

# A cathedral for food

## Mixed-use regeneration on San Francisco's waterfront

The San Francisco Ferry Building, with its grand clock-tower inspired by the cathedral in Seville, has been a major transit hub for more than a century. In its heyday it saw 50 million passenger movements each year, and it is still in use by commuters. This iconic landmark has recently been transformed into a world-class showcase for the region's finest food, as well as a prize downtown office location. Locum's Principal in North America, [Anna Brown](#), reports on the West Coast's newest destination.



*Below: Joining the diagonal Market Street to the waterfront, the Ferry Building's tower serves as the meeting point for gatherings as frequent as the weekly farmers' market (a pride of the area) or as unpredictable as the many demonstrations and parades that traditionally form here to march to the Civic Center.*

Photo courtesy of Wilson Equity



Despite its illustrious history and dramatic demeanour, in 1957 this San Francisco landmark was hidden (from the City-side) behind a flyover. But with the removal of the Embarcadero Freeway following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the Ferry Building is once again San Francisco's focal point, joining Market Street to the waterfront. Now, after a 10-year effort to transform this once industrial area, the Ferry Building is about to emerge from construction to claim its place as a gem on the water, midway between the new PacBell Ballpark and Fisherman's Wharf (left).

Restoring the Ferry Building to its historic role as a bustling transportation hub and elegant centerpiece of the waterfront is one of the highest priorities of San Francisco's Waterfront Land Use Plan. The Ferry Building is complemented by the redesigned Embarcadero corridor, now a continuous pedestrian promenade along the water, adorned with public art and adopted by skateboarders.

Downtown workers, residents and visitors will doubtless soon be flocking as well, to visit the waterfront's refurbished and expanded ferry terminals, food retail and restaurants, conference facilities and appealing public realm. This is all part of a highly conscious plan set in motion by the Port of San Francisco, which aims to expand and connect water and land transport systems, and to re-establish the downtown waterfront as a tourist destination.

The Port laid the groundwork for this transformation, including seismic upgrades, design studies, and significant seed funding to make the Ferry Building renovation a reality. The Port also had to vacate its own offices in the Ferry Building, for which it additionally commissioned the rehabilitation of Pier 1 a few yards to the north.

### Project structure

As site owner, the Port of San Francisco entered into a carefully negotiated partnership with developers Wilson/Equity Office and financier Equity Office Properties, the latter already a significant property owner in the Financial District. Despite the termination of the partnership between the two private sector entities and the disbanding of Wilson/Equity Office (due to the Bay Area's dormant office market), the Ferry Building project stayed more or less on track.

With the formation of Wilson Meany Sullivan by principals from Wilson/Equity Office, Chris Meany retained his role as developer of the Ferry Building Marketplace. Wilson/Equity Office has retained responsibility for letting the building's office space, a much less successful role to date. Equity Office Properties will take over management of the property once the \$90 million redevelopment is complete, and both retail and office elements are initially let.

## A gourmet terminus

San Francisco architect Cathy Simons (of SMWM) saw the project as an opportunity to return the landmark to the public realm. Many of the design's central inspirations stem directly from this sense of civic endowment, and focus on the historic hall or 'nave' that runs the length of the building. When the building reopens, the nave will again be one of the West's most dramatic interior public spaces.

With 'slow' transport goes 'slow food', a West Coast trend which revels in authentic local food culture, organic produce, artisan chocolate-makers, and the like. The ground floor of the Ferry Building will showcase this vibrant and dynamic Bay Area food culture. Restaurants will be located at the four corners of the Ferry Building's ground floor, and on the interior street defined by the Nave will be a collection of high-quality Bay Area food retailers, with an emphasis on food that is produced in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The balance of the ground floor will be a market hall in the style of Peck in Milan, Pike Place in Seattle, and Harrod's in London. There are four larger areas: the Farmers Market will be housed in a dramatic interior arcade; a second arcade will feature a revolving offering of seasonal, artisan products from the region (such as preserves, olive oils); a large market hall will offer meat, fish and poultry; and a second market hall is dedicated to wine. Smaller individual shops selling products like cheese and chocolates will complement the four larger areas. Finally, interspersed among the larger spaces is a series of very small niches (each about 300 square feet), which are intended to offer a vast assortment of unique food-related items like specialty cooking utensils, cookbooks and so on. Throughout all the retail shops will be opportunities to sit and eat food prepared from the market.

