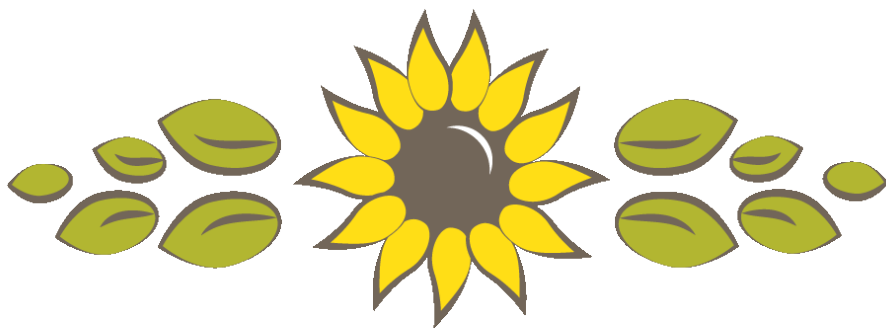


CHEQUAMEGON FOOD CO-OP

Five-year Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Written by Kiersten Galazen, General Manager
with input from Co-op management team, board of director and staff

January 2023



CHEQUAMEGON FOOD CO-OP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

executive summary

profile

market analysis

ends statement

the plan

- local support

- co-op pride

- fair treatment of workers

- healthful living

- environment

- other key initiatives



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early in 2022, the Chequamegon Food Co-op's (CFC) board of directors charged General manager, Kiersten Galazen with creating a strategic plan.

The first part of the process was for the board to review and update the co-op's Ends Statement. Co-op management then enlisted the input of the ownership through a week-long in-store open space event and a third party administered shopper survey. Meanwhile, the board of directors tabled in-store in conjunction with the open space. Later, the co-op management team held brainstorming sessions around the various points of the co-ops Ends Statement. The management team worked together to write a shared vision based on the idea of, "the co-op in 5 years." Meetings were held for all interested co-op staff to talk about the shopper survey and the strategic plan. The board discussed various portions of action items they felt were key to the strategic plan at their 2022 annual retreat. Through all these various forms of input, a plan was formed.

Checking in on our plan's progress with the management team and BOD will happen every six months, aligning with February's ends report and then in August. The plan will be reassessed and updated as needed.



PROFILE

History

The Chequamegon Food Co-op began humbly in the basement of a local house as a buying club. The co-op became incorporated on March 9, 1976. Over the years the store changed location several times, coming to rest at 215 Chapple Avenue in 1986. In 1999, 213 Chapple Avenue was purchased to expand the store. Since then, the co-op has continued to grow—its active membership base is now over 3000 households. The co-op joined forces with other co-ops as part of the National Co-operative Grocers, a co-operative which helps strengthen member co-operatives and enables our store to procure lower food prices and services. In 2011, the co-op purchased 700 West Main Street with plans to open an expanded store in the future. The new store opened there in the fall of 2014. The expansion allowed the co-op to triple retail space, expanding on all existing departments, offer a deli and seating area as well as a community room and parking lot.

Location

Chequamegon Food Co-op is located on the corner of Main Street and Chapple Avenue in Ashland, Wisconsin at 700 Main Street West. The location has 6,000 square feet of retail space.

Mission

The Chequamegon Food Co-op is dedicated to providing ecologically sound foods and products, the production and quality of which promote the health of our members and our community.



MARKET ANALYSIS

National Trends

Everyone from large retailers (such as Walmart) to traditional grocers (like SuperOne Foods) and right down to the average convenience store continue to expand their organic and natural offerings. Because natural and organic products are a smaller percentage of their product mix, they keep margins lower which keeps prices lower. Local however, still remains a relatively un-targeted niche market.

According to the Organic Trade Association, in 2020, with the immediate onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, organic produce sales increased more than 50 percent as people stocked up on groceries and then lowered to a 20 percent increase in sales by the spring of 2020. More recently in 2021 their survey showed consumers returning to a buy-as-you-need shopping pattern. Organic food sales had 2% growth in from 2020 to 2021 totaling \$57.5 billion in sales in the U.S. Progressive Grocer gives an overview of the 2021 FMI Shopper Trends Report that confirms shopper trends have been reshaped in line with the recent pandemic:

“The research points to the surge in at-home meals, the spike in e-commerce and the evolution of health and wellness as the most notable trends.

