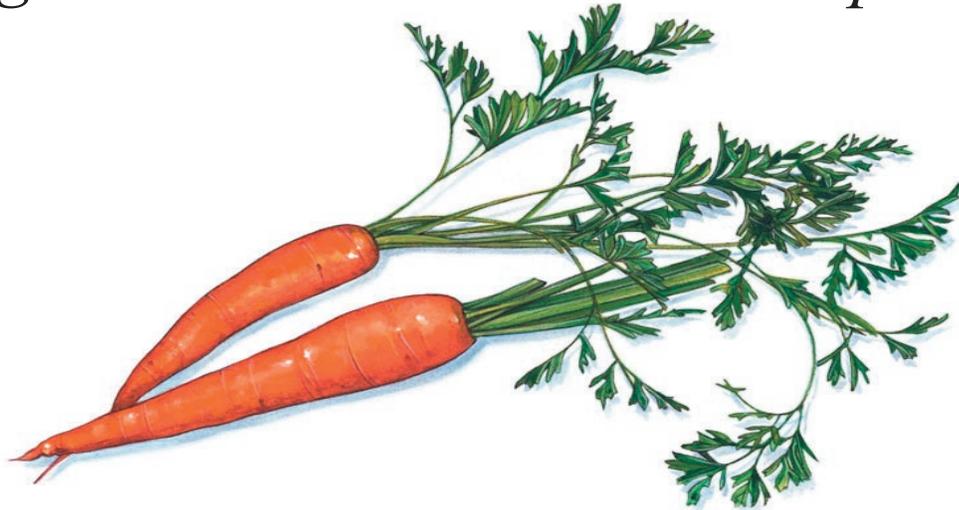


The 100 Year Plan – First Steps

Towards the Creation of a Regenerative Market & Marketplace



In April 2002, the Board of Directors of the Brattleboro Food Co-op invited several people from an environmental group called “Natural Logic” to speak at that year’s annual meeting. The Board members were beginning the process of educating themselves as well as shareholders about green building and sustainable communities. Their desire was to develop a framework of thinking that would go beyond the “usual green design approach of doing-less-damage, to a more substantive one of regenerating the health of the larger network of interconnected systems. The interrelationships of the various systems in nature – forests, soil, habitat, water, and more – provide us with clean air, potable water, healthy soil and therefore our food. Our buildings, cities and lifestyles impact the interconnectedness and the health of these systems. Simply slowing down the damage to these systems by creating a new building that is more resource efficient misses the more significant issue supporting the health of these life support functions.” [Preparing the Ground for a Regenerative Market and Marketplace, Page 3, Natural Logic, Inc.] It has been the Board and management’s aspiration to take the co-op as far along on this path as possible.

Over the past four years, therefore, Brattleboro Food Co-op’s Community Engagement process has provided many opportunities to educate and to hear from our shareholders, staff, managers, board members, creative thinkers, and many other stakeholders and like-minded organizations. All of this interaction has resulted in a richer understanding of our co-op, and a more definite idea of what it could become in the future. The following report gathers together all of the major ideas, presented in order of importance as established in the recent shareholder survey.

All of the principal concepts in this document will provide guidance to the co-op on the long road towards the creation of a regenerative market and marketplace. Every initiative will be decided upon and implemented according to its contribution to organizational and environmental sustainability.

The governance policies of the Brattleboro Food Co-op are unequivocally in alignment with what has been learned through the Community Engagement process. We will begin this report, therefore, with a review of the Ends Policies and management’s interpretation of those policies.

Ends Policies and Management Interpretation

The policies appear in italicized print.

QI – Ends

Global statement: The purpose of the Brattleboro Food Co-op is