiative](#) to [brewers dressing in funky outfits for good causes](#).



CITIZEN POWER

This refers to **feeling heard and in control over the future of your community**. Community members and businesses have a mutual interest in the future of your town/city. Opening up with your vision, and listening to what other groups advocate for, will help you establish your institution as both empowering others and a key voice in the future of your community.

- Hosting civic engagement events, including voter registration initiatives
- Offering spaces to local community groups
- Collaborating with local tourism offices to offer space to traveling journalists

IN ACTION: Green Bench Brewing Co. offers up their meeting spaces to local groups, like the Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter, for free.



RECIPROCITY

This refers to **cooperation toward a shared goal and outcome, with universal contributions to ensure universal benefits**. This principle is based around the fact that your business is dependent on the community — so your return/investment in them is a sign of trust and appreciation.

- Hosting artisan or farmers markets in your outdoor space
- Repurposing old spaces or industrial buildings through renovation or arts projects
- Engagement with local commerce boards and governments, opening space up for events and announcements

IN ACTION: Ancient City Brewing has brought local commercial vendors together in open-air, COVID-compliant markets — free of charge to the vendors.



Read more about the impact of social capital and this research project at:
ericmschulz.com/breweries

Feel free to reach out to me directly at schulz.er@northeastern.edu