‘Throughout this past year, American grocery consumers have developed a deeper relationship with their kitchens, increased their healthy eating consciousness, and have learned new ways to shop,’ ... “Looking ahead, we expect many of these trends to continue.’

Even as masks come off and the country opens up, consumers are likely to continue to make more meals at home. The new U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends report found that 49% of consumers are cooking or preparing their own meals more now than before the pandemic and 42% say that they “like or love” to shop for groceries.”

Meanwhile post-pandemic inflation has hit every consumer sector but is particularly felt by grocery shoppers. According to the Catalina Shopping Basket, prices for groceries rose 15% compared to 3rd quarter 2021. Some categories were particularly hard hit such as yogurt (+21%), cereal (+20%) and hand & bath soaps (+19%). Though the pandemic is waning, food pricing remains volatile and is largely tied to energy costs along with the ever-increasing climate induced weather events. According to Andrew Harig of FMI this is not likely to improve in 2023.

Richard Volpe, PhD, professor at Cal Poly maintains that due to climate disruption, the supply chain needs to adapt in terms of how and where food is grown. The time is now.



Regional Trends

The 2018 Northland College Center for Rural Communities Foods Survey found:

“...that almost 92 percent of households would like more of the food they purchase to be produced within the two counties. This result is consistent with a previous study conducted by the CRC which found that over 90 percent of Chequamegon Bay Food Co-op members would like the food they purchase to be produced within 100 miles from where they live (Hofsetdt et al., 2015).”

However, this high demand is unfilled. The survey shows that many foods that consumers would like to purchase locally are either not sold at stores they shop at or plain not produced locally. The three primary suggestions to increase affordable local foods are: “1) identify products for which the premium for local is small and make these products available where people shop, 2) leverage federal assistance programs to reduce prices for lower-income qualifying households, and 3) build community programs that offset the cost of production and local distribution, or that support a sliding-scale for consumers.”

A 2021 University of Wisconsin-Madison industry status report found that Wisconsin remains with a high yield of organic products, WI having the second highest number of organic farms in the country second to California. Eighty percent of these farms plan to maintain or increase their organic production. The UW report also identifies that:

“Resilience is a characteristic inherent to many aspects of organic agriculture, with its emphasis on integrating diverse production and market approaches, building soil health, and adopting systems-based approaches to management. While organic farmers and the organic industry have recently faced several challenges testing that resilience—including regulatory enforcement, lack of farm and processing infrastructure, adaptation to extreme weather, and the COVID-19 pandemic—Wisconsin organic agriculture continues to demonstrate its strength.”

According to the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture (the most recent available), Wisconsin has seen a 7% decrease in farms, however both Ashland and Bayfield counties each experienced an increase the number of farms. Ashland seeing 41% increase (187 to 263), and Bayfield 21% increase (352 to 427) since 2012.



Co-op Trends

Based on our Spring 2022 shopper survey, our current shoppers are very price sensitive. Just over 23 percent of our shoppers say that our prices meet their needs well or very well. Arguably, the survey came at a time when shoppers were really starting to feel the pinch of the current post-pandemic inflation, but unfortunately, past surveys confirm that this is an ongoing issue. Responses also show an increase in willingness to shop at the co-op because it is a co-operatively owned business, though interestingly, perhaps less so than the average co-op shopper nationwide. Our customers are primarily looking for a reliable supply of fresh and local foods at affordable prices.

Our survey also highlighted two areas where our shoppers desired improvements. These were the need for improved offerings and execution in our fresh departments, particularly meat and deli and increased local product offerings.

Additionally, the survey asked our shoppers to weigh in on potential initiatives for the co-op's next strategic plan. The two initiatives with the greatest support were for CFC to 1) do more to support local production and the local food system, and 2) offer more lower-priced products and shopper discounts.

