

Nonprofit hub to open in Berkeley

San Francisco Business Times - by [Sarah Duxbury](#)



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A green nonprofit center has grown in Berkeley.

Next month, after two years and \$28 million, the David Brower Center will open its 50,000 square feet of office and public space.

About 55 percent of the 24,000 square feet of ultra-green office space has been leased at rents between \$26 and \$32 per square foot, almost all to nonprofits. Letters of intent have been signed on about 20 percent of the unleased space, and Amy Tobin, executive director of the David Brower Center, expects to be fully leased by July.

A restaurant called Terrain will open in a 3,200-square-foot ground floor space in the fall.

Tobin anticipates that the building will receive LEED Platinum, the highest certification, from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Named for the man many see as the founder of the modern environmental movement, the center was envisioned as a home for environmental and social activism.

“The idea is to stabilize and support the nonprofit community with long-term leases and opportunities for collaboration,” Tobin said, noting that shared kitchens, bike parking, sofas in public areas and wi-fi will encourage workers to interact and perhaps share ideas. “We are using real estate as a strategy to create a stable asset for the progressive community.”

In addition to three upper floors of offices, two conference rooms totaling over 2,500 square feet and a 180-seat theater will be available to the community to rent. It also has a ground-floor art gallery.

“The Brower Center is a cutting-edge model of a nonprofit center,” said China Brotsky, senior vice president at [Tides Foundation](#) and managing director of Tides Shared Spaces, which has 150 member centers nationwide, including the Brower Center. Such centers “provide affordable space, but also visibility and legitimacy.”

Chief among Brower’s charms, and how it advances the nonprofit center concept, Brotsky said, are its uber-green construction, how it has partnered with the city of Berkeley, with a housing developer and with retailers, the high quality facilities, and how the Center has used different financing vehicles to build the project.

Founded in 2002, the Brower Center has raised \$11.5 million of its \$13.5 million capital campaign target, but has also relied on conventional financing and new market tax credits to cover the full \$28 million project cost.

The center is part of a larger redevelopment that also includes 97 units of affordable family housing with retail built by Resources for Community Development and an underground city-owned garage.

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