

## Food Shed Co-op to build county's first community-owned grocery store

By Ken Keenan for Chronicle Media — July 10, 2023



Once it opens, the 9,000-square-foot store will offer approximately 5,000 different items and will be open to the public. (Photo courtesy of Food Shed Co-op)

Drive, between Crystal Lake and Woodstock. Groundbreaking is set to commence in the next few weeks, and the timetable for a grand opening will be determined at a later date.

Once it opens, the 9,000-square-foot store will offer approximately 5,000 different items and will be open to the public. The store will have a variety of departments, with produce being the signature category. It also will be constructed with environmental concerns in mind, utilizing solar power and featuring electric vehicle charging stations, as well as being committed to reducing single-use plastics.

"The store really is a model for the future," said Food Shed Co-op General Manager Peter Waldmann, who praised Gallant Building Solutions for being in lockstep with the co-op's vision for the project every step of the way. "We want to open a store that's environmentally sustainable, and we'll be able to reduce consumer waste and industry waste as well. So, it's not just a grocery store, but a place for the community to gather and learn about the food they're putting into their bodies."

Waldmann said the idea for a community-owned food co-op was the brainchild of longtime McHenry County residents Scott and Kim Brix. Owners purchase shares at \$100 each, with a minimum requirement of two shares. Through the years, enough capital was raised to move forward with the intended project.

"We now have 1,712 members, and we're still accepting investments," Waldmann said. "It takes a long time to develop a project like this. It was a process of getting to a point where we could build the store, so we really are building this from the ground up. It's community owned, so the owners control it. And if you're an owner, you have a voice in the decision-making. You can run for the board (of directors) and have an influence."

Owners also will have access to educational workshops, and monthly owner-only price promotions.

"We take seriously the owners' stake in the store," Waldmann said. "The ultimate goal for everyone involved is to get the economy circulating in the county. It's hard for local growers to get into the bigger stores, so being locally owned means providing locally sourced food. We view it as our responsibility to provide fresh, affordable food for the community. We really want to help and support McHenry County."

Waldmann said that anyone interested in becoming a founding owner can do so by visiting [www.foodshed.coop/become-an-owner](http://www.foodshed.coop/become-an-owner).

A new grocery store is coming to McHenry County, and it's not just another in a line of big-name, corporate entities familiar to most people.

In fact, this one will be the first community-owned grocery store cooperative in the county, thanks to the efforts of the McHenry County Food Shed Co-op, working in tandem with Crystal Lake-based Gallant Building Solutions.

Since its inception, in 2014, the Food Shed Co-op has been committed to planning and designing the store, to be located on property purchased by the co-op at the corner of Route 14 and Lakeshore