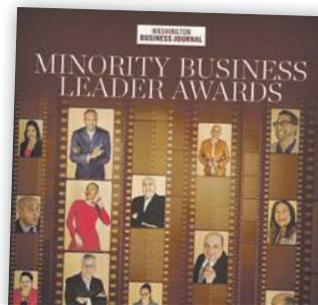


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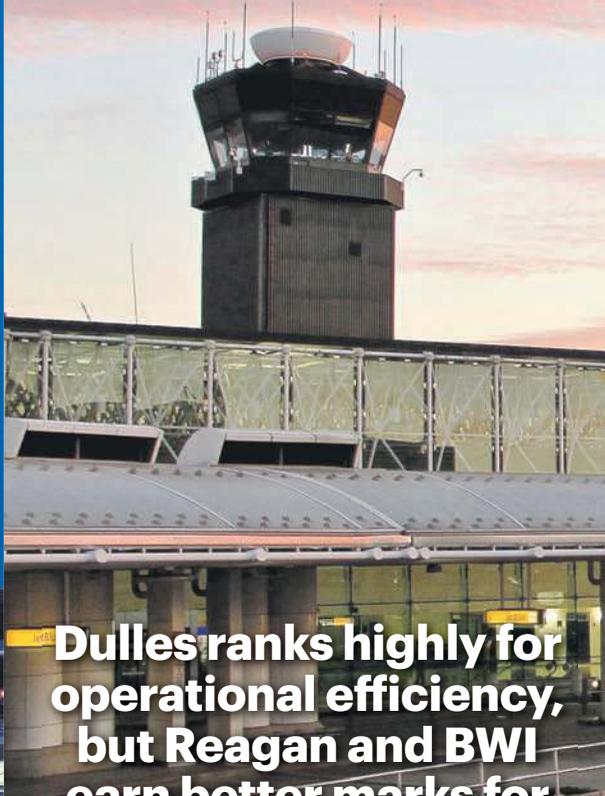
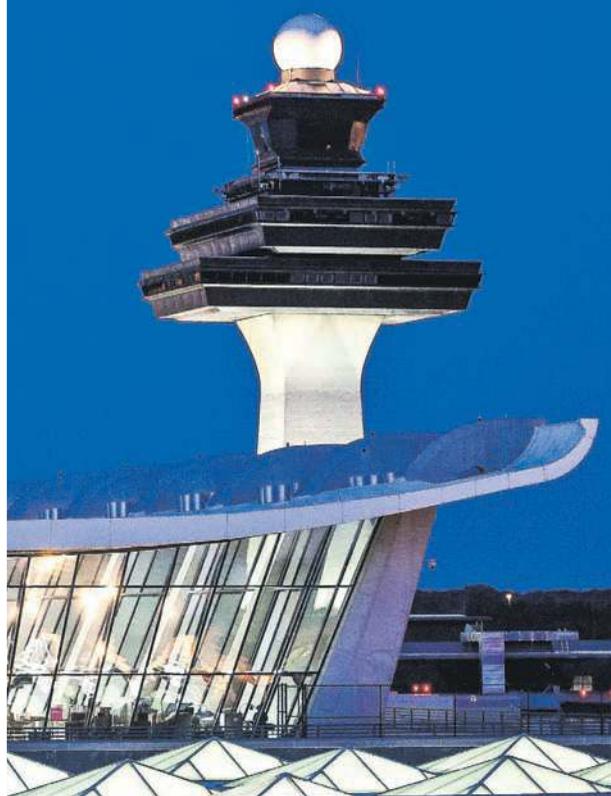
SPECIAL SECTION

Minority Business Leader Awards

Learn about our 25 new honorees and take a look back at previous leaders as we celebrate our 10th year. **INSIDE**



HOW OUR AIRPORTS STACK UP



Dulles ranks highly for operational efficiency, but Reagan and BWI earn better marks for the flying experience.

SPECIAL REPORT | PAGE 32



HOW I...

