

Update: Westfield shopping center to open in September

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It's taken 10 years, but in three months, San Francisco will have its [Bloomingdale's](#) and the old Emporium will open as the new Westfield San Francisco Centre.

The \$420 million project will add over 900,000 square feet of new retail, including a 357,000-square-foot Bloomingdale's flagship and nine-screen Century Theatre. It will also return to life a storied San Francisco building that for decades has sat empty on an important stretch of Market Street.

The long-stalled project broke ground in November 2003. Westfield and Forest City have completed major construction and the team is now tending to details like finishes and painting. All that remains is for tenants to complete their improvements in time for the September ribbon-cutting.

The 1.5 million-square-foot shopping center is 95 percent leased, with all signed tenants slated to open at once on Sept. 28.

The project is noteworthy because of Forest City's savvy in partnering with rival Westfield to move the project forward. And Westfield's clout in the mall world has meant that the project has signed some of the most coveted names in retail.

[American Eagle Outfitters](#) will introduce its brand-new concept, Martin + Osa, in San Francisco. [Abercrombie & Fitch](#) will open its first San Francisco Ruehl and Hollister stores at the mall, and [Gap Inc.](#) will introduce Forth & Towne to the Bay Area there. Almost half of the new tenants signed are entering the San Francisco market with Westfield.

The project will also feature a 30,000-square-foot Bristol Farms market in the lower level food emporium. The store will be Bristol Farms' first in Northern California, and the hope is that it will succeed as well as Whole Foods has in New York's Time Warner Center.

Other food offerings in the shopping center include fine-dining options from Bay Area locals such as Lark Creek Restaurant Group and Tom Colicchio of New York's Gramercy Tavern, among others.

To reach this point, the project was forced to abandon a four-star hotel tower and a pedestrian foot bridge linking the mall to a parking garage. But the loss of those will likely not affect attendance -- Westfield expects 25 million shoppers to visit the mall annually.

Then there are the desk-jockeys in the project's 235,000-square-foot office tower. San Francisco State University is the largest tenant signed so far with a 10-year lease for 107,000 square feet. The site will be SFSU's downtown campus and will house the school's M.B.A. and other advanced degree programs. SFSU will move in sometime in January 2007.

Westfield anticipates shoppers will spend \$600 million a year, bringing the city \$18 million in sales tax revenue and 1,400 new jobs.

-- Sarah Duxbury