

Introduction to the 2023 Whole Foods Co-op Vision

We are respectfully submitting the final version of the 2023 Whole Foods Co-op Vision. We extracted the key elements of 15 individual visions, acquired at a Board and Management Retreat in 2011, and combined them into one document. We feel that this document defines the goals for the Co-op over the next 10 years and captures a picture of what the Co-op looks like in 2023. It is written in the present tense and is akin to visualizing the Co-op at a specific time in the future.

Now that the 2023 Whole Foods Co-op Vision is established, here's what we see happening:

- Putting this all down in black and white creates something much bigger than any one of us. We expect things to start happening! The Community Center is already an example of this.
- Both the Board and Operations will know where the Co-op is going and both can play a part in planning the trip!
- The Board, as a governing body, will have a Vision to guide them in shaping the Co-op's future.
- It will help Operations know where to spend money and will help us avoid getting caught up in something that may delay us from getting to our destination.
- It will help Operations make better hiring decisions. Someone's area of interest or expertise may be exactly what we need to move us closer to our target!

We hope that you find the 2023 Whole Foods Co-op Vision both enjoyable and inspiring.

Whole Foods Co-op

Whole Foods Co-op Mission Statement

To serve our community as the foremost provider of foods and products that enrich health and well-being, cultivating a spirit of community through excellent service and education.

NARRATIVE

Note: The following narrative is a compilation of individual visions from our Board of Directors and management team. This is the fruit of our Visioning retreat held in June 2011. Departments at the Co-op and the board of directors will write their own visions that support and feed into the overall Vision. Therefore, this narrative is a broad, sweeping overview of what the Co-op looks like by the end of 2023. Much more detail will make its way into each of the departmental visions.

*It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision.
Helen Keller*

2023 Whole Foods Co-op Vision

It's the end of 2023 and the Co-op has come a long way in the last 10 years. What was once a singular, small, locally owned business in 2013 has become a thriving venture, firmly rooted in the Erie community. We expanded our retail operations and we now have a beautiful, updated Co-op Café and bakery. Natural, organic, fun, with a little something for everyone.

When you arrive at the Co-op, you are greeted by greenery and seating that minimizes the expanse of pavement surrounding the Co-op. Vertical gardens, colored with a multitude of flowers, climb the building and there are people sitting at the picnic tables and benches in our small park. Medicinal and culinary herbs fill the garden, and these are often used in-house by the Co-op Cafe for food and tea. It's a pleasant and refreshing place to spend part of an afternoon with friends and family.

When you look up you see the living roof that covers much of our building. There's a graceful stairway that is accessible from the inside of the Co-op that leads onto a remarkable seating area on the roof. A few people are relaxing up there and between the roof, the vertical garden, and the atrium, we've created quite an oasis for our customers and staff over the past 10 years.

We've transformed a cement block building and a parking lot into an imaginative and beautiful green space.

Walking into the Co-op, you immediately smell the fresh, artisan bread just coming out of the earthen and brick oven. Delicious to the senses! The store's colors are vibrant, welcoming, and fun! All of our shelving was updated and the store has a nice flow and energy to it. Installing an eco-friendly floor made a huge difference too! The WellBody department has natural practitioners and consultants available for our customers on a regular basis. We also added a new department showcasing local/organic beer and wine which has been wildly successful. All of our departments have expanded to accommodate the growing sales.

The children's play area is always buzzing with kids and the supervisor keeps them well occupied and entertained. This has made it so much easier for our customers with children to come and shop at the Co-op! We have monthly Kid's Club events that are always well attended by a growing number of our customer's children. Many of the previous Co-op kids are now bringing their own children to play and shop at the Co-op; the circle remains unbroken as we see the continuation of generations coming through our front doors.

Every day, our delivery van gets loaded up and delivers baked goods and other Co-op products throughout the city. Catering has taken off and has become a profitable and integral piece of the Co-op Café and Bakery.

The Education and Outreach department has grown by leaps and bounds since we opened the Co-op Community Center in 2012. We have a beautiful classroom and home-style kitchen which serves both the Co-op and the Erie community well. We collaborated with the Erie Community Foundation and our partnership opened up the floodgates for a comprehensive educational program that reaches into many of the low-income pockets of the city. Our urban community garden project, which was started with a grant, was a key part of this program.

In the last ten years the Co-op has expanded far beyond 26th street. We are operating a profitable farm that produces organic fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey. Our products are sold in our store as well as other businesses in the Erie community. We are proud to be able to offer fresh, organic produce year round from our greenhouses. The farm is a beautiful place to visit, a great example of permaculture at work, producing food sustainably and enriching the land in the process. There are paths that take you through the many gardens and greenhouses, and there is a market stand on the side of the road. The farm is also home to many chickens who are usually happily pecking away in their own herb garden. There is even a butterfly garden that gracefully ambles alongside one of the paths. The farm often hosts groups of children on field trips, which has been a resounding success with schools and camps throughout the county. Visiting kids rejoice in the opportunity to play in the dirt and learn how to plant seeds to grow their own food.

Once a week, during the warmer months, we host a Farmer's Market in downtown Erie. The small Market, which began in our Co-op parking lot, eventually moved to a downtown location in order to reach more people in the community. The Market has now grown into something more akin for a farmer's festival! There are usually 20+ vendors and you can feel the

camaraderie in the air when the Market's in full swing! There is music, local produce from our own farm and many others, as well as a plethora of other locally made artisan goods.

The Co-op has reached many other important milestones over the last decade. Our sustainability efforts have reduced the store's energy bills to a minimum and we generate less trash than we did 10 years ago! The Co-op brings in in excess of \$10,000,000 through our retail sales, Co-op Farm, and educational programs. We have over 10,000 member-owners and hundreds now attend our annual meetings. Our employees have one of the best employment packages in the Erie area and we were voted one of the best places to work in Erie County. A lot of hard work has brought us to this remarkable time and place. It has been very fulfilling for all involved to see so many dreams and aspiration come to fruition, and to see the positive impact the Co-op has had on the Erie community. Here's to hoping that the next 10 years will be just as extraordinary!