

Food co-op starts construction in Woodstock

The Food Shed Co-Op expects to finish construction by the end of this year

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Food Shed Co-Op board members shovel the first mound of dirt at the groundbreaking ceremony in Woodstock on July 18, 2023. (Michelle Meyer)

The Food Shed Co-Op grocery store had its groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday after nine years of raising funds.

The Food Shed Co-Op will be a community owned and controlled grocery store located at 10806 Route 14, Woodstock. The McHenry County Food Cooperative started in 2014. There are 11 board members and over 1,700 co-op owners.

ADVERTISING

Over 100 attendees, many of them co-op owners, attended the groundbreaking ceremony. Woodstock Mayor Mike Turner and McHenry County College President Clint Gabbard spoke at the event.

Gabbard said that MCC will be partnering with the Food Shed and agriculture and culinary students will be able to learn about sustainable growing and the economics of grocery co-ops.

“I’m excited to have locally grown food and know where it comes from,”

— Claire Beck, Food Shed Co-Op owner

The 9,000 square-foot building, constructed by Gallant Building Solutions, is expected to be complete some time this year, said Peter Waldmann, Food Shed Co-Op general manager. The store is anticipated to open in early 2024, or about four weeks after construction is complete.

The land was purchased in 2020 from Mayo Clinic for about \$50,000, said Scott Brix, vice president of the co-op. Brix is considered to be “owner number one” since he was one of the first people to bring the co-op together.

The grocery store, expected to cost over \$5.8 million, anticipates selling over 5,000 items, with local produce as its main department.

“I’m excited to have locally grown food and know where it comes from,” co-op owner Claire Beck said.

Co-op owner Pam Witte said that many local farmers already are involved or are owners themselves.

Fundraising is still underway since the co-op has a construction budget gap over \$450,000 because of inflation, Brix said at the groundbreaking ceremony. The project will need to raise those dollars before Aug. 30 to ensure construction doesn’t halt.

Most recently, the co-op was able to secure 18 investments in preferred shares by July 18. Now, they are doing a match donation up to \$100,000 until July 25.

In 2021, the co-op was able to raise \$1.7 million in a capital campaign. A \$200,000 grant from the USDA LFPP Grant and \$10,000 from the Food Coop Initiative in 2016 also helped fund the grocery store.

“This thing seems to want to happen in Woodstock, Illinois,” Brix said. Contributing destiny to the reason why the co-op was able to get over the various funding hurdles.

People can become an owner by purchasing a one-time payment of \$200 for two shares of common stock. Tax-deductible donations also are accepted, which can be done on their website.

Co-op owners can purchase a brick to be placed in the “brick garden” outside of the grocery store. There also will be a rain garden and pollinator planting on the property.

The Food Shed Co-Op plans on using “sustainable materials” for the building and is looking to use solar panels for clean energy. A PACE bus stop, electric vehicle charging and a bike path will be near the grocery store.

“The mission is to build a local food cooperative that promotes a healthy, ethical and resilient community,” said Rusty Foszcz, president of the Food Shed.