

Take a sneak peek at West Elm furniture store set to open in midtown's Ice Blocks

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Midtown's fast-growing Ice Blocks is getting another trendy new tenant: West Elm, the international home decor store, is opening Thursday.

The company features pieces with a clean, sharp, modern aesthetic. Near the middle of the store, there is a coffee table that embodies the store's design credo - its a simple, rectangular piece made of light wood, with the grain variations still clearly visible. It sits on top of thin rods of blackened steel, giving it an industrial feel. But it's practical, too - the top of the table pops up to reveal ample storage space, and doubles as a tabletop to work or eat on.

"What sets us apart, really, is that these pieces are multifunctional," said Andres Ortega, a spokesperson for West Elm.

The coffee table is \$599. Smaller pieces in the store – plates, mugs – run as low as \$6.

In addition to furniture, the store offers free design consultations, where visitors can come in and get advice on which furniture works best for their floor plans.

"We believe in letting our customers pick and choose the product that lets them express their personal style at home," Ortega said.

West Elm also dedicates a section of the store to local makers and artists. On a table under a "West Elm Local" sign, visitors can buy handcrafted soap, stationery, bowls, side tables and more, most of it sustainably sourced from Northern California products. For many of these small artists, West Elm provides a platform to distribute their work more broadly.

Meghan Wright, a longtime Sacramento resident and owner of Fig to Feathers Farm, a company specializing in handcrafted skincare, said that being asked to sell her work at West Elm made her "giddy."

And for Wright, watching the evolution over the past decade of the R Street corridor where West Elm is located – and then being a part of that evolution – is exciting.

West Elm's opening comes on the heels of many others in Ice Blocks, a multiuse development with shopping, eateries and residential apartments. New restaurant Beast + Bounty just opened across the street, next door is the new Device Brewing, and the clothing store Bonobos is a short walk away. Upstairs is Ice House, residential apartments that come at a steep price.

"We're very honored to be a part of this new community," Ortega said. "There are a lot of like-minded brands and small business in this area, that it felt like a really good fit for us."

The new West Elm expects plenty of traffic from new and potential Ice House residents. In fact, West Elm has been outfitting apartments in Ice House for potential residents to look at, from studios to one-bedrooms. In one 600-square-foot loft in Ice House, two of West Elm's leather swivel chairs facing another industrial-style coffee table and a small flat screen TV. Wine bottles sit on the white kitchen tabletop. A side table, handmade by local artist Trent Dean, sits in a corner. A small dining table stands flush to the far right wall complete with plates and place mats.

Kim Anderson, general manager of West Elm, described the apartment's style as industrial but contemporary. "We wanted it to be comfortable and relaxed," she said.

Kristen Leon, vice president of operations at Heller Pacific, the company in charge of Ice House, appreciates how the simplicity of the West Elm furniture opens up the space of the apartments, and gives residents a glimpse into how they might live. "The spaces are great because they're so livable," Leon said.

With West Elm just downstairs, Ice House residents can build an apartment to match the preview room that Leon shows potential leasers. Ortega and Anderson are hoping they choose to do exactly that.



Rachel Jordan, a home stylist at West Elm, wipes a table Wednesday in the store in Sacramento's Ice Blocks development on R Street. The furniture retailer's grand opening is Thursday. Daniel Kim dkim@sacbee.com



Cameron Hinke, a sales associate for West Elm on R Street in Sacramento's Ice Blocks development, uses a lint roller Wednesday to ready a display for the store's grand opening on Thursday. Daniel Kim dkim@sacbee.com



A worker prepares displays Wednesday at the new West Elm store on R Street in midtown Sacramento's Ice Blocks development. Daniel Kim dkim@sacbee.com