Our co-op shoppers continue to age with over 36% of the respondents to the survey over the age of 65. Interestingly, around one-in-three respondents (29%) have been members of Chequamegon for less than three

years or are not currently members. This speaks to the large influx of people moving to the area that we have seen in conjunction with the pandemic, which is reflected in our new owner numbers since 2021.

The co-op pulls shoppers and owners from a very wide area of northern WI. According to the shopper survey, only 27% of our shoppers live within 5 miles of the store. David Trechter of the UWRF Survey Research Center suggests that this is unusual and provides unique challenges:

“Only one other co-op in the national database has a lower proportion of shoppers who live within 5 miles of the store. CFC is in a rural area with many seasonal residents, so a dispersed shopping public is not unexpected, but Chequamegon stands out even with that caveat. Having a higher proportion of shoppers close to one's store is a good thing in that shopping is more convenient and patrons aren't as likely to drive past as many alternative suppliers of groceries on their way to their co-op. Thus, the dispersed nature of CFC's shoppers presents challenges to the Co-op.”



Sales

	Fiscal Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022
Sales \$	\$5,429,603	\$5,783,798	\$5,980,160
Sales growth	19.6%	6.7%	3.4%
Average basket \$	NA	\$41.21	\$41.12
Average weekly customer count	NA	2,716	2710
Gross margin %	38.9%	38.38%	TBA %
Margin minus labor (MML) after taxes & benefits	18.7%	18.2%	TBA%
EBITDAP	14.4%	10.6%	9.6%
Average inventory days on hand	27	26	31
Patronage issued	\$85,536	\$121,650	TBA
Donations/community giving	\$505	\$989.54	\$2,574.56



Membership

	Fiscal Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022
# of new owners	259	331	317
# of current owners (sales within last 12 months)	NA	3064	3349
% of sales to owners	80%	79.79%	TBA
Share/stock price	\$150	\$150	\$150
Payment plan	\$25/year	\$25/year	\$25/year
Average # of new owners/month	21.58	27.58	26.41
Average # of renewals/month	59.3	74.36	74.27
Owner benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting privileges • Opportunity to serve on board • Newsletter • Sales & Discounts Rewards Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting privileges • Opportunity to serve on board • Newsletter • Sales & Discounts Rewards Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting privileges • Opportunity to serve on board • Newsletter • Sales & Discounts Rewards program



Products

Department	Measure	Fiscal Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022
Grocery (includes Bakery, Beer, Bulk, Frozen, Packaged, meat, cheese and refrigerated)	Sales \$	\$3,517,413	\$3,715,622	\$3,856,541
	Sales growth	23.3%	5.6%	3.8%
	Gross margin %	38.38%	37.39%	TBA%
Deli	Sales \$	\$355,579	\$421,527	\$429,750
	Sales growth	-1.2%	18.5%	2%
	Gross margin %	60.51%	57.13%	TBA%
General merchandise <u>+swag</u>	Sales \$	\$110,351	\$140,075	\$127,905
	Sales growth	15.9%	26.9%	-8.7%
	Gross margin %	39.95%	31.74%	TBA%
HABA	Sales \$	\$472,861	\$458,318	\$461,320
	Sales growth	10.4%	-3.1%	.7%
	Gross margin %	47.07%	46.4%	TBA%
Produce	Sales \$	\$859,477	\$944,351	\$924,560
	Sales growth	30.3%	9.9%	-2.1%
	Gross margin %	36.4%	35.63%	TBA%



SWOT Analysis

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
Customer service Community owned Awesome staff Main street location Outreach NCG membership Local focus	Price and price perception Buying power Mental resistance to change Aging shopper base
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>
New people moving to area Expanding on local Improving on existing fresh departments Serving shoppers who live at a distance Underutilized space upstairs and in basement	Competition Online shopping Inflation Climate Change Adverse weather events Increased operating costs Product availability



ENDS STATEMENT

What is an ends statement?

An ends statement defines organizational purpose; it explains what outcome an organization desires that will affect a certain group of people for a specific benefit. Ends statements justify the existence of an organization. Each statement declares which group the organization plans to serve and which specific outcomes they desire from their actions.

