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## Long-awaited St. Elmo Public Market in South Austin to open this year

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About half of the upcoming St. Elmo Public Market in South Austin is pre-leased to a variety of food and beverage retailers as shell and core construction finally nears completion, developers said.

The mixed-use project's centerpiece — a 40,000-square-foot market space crafted out of a 1950s warehouse and former bus manufacturing facility for Austin schools — is expected to be turned over to tenants for buildout in April, said Matt Roy, one of the developers of the project. It has been likened to the Pike Place Market in Seattle.

The St. Elmo market, which is south of Ben White Boulevard and bounded by Industrial Boulevard and South Congress Avenue, will open before the end of 2020, according to developers. Construction began in early 2018.

Brandon Bolin — partner with Addison, Texas-based Maker Bros. Inc., the lead developer of the project — said tenants have their own buildout schedules, but all are expected to open in the third quarter of the year.

The 12.5-acre site will also be home to a 385-unit apartment complex to the north of the public market and connected by a landscaped space for special events such as festivals and farmer's markets and a pedestrian thoroughfare lined with Spanish sycamore trees. To the south of the market will be a 105,000-square-foot office building. A plaza and playscapes will be installed at the front entrance of the market. A parking garage will also be constructed on the site.



ANDERSSON/WISE



St. Elmo Public Market is described by the developers as Austin's first authentic artisan food retail marketplace, where the developers and Steve Carlin, who specializes in developing artisan public markets, curated a lineup of destination-worthy food and beverage vendors and experiential retailers.

"We weren't looking to just do a carbon copy or a second location for a brand," Roy said, explaining that vendors will be new concepts from existing Austin companies, for example, the owners of Lick Honest Ice Creams will open a yet-be-named hot

and cold dessert restaurant at the market.

The market will resemble a food hall with communal seating and individual vendors selling their products from their own storefronts inside. These retailers, though, are going the extra mile, hiring architects to design their unique brick-and-mortar location.

Originally expected to be open by the second quarter of 2019, construction on the public market is a “massive undertaking” and experienced some delays due to the desire to preserve the original bus factory and lengthy permitting process, Bolin said in an email.

Roy said general contractor The Burt Group had to demolish about 300,000 square feet of the former manufacturing facility, and utilities to accommodate all of the tenants had to be run from South Congress Avenue.

### **The details**

At the market, Greater Goods Coffee Co. and Fire Dance Pizza will join other previously announced tenants: Mignette, a new large-scale bakery/modern diner concept from Michael Fojtasek, the chef behind Olamaie; a butcher shop and local produce concept from the founders of Salt & Time; Texas Hill Country Olive Company; Family Business Beer Company; and the new spinoff from Lick Honest Ice Creams.

The market will be the first brick-and-mortar location for Fire Dance Pizza from husband-and-wife team Shannon Wiener and Alex Webster. They started out selling their wood-fired pizza at farmer’s markets.

Greater Goods Coffee sells a curated selection of specialty coffees from around the world. Co-founders Trey Cobb and Khanh Trang opened their Dripping Springs roastery in 2015. It also has locations in East Austin and Bee Cave.

Michael Hsu Office of Architecture designed Greater Goods’ market space.

Roy said they have letters of intent from five other retailers. He said prospective tenants need to be high-caliber and have the employees and the capital to expand.

Mignette will be the largest tenant at the market, leasing 3,562 square feet. The butcher shop is taking 2,762 square feet.

“The St. Elmo Public Market is going to provide locally-sourced, fresh ingredients and products to an underserved area of South Austin,” Bolin said. “Ownership has embraced the industrial nature of the area, which is evident by the preservation and restoration of the Austin bus factory.”

The industrial elements of the former factory will be retained in the finished market, including the original brick, concrete floors and exposed metal.

Under the terms of the lease, tenants will be required to be open every day of the year except for Christmas and Thanksgiving, Roy said. Most will also be required to be open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Some, though, will open early for breakfast or stay open later.

### **What’s next?**

Construction on the apartments, the second phase of the project, is slated to break ground in the second quarter of 2020, Bolin said.

Roy said construction on the office building could start after a lease is signed with a major tenant. The developers are in talks with a co-working company to take the majority of the space.

Andersson / Wise is the architect behind the market and office building. WDG Architecture designed the apartments. Dallas-based Hocker Design Group is the landscape architect.

Fenix Global Investments, based in Singapore and Hong Kong, is the equity partner.

Next door to the project, another apartment building and a boutique hotel are planned from other developers, Roy said. Details on those projects weren’t immediately available.

Also adjacent to the site at 4401 S. Congress Ave., Cypress Real Estate Advisors is developing a 275-unit apartment building. All but 27 of the units can only be rented to tenants earning incomes at or below 120% of the median income.

The completion of St. Elmo Public Market is expected to trigger other redevelopment of former industrial space in the district, south of Ben White Boulevard, as construction of apartments, retail and flex space continues to be pushed south.

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