The development team is hopeful that, fully populated, the Ferry Building Marketplace will be a world-class market hall with a selection of the best of the Bay Area's food culture, from restaurants to fine fishmongers to bakeries and chocolate shops, and the critical mass to attract visits from San Francisco residents and visitors. Ferry passengers, many of whom live in upscale Marin County and commute to San Francisco's Financial District, are a daily captive market for these perfectly targeted retailers.

## Anchor tenant

The Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market will move the immensely popular Saturday market to its new home at the Ferry Building in late April, and will add markets on additional days of the week. Farmers will sell their wares from the outdoor plaza overlooking the Bay, the indoor/outdoor North and South Arcades, and from the sidewalks along the Embarcadero. The Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market, a project of the Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture

(CUESA), is a nationally acclaimed venue for the finest fresh and prepared foods - largely organic. Currently, as many as 5,000 faithful shoppers attend the market each week.

CUESA and the developer appear to have built a strong working relationship, despite early suspicions, and have worked out a practical arrangement for the Market in the Ferry Building. The Saturday market will have more space than it has now and will be two thirds on the Plaza and one third on the Embarcadero under the arcades of the building. It will also span the Bay side of the building to the rear. Other days, farmers, like those at Pike's Market, will have day tables under the roof but will not be totally enclosed. These will be in the interior and exterior of the arcades. At present, table fees to the farmers in the Ferry Building will remain the same.

## Other tastes

Several successful local entrepreneurs will have permanent stores in the building. A few are featured here...

### Acme Bread Company

Acme uses only organic flour and works closely with farmers in evaluating and selecting the grain varieties for its flour each year. The hearth ovens are another factor in the outstanding taste and texture of Acme Bread.

### Capay Fruits & Vegetables

Capay Fruits & Vegetables is a 240-acre, family-owned, organic farm nestled in the Capay Valley, 85 miles northeast of San Francisco. Founded with five acres in 1974 by Kathleen Barsotti, the farm was one of the first to embrace the emerging organic movement. Today, her four sons sell at several farmers' markets in the Bay area, and run *Farm Fresh To You*, a 500-member Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscription produce delivery service.

### Cowgirl Creamery's Artisan Cheese Shop

Selections will be available from Jean d'Alos in France, Neals Yard's English Farmhouse cheese, and many other highly regarded artisanal producers from the United States, Canada, Italy, Spain and Greece. Proprietors Sue Conley and Peggy Smith will also feature cheese and crème fraiche under their own label from their Point Reyes-based Cowgirl Creamery cheese-making facility. The Ferry Building Marketplace shop will sell related accoutrements, such as cheese tools and boards, and will have a selection of books on cheese. A dairy bar will offer milk, yogurt, and fresh cheese along with fruit and local preserves.

### Frog Hollow Farm

Farmer Al grows 25 varieties of peaches along with apricots, cherries, pluots, table grapes, plums, Asian and European pears, and nectarines. The jams, chutneys and marmalades are made from tree-ripened fruit prepared by Courchesne's partner in business and life, Pastry Chef Becky Smith. Partner Sarah Coddington is the third generation of her family to work on the Frog Hollow Farm land.