The CFC's Ends Statement is our guiding light and should be considered in all actions. They are reported on annually in the Ends Report each February. In preparation for the strategic plan, the BOD updated our Ends landing on the following final draft in March of 2022:

CFC exists to be a core participant in the healthy local food network, where:

- 1. Consumers have access to a wide variety of locally produced products**
- 2. Support is provided to individuals, co-ops, and other local groups in the production of healthful goods in our community.**
- 3. Members take pride in their co-op**
- 4. CFC is a leader in the fair treatment of workers**
- 5. Knowledge is shared regarding healthful living choices**
- 6. Our environment is considered in all actions**

Our goal is to continue to expand our local food economy and healthful food availability to our community.

A good five-year plan should be designed to continue support of the co-op's Ends. Keeping this in mind, our strategic plan is largely based around these six points.



THE PLAN

ENDS 1 & 2

1. Consumers have access to a wide variety of locally produced products

2. Support is provided to individuals, co-ops, and other local groups in the production of healthful goods in our community.

Interpretation:

Local products are a vital part of both the co-op's business and identity. Access to local food within the greater community can be limited, with the co-op being one of the main ways for people to access local foods year-round. The co-op should help support of local production when doing so matches our co-op values. We have lumped these two Ends together because largely to support one is to support the other.

Strengths:

- We are viewed as an area leader in prioritizing local goods and services
- Local sales are growing as a proportion to total retail sales
- Good relationships with local producers
- Micro-loans are an asset
- Our positive people focused marketing
- Proximity to farmer's market
- We support CSAs
- The more we sell, the more healthful food we are getting into the community

Weaknesses/roadblocks:

- Availability of local products
- CSAs are a competition for both sales and product



- Recent proliferation of small format “farm” stores are competition
- Storage capacity of the co-op
- Storage capacity of local farmers and producers
- Lack of diversified local products
- Lack of value-added local products
- Market saturation of certain local products (seen in things like greeting cards and local soaps, some local produce when in season)
- Producers struggling with practicing a sustainable business model to continue existing as a business
- Producers lack of technology/social media/business savvy or desire to grow business to next level (sometimes farmers would rather just be growing things)
- Education to public of importance of shopping local
- Lack of employees for local farms/businesses (ability to hire and pay)
- Potential lack of production space (certified kitchens, offices, storage, etc.)
- Need of producers to have a steady income/health insurance
- Affordability of local products

Objective:

Increase sales of local products., increase production of local products, increase support for local producers, and increase awareness of local issues which will in turn increase production and sales.

Strategy/Tactics:

- Run a sound and successful cooperative grocery store. This may be the single most important thing we can do to help support local. CFC is perhaps the primary location in northern WI for the average person to access a wide range of local products. As shown in our history, the more we sell as a store, the more dollars of local products we sell!

Timeline: Ongoing.

- Create vendor support materials. Target this at new and prospective vendors. Make it easy and accessible. Create "How to sell at the co-op 101" (how to write an invoice/how to pitch your product/packaging and pricing best practices, offer advertising/logo/graphic support/advise). Make it available on the website and in store.

Timeline: Spring/Summer 2023

- Consider starting a small business support group. Perhaps there is already something like this in the area or



a better organization to handle this. If so, how can the co-op lend support?

- Continue to support local CSAs through use of the co-op as a drop-off site.

Timeline: Ongoing.

- Offer more micro-loans/continue to target loans towards specific goals/projects

Timeline: April and October, 2023 through 2027

- Consider the feasibility of offering grants to startups or other small endeavors with solid written business plans that involve sales to CFC

Timeline: March 2024

- Improve our storage capabilities/rent space to local producers. Climate controlled rodent-free storage space can be at a premium and in many cases is something that a start-up has to rent, buy, or build to obtain. We have already started to rent space in the basement, so we would need to finalize

this program and advertise it.

Timeline: Review August 2023 check-in

- Investigate what would be needed to make the basement a more usable space for the co-op, i.e., feasibility of conveyor or freight elevator, additional refrigeration space, etc. which could increase our ability to pre-buy and store local products.

