

Somerset North — as it grew

Huge clouds of dust began swirling over the northeast corner of Big Beaver and Coolidge two years ago this month as construction crews began clearing and preparing the site for the \$200 million, three-level Somerset Collection North.

At the time it was referred to only as Somerset North, the companion to the Somerset Collection on the south side of Big Beaver. But as work on "North" progressed, those making the decisions for co-owners Forbes/Cohen Properties and Frankel Associates announced that Somerset Collection would be the name for both — with "South" and "North" used to refer to them individually.

The new mall at 940,000 square feet is almost twice the size of its companion, bringing the total square footage of the "Collection" to more than 1.4 million. The addition of 112 new stores brings the total to 181.

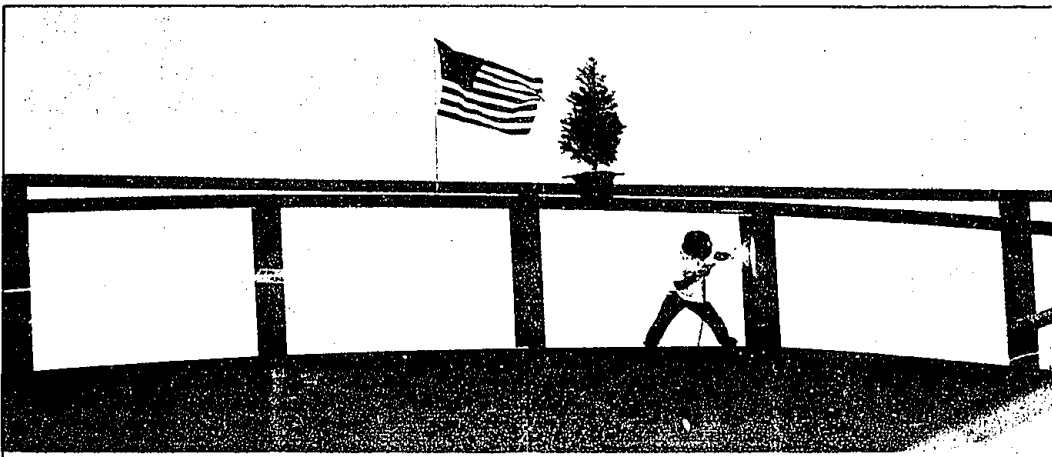
One of the main features is a 700-foot long moving skywalk spanning Big Beaver, there to deliver shoppers from one mall to the other. Shoppers will be able to arrive and park in outdoor parking lots or covered structures at either mall, and travel back and forth on the skywalk over the six-lane boulevard.

Finishing touches are under way as the grand opening nears.

"North" was designed by architect JPRA Architects/Peterhansrea Designs of Farmington Hills; landscape designed by John Grissim & Associates of Farmington Hills; general contractor Perrini of Framingham, MA.; managing partner Forbes/Cohen Properties of Southfield.

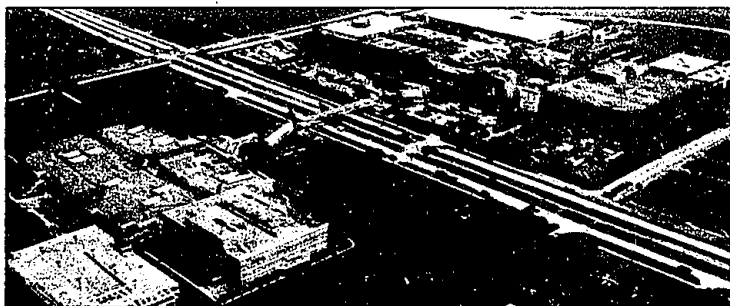


In the beginning: An early frost can be seen as cranes and crews begin building Somerset "North." At the time the opening target was the fall of 1996. That date was rescheduled to Aug. 16. Above, trucks arrive at the site with concrete beams for the mall parking structure. There are 7,000 parking spaces in outside parking areas and inside the covered parking structure.



STAFF FILE PHOTOS

Tradition: The flag and the tree at the highest point of the structure — the topping off — signifies the time the top beam of a building goes into place. It is August, 1996.



In progress: The aerial photograph above shows the Somerset Collection at the midpoint of the construction of Somerset North in the top right corner in August 1995. At right earlier this year, Hudson's department store, the anchor on the east side of the mall, begins to take shape. The other major anchor is Nordstrom on the west side.



Better than TV: Hanging a skywalk 700 feet across Big Beaver, also under construction, drew an audience during a July heat wave last summer.



Days to go: Workers go at a feverish pace as opening day draws close. This photo of the front of the new mall was taken last week.

STAFF PHOTO BY JERRY RYDERLAND