

SOUTHERN MARKET



HISTORIC REVIVAL

134-YEAR-OLD BUILDING REPURPOSED AS RESTAURANT INCUBATION SPACE, COMMUNITY HUB



TOP PHOTO: GREGORY J. SCOTT, ABOVE AND BELOW: SUZETTE WENGER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Southern Market, at the corner of Vine and South Queen streets, is slated for its grand reopening Thursday. The first floor houses spots for 10 food vendors, with seven of the spots filled; a bar named Bar 1888, a nod to the year the market opened; a coffee shop and a pizza shop. The 7,600-square-foot space can seat 250. The owners of Willow Valley transformed the C. Emlen Urban designed space into a new marketplace for people to gather in the heart of Lancaster city.

CHAD UMBLE
CUMBLE@LNPNEWS.COM

In the memories of Lancaster city residents younger than 40, the only market-related thing about the stately red brick building at the corner of Queen and Vine streets is its name.

But 36 years after the historic Southern Farmers Market closed and the building became picturesque office space, food vendors are returning as the centerpiece of a long-imagined revival.

While the “new” Southern Market maintains the character of the 134-year-old building, the former produce, meat and bakery stands will be replaced with food vendors offering globally inspired meals next to a large, central bar serving

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cocktails, wine and beer.

“It’s a dining experience,” said Mary Ellen Davis, Southern Market’s manager. “Think of it as a (large) dining room.”

The new Southern Market, which debuts to the public at 4 p.m. Thursday, is being cheered by city officials and downtown boost-
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The first floor houses a live mural that hangs from the western side of the dining room.

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mers who see the revitalized market house as pushing downtown's prosperity farther south while enhancing a key intersection one block away from the heart of the city, Penn Square.

On-site support and business training give food startups selected for the market some extra chances to succeed.

"Vendors can continue to hone their craft and play with recipes so they can become ready to go out on their own," Davis said.

With customer seating for 250 in the 7,600-square-foot food hall, Southern Market will debut with seven vendors working out of spaces that ring the 30-seat central bar.

Three vendor spaces are still available. There's also a coffee shop in the front and a pizza shop in a street-side retail space.

In addition, there are three community rooms in the back and 19 small, rentable offices ringing a second-floor mezzanine.

The transformation of the 20,000-square-foot Southern Market into a food hall meant to be a community hub is the culmination of a series of plans by a variety of city officials, downtown boosters and entrepreneurs.

But after some starts and stops and apparent dead ends, remaking Southern Market as a food hall has only become a reality now because of the surprise entrance of a well-capitalized backer: Willow Valley Communities.

"When something like this is done, people say, 'Well of course, this had to happen.' But there were so many points along the way where it seemed like it wasn't going to happen," said Dan Jurman,



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Southern Market is full of shoppers in 1962.

who, as president of the nonprofit Lancaster Equity, brought Willow Valley Communities to help with its aspirational plans for Southern Market.

As it was quietly making separate plans for a \$90 million-plus, 20-story apartment called Mosaic at Queen and Vine Streets, Willow Valley Communities learned of Lancaster Equity's plans to re-

vive the historic market across the street. Willow Valley Communities eventually became the leading partner, providing the expertise and capital to bring the \$7 million project across the finish line.

"It just feels like there is a turn here from the Lancaster of yesterday to the Lancaster of today that has an element of our diversity, and also has an economic develop-

ment aspect," said Lancaster city Mayor Danene Sorace. "To find the partnership between Lancaster Equity and Willow Valley — that was all just good timing."

Market history

Southern Market, the first major structure designed by renowned local architect C. Emlen Urban,

IF YOU GO

● **Address:** 100 S. Queen St., Lancaster

● **Hours:** noon-9 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, noon-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

● **Info.:** Southernmarketlancaster.com, facebook.com/SouthernMarketLancaster

opened in 1888 as a Wednesday and Saturday farmers market. By 1986, when it closed, it was only operating on Saturdays, and more than half its stands were vacant.

After Southern Market's last day April 26, 1986, many standholders moved to Lancaster Central Market, a Tuesday and Friday farmers market, which then began opening on Saturdays. Despite ideas for a different kind of redevelopment, the Southern Market building, which was owned by Lancaster city, was subsequently renovated as offices for the Lancaster Chamber and the city, which also had its council chambers there.

After an annex was built at City Hall on North Duke Street, city functions moved out and then Lancaster Chamber left in 2017 for new offices on East King Street. Assets, a nonprofit that aids budding entrepreneurs, remained a tenant and was the first to float the idea of turning the property into a food hall.

But when the city issued a request for Southern Market proposals in late 2017, a food hall plan was not among the submitted options, and the city tentatively selected a \$1.2 million bid from a Maryland-based company that wanted to turn Southern Market into a showcase for homebuilding and renovation.

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