Timeline: Report on this by February 2024 Strat Plan check-in

- Increase awareness around local production issues. Knowledge is key to our shoppers understanding, appreciating and buying premium local products.

Timeline: This will be ongoing effort. Start winter 2023

- Celebrate what we already do! We are already doing a lot around local food. It is important to highlight what we are already doing and take a moment to rejoice in and share the successes!

Timeline: This will be ongoing

ing effort. Start winter 2023

Results/Measurement:

- The co-op is financially successful with increased sales year over year
- The public has a high awareness of services offered by the co-op...loans, grants, kitchen rental, etc., making it easier for potential startups to see a path to success. Measure this through future shopper surveys and use of programs.
- Number of local vendors and service providers increase steadily over the next five years.
- Total local sales increases as a dollar amount
- Total percentage of local sales increases
- The co-op is seen as a leader in northern WI in terms of supporting, championing, and availability of local products. To be measured through a future shopper survey.



ENDS 3

3. Members take pride in their co-op

Interpretation:

Pride is caring and caring is sharing. Owners who take pride in their co-op are more likely to shop at CFC, more likely to support CFC, more likely to support other co-ops, local food, and be proponents of the co-operative ownership model in general.

Strengths:

- We feel like our owners do have a lot of pride in their co-op already!
- Owners are good about telling us what we are doing well and what we should be doing differently.
- Community events, donations, and sponsorships

Weaknesses:

- Perceptions that the co-op is too exclusive, elitist, or hippy-esque
- Price perception
- Higher than conventional prices
- Can always improve customer service

Objective:

- Owners and community increase community pride in and goodwill towards CFC
- Increase ownership
- Owners and community increase support for co-op initiatives and activities
- Awareness of co-ops and the benefit of a co-operative model increases in the community

Strategy/Tactics:

- Celebrate what we already do! We are doing a lot of cool things already, so let's make sure everyone knows it. We are already doing so much but it isn't always well known. Tell our story again and again through different mediums.

Timeline: This will be ongoing effort. Start winter 2023

- Up-selling membership. Doing this well really lets our co-op pride as employees/





owners shine. It also really works towards recruiting new owners. Could someone who is already on staff and doing this great teach the rest of us? Program becomes part of new hire or yearly staff training.

Timeline: February 2024

- Being better at passing on kudos from membership to all employees. Pride is caring, caring is sharing. The all-staff notebook would be a great vehicle for this.

Timeline: This will be ongoing effort. Start winter 2023

- Increase engagement through more customer feedback opportunities, a question a month, CX survey or something of that nature.

Timeline: 2023 Review at February 2024 check-in

- Improve offerings/experience of CFC fresh departments: cheese, produce, deli, dairy and meat. This was a low scoring area for us in the 2022 shopper survey. Measure thorough CX survey, sales growth, customer comments and/or future shopper surveys.

Timeline: Ongoing. Starts Winter 2023

- Run a financially successful store. Financial success allows owners to feel good about the store they own, funds the great initiatives and extras that they know and love and sets them up for the possibility of a patron-age rebate!

Timeline: Ongoing

- Celebrating customer service in the age of self-checkout! Talking about it, keeping lines short, and having the best personalized service in town. Great service starts with great staff. Invest in staff training, compensation, and management.

Timeline: Ongoing

- Build pride in the younger generation. Utilize the Cheeky Monkey program and increase youth events and opportunities. Increase community classes/events/partnerships. Targeted coupons to parents through teachers and youth groups. We are already starting to hire our early Cheeky Monkey kids; these youth continue to become

our future employees.

Timeline: Plan in place by February 2024

- Classes/events for tweens-there is a real vacuum for this age group. Pursue partnerships with Ashland Parks and Rec, S.P.A.R.K, youth groups, etc. These youth become our future employees.

Timeline: TBA

- Increased member involvement through volunteerism. Ideas include garden help, adopt a beach, adopt a highway, staff volunteer program, and community art projects. We will look for community partnerships to aid in this.

Timeline: Ongoing.