BEAT GOLIATH TO THE PUNCH 44

INNERLOOP

Billionaires' row

Can you name the 11 local executives who made Forbes' list of the richest people in the world? (Hint: One recently moved to D.C.) **SARA GILGORE, 4**

TOPSHELF

A new test kitchen

The owners of a well-known food truck and retail operation have leased a former warehouse in Northeast for the city's latest food incubator. **REBECCA COOPER, 6**

HEALTH

A salvo from Gray

With Vincent Gray proposing to build a new hospital at St. E's, a showdown with Muriel Bowser could be looming. **TINA REED, 14**

REAL ESTATE INC.

Wegmans? Maybe!

Yes, Roadside Development confirms it's talking to the beloved grocer for the Fannie Mae site. **DANIEL J. SERNOVITZ, 24**



EXECUTIVE PROFILE

MANY HAPPY RETURNS 46



► Most expensive homes **36**

► **List Extra:** Keeping up with Kalorama **40**

► Largest engineering firms **42**

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TAPPED OUT

Why a 'Top Brewers' list lacks D.C. names

The Brewers Association came out with its annual list of the nation's top craft brewing companies last week, and it might have left some D.C. beer fans scratching their heads. D.C.'s beer scene is growing exponentially and winning all types of awards, so how come no area breweries made the list?

The short answer: It's because the list is ranked by volume. So with Yuengling and Sam Adams' Boston Beer Co. topping the list – yes, they're still considered craft breweries at their massive scale – even Greater Washington's largest breweries are still a far cry from brewing at that kind of capacity.

The last company on the top craft breweries list, No. 50, is BJ's Brewery, the Huntington Beach, California company behind more than 170 locations of BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse around the U.S. BJ's, which is a public company, brewed just more than 60,000 barrels of beer in 2016 between its in-house and third-party brewing operations, according to its Securities and Exchange Commission filing.

In contrast, Port City Brewing Co. in Alexandria, one of the D.C. area's largest breweries, did 17,000 barrels



FILE PHOTO

Even with its new brewing line, D.C. Brau wouldn't crack the top 50 craft breweries in the U.S. by volume.

D.C. Brau, the other elder statesman of the region's modern brewing scene, did just over 15,000 barrels last year.

Both Port City and D.C. Brau have expansions planned, though even with those capacity increases they wouldn't break the existing "top 50" threshold. Port City, which announced last year that it would open a satellite brew- house in a warehouse down the road from its existing Alexandria facility, expects to be at about 35,000 barrels

per year after the expansion.

With its new brewing line, D.C. Brau said it would up its capacity by 360 percent during the next decade, which would put it at a little more than 55,000 barrels. But that's not until 10 years from now, at which point, surely, other breweries that made the list will have ramped up production as well.

Brewery expansion in the D.C. area is hampered by high real estate costs, along with other headwinds. But not making the list with some of their behemoth brethren isn't necessarily a problem for Washington's breweries. (The one Maryland brewery that did make it is Flying Dog in Frederick at No. 32; Delaware's Dogfish Head also made the list at No. 23.) D.C. Brau has no current plans to go national, and neither does Port City.

"I'm not convinced that any of us, the local breweries, that is, aspire to being in the top 50," said Bill Butcher, Port City's founder. "I know that we don't. It's not a goal of ours."

Why's that?

"We like being a small, independent brewery," Butcher said. "We can be happy and profitable and remain small. We don't have to keep grow-

ing and growing to remain profitable, especially with all the costs associated with growth."

Though Port City may expand its reach within the Mid-Atlantic region after increasing brewing capacity – it currently distributes as far north as Connecticut and south to North Carolina – Butcher isn't looking to move much further beyond this region, he said.

But Port City doesn't necessarily have to move beyond the East Coast in order to continue growing.

"We're still finding more and more growth right here," Butcher said. That upside in the craft beer market could be why several major West Coast breweries are setting up shop here: Sierra Nevada, Stone and New Belgium are all opening outposts in either Virginia or North Carolina.

Those breweries, however, have all had years or decades on D.C.'s beer scene, which just formed in 2011. Stone Brewing, out of Escondido, California, opened in 1996. Sierra Nevada was founded in 1980.

"People forget how young D.C.'s craft beer scene is, and how small it still is," Butcher said.

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