### Golden Gate Meat Company

Golden Gate Meat Company is a family-owned business that was founded in 1977. The company's motto is 'Service with quality, the old-fashioned way.' With a growing wholesale business and line of

natural and organic meats flourishing, the Golden Gate Meat Company is looking forward to opening a retail shop at the Ferry Building Marketplace. Together, Jim Offenbach and his brother, 'Chef' Chris Offenbach will offer the public the same products that they have offered to the trade for the past 25 years. Their butcher shop and charcuterie will carry only natural and organic meats - beef, veal, pork, lamb, poultry, wild game, offal, and smoked meats - featuring *Meyer Natural Angus Beef* and *Green Circle Organic Beef*. They will have a visible dry aging room that will age beef and local lamb for up to 21 days.

### Hog Island Oyster Company

In 1983 Hog Island Oyster Company began farming oysters in the tiny hamlet of Marshall on scenic coast Highway One. Today, Hog Island grows and sells over 10 million oysters a year, supplying shellfish to wholesalers, restaurants, and gourmet food stores around the country. Hog Island will open a 25-seat, U-shaped oyster bar with windows fronting to the Bay-side north end of the Ferry Building. In addition to fresh, locally raised oysters on the half-shell, the menu will include barbecued oysters, steamed clams, and other offerings such as chowder and oyster stew. Beer and wine will be available. Fresh oysters will be available to take home certain days of the week.

### Peet's Coffee & Tea

In April 1966, Alfred Peet opened the first Peet's - a coffee store with a roasting machine - at the corner of Walnut and Vine in Berkeley. Mr Peet grew up in the family's coffee and tea business in Alkmaar, Holland. After World War II, Peet worked in the tea trade in Indonesia. At age 35, he moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and later opened his shop, roasting coffee in the distinctive style he learned from his family.

### Scharffen Berger Chocolate Maker

Scharffen Berger moved into its permanent home, a 27,000-square-foot, 1906 vintage-brick warehouse in Berkeley, California, in 2001. Scharffen Berger's bean-to-bar chocolate manufacturing process employs vintage European chocolate-making equipment.

### Taylor's Refresher

The original Taylor's Refresher, a roadside eatery located on Highway 29 in St. Helena, was founded in 1949. When wine critic Robert Parker named Taylor's one of his Most Memorable Meals of 1999, 'all hell broke loose', according to co-owner Joel Gott.

Photo by Tom Paiva



### The Ferry Building Marketplace

**The Building:** Built in 1898, the Ferry Building and its 240-foot tall clock tower is the iconic landmark of the San Francisco waterfront. The dramatic heart of the building is a three-storey tall, sky lit hall, known as the Nave. It runs the entire 660-foot length of the building. The ground floor of the Ferry Building is devoted to a 65,000-square-foot public food market showcasing the very best of the Bay Area's world-renowned food community. The second and third floors of the building house 175,000 square feet of office space and the ceremonial hearing room of the San Francisco Port Commission. Key design elements include:

**The Nave:** The Ferry Building Marketplace is organised along a dramatic indoor street called the Nave. It runs the entire 660-foot length of the building. Natural daylight fills the Nave from the steel-trussed glass ceiling.

**Nave Shops:** Dozens of specialty food producers - such as a chocolate-maker, pastry shop, and olive oil merchant - will have shops that line each side of the 'street' of the Nave.

**Market Halls:** Two great, open Market Halls are situated behind the Nave on the Bay side of the building. In the design tradition of classic public markets, the high-ceilinged halls will offer a complete array of high quality food and drink.

**Restaurants and Cafés:** There will be two city-side cafés, one at each end of the Ferry Building along the Embarcadero, and two magnificent Bay-side restaurants with unparalleled sweeping views of the waterfront.

**City-side Arcades:** There are two open air arcades where vendors from the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market will sell the best of the area's produce and regional specialties.

**Bay-side Plazas:** The wide esplanade on the water-side of the building has been reopened to pedestrians, many of whom will be en route to and from the adjacent Downtown Ferry Terminal. The popular Saturday Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market will move to its permanent home on the large plaza on the southeast side of the building.