- Celebrate our 50-year anniversary (2026) with something big! Go all out for the year. Initial ideas include a big party, a Best of the Co-op book with photos, recipes, and artwork.

Timeline: Ideas are in place by December 2025 to make 2026 budget.

- Remodel the restrooms to be gender inclusive. Contract with architect if necessary. This might be a good opportunity to include dual flush toilets. Remodeled space is then a place for community art.

Timeline: 2023 for remodel. Review at February 2024 check-in

- Specifically advertise to attract younger shoppers. This may mean changing where/how we advertise.

Timeline: Ongoing

Measurement

- Increase Facebook likes, stars, general positive comments, survey scores, and positive press.
- Increased total ownership year over year. Continue to attract new owners
- Co-op runs at a healthy, modest profit
- Annual patronage rebates
- Good scores earned in surveys



ENDS 4

4. CFC is a leader in the fair treatment of workers

Interpretation:

CFC should be an exemplary place to work! Our employees should have good wages, good benefits, and should feel comfortable at work. CFC prioritizes supporting other business/brands that treat their workers fairly.

Strengths:

- Great benefits
- Flexible schedules
- Full and part-time opportunities
- Safe, friendly, caring work environment

Weaknesses:

- Pay
- Finding people who want to work in retail/customer service long term
- Grocery is a lower margin business than say tech or health care.

Objective/Strategy:

- All employees make a livable wage (as defined by the NCG model). This will probably be a moving target. CFC pay is in line or better than other comparable

businesses.

Timeline: 2023 and on. Continue incremental wage increases until goal is achieved and maintained.

- Benefits are currently excellent, but keep in mind what is good or desired now may evolve with time. Consider new benefits such as an employee volunteer program, a walk to work incentive, and/or wellness incentive.

Timeline: Review Benefits winter 2024 for August 2024 check-in

- More employee educational opportunities. Set a minimum requirement for trainings and extra-curriculars and hold all managers accountable.

Timeline: Plan by February 2024

- More cross-training. Employees crossed trained into multiple departments tend to be more engaged, can help wherever needed, are more likely to apply for internal openings, and are building their professional skill set.

Timeline: Ongoing; review where we are at and set a plan by end of 2023

- Celebrate what we already do!

Results/Measurement:

- Higher employee retention rate. Continue to track turnover by department spreadsheet.
- Little or no lateral employee loss (e.g., not losing employees to other service jobs). Measured through exit interviews.
- Bi-annual Employee Survey shows good positive scores and comments, B7 Report is in compliance every year.
- Hiring becomes easier/workers compete for open positions at the co-op
- Track list of employee trainings attended.



ENDS 5

5. Knowledge is shared regarding healthful living choices

Interpretation:

The co-op should be a source and resource for information in the community.

Strengths:

- We have an established class and outreach program!
- We are often viewed as a source of knowledge on all sorts of random matters in the community

Weaknesses:

- Class attendance
- Finding instructors
- Class capacity
- Time spent on random questions
- Employee turnover

Objective/Strategy:

- Share information through articles, demos, events and other media

Timeline: Ongoing. Review annually

- Explore video as a medium of communication.
- Classes. Increase class attendance, class size, and number of classes offered. Find and develop new instructors.

Timeline: Ongoing. Starts



Winter 2023

- Bicycle Benefits. Continue to push this program. Actively encourage other businesses in the area to join to help build healthy lifestyles in the community.

Timeline: End of 2024

- Information/Recipes. Explore other ways to share the info we already have going on.

Timeline: Ongoing

- Conversations/Customer Service plus. Focus on stellar service.

Timeline: Ongoing

- Develop an outreach program outside of current membership base, including outreach to youth and students.

Timeline: Ongoing. Review annually

- Be a champion of Fair Trade and Organic products. Share info on these issues whenever possible.
- Continue and expand on the Ojibwe language project.

Timeline: By end of 2024

- Explore partnerships/sponsorships opportunities with area organizations.
- Celebrate what we already do!

Measurement:

- The co-op is seen as a reliable source for information in the community. Measured through customer comments, future surveys, etc.
- The co-op supplies regular articles for local publications and/or is positively mentioned in others writing.
- Number of classes and attendance increases year over year.
- The Bicycle Benefits program expands in both the community and the co-op.

ENDS 6

6. Our environment is considered in all actions

Interpretation:

We are nothing without our environment and climate change is one of the biggest issues of our time.

Strengths:

- We already do a lot of things to help the environment!

Weaknesses:

- Not a lot of easy spaces for improvement
- Lack of awareness of what we are already doing
- Younger generations lack of willingness to recycle/compost
- It's overwhelming



Objective/Strategy:

- Research electric vehicles and consider purchasing one as a co-op delivery vehicle. Huge advances are being made on this front. What is impractical in 2023 may be great in a few years.

Timeline: 2027. Have research completed before 2028 budget is approved.

- Carry and use less plastic and generally unethical packaging. Continue to look at our packaging use. Besides trying to do our part, how can we encourage shoppers to do theirs? Find ways to encourage brands to reduce their packaging. Leverage community involvement to help with this.

Timeline: Ongoing

- Expand the bulk selection/increase bulk sales.

Timeline: Ongoing

- Support better brands. Fairtrade, B-Corp, Organic, etc. These are companies/brands that are already trying to be socially and ecologically sustainable. Support their work by encouraging shoppers to choose these products.

Timeline: Ongoing

- Dual Flush toilets. Consider switching to these as a water saving device either as part of a restroom remodel or as current fixtures age out.

Timeline: 2024 Check-in. See remodel.

- Finish the solar stall project. Find ways to share solar generation info with owners, preferably in real time. Explore opportunities to add additional solar.

Timeline: 2023

- Celebrating what we already do! We are doing a lot already. It is important to take a moment to celebrate our good work and small successes with our owners and community.

Timeline: Ongoing

- Encourage a 3rd party packaging co. start-up. Look for and provide support to a third-party business to take on reusable packaging for Northern WI. This business could provide reusable packaging to local companies, collect, clean, and return them for reuse. Or install a dishwasher for deli and sanitizing jars to reuse in store.

Timeline: By end of 2027

- Consider adopting a highway or beach, preferably as part of a staff or owner volunteerism project.

Timeline: August 2023 check-in

- Green building is used in any future upstairs remodel

Timeline: See upstairs

- Consider walk to work incentives for staff

Timeline: See benefits review

- Install fans in center store to push warm air down in the winter months

Timeline: 2024

- Install LED lights in the basement as current florescent lights and ballast age out.

Timeline: TBA

- Help champion and advertise the electric charging station that the city of Ashland is installing in the parking lot across from city hall.

*Timeline:*TBA

Measurement:

- Improvement in annual co-efficient measurements (this is the place where we submit data to NCG, which besides making us track it, also gives us metrics to compare ourselves to).
- Solar project is finished and fully functional. Membership can access generation data.
- Sales of organic and local products increase every year.



OTHER INITIATIVES

Upstairs

The 2nd story of the older, brownstone part of the co-op building is currently vacant and in an unusable condition, yet it often catches the eye and ideas of the ownerships and board. The area is roughly 40ft x 100ft and sits directly above the current office area.

When exploring potential uses, they can broadly be broken into three options: do nothing, develop for co-op use, or develop for third party use. Contract with an architect to figure out what is physically possible and what would be legally required for various use scenarios. Keep green building practices/materials at the forefront of any plan. Consider, cost, feasibility, ROA, and demonstrated need around the various use options.

Timeline: Report to BOD by end of 2026. A plan is in place and ready to execute by end of 2027



Increased access for long distance shoppers

Our shopper survey shows that we draw owners and shoppers from much of northern WI and that at the same time our core shopper base is aging. The co-op will investigate ways to better serve co-op owners living at a distance from the store, particularly those in smaller or under-served rural communities with the current primary thought being some sort of delivery option. This could potentially take the form of delivery partnerships with existing businesses/organizations, self-delivery, and third-party delivery. The co-op will develop a pilot program in one or two key communities. Monitor results of pilot project and assess in terms of expansion or discontinuation of program.

Timeline: Work starts on this fall 2023. Initial review at February 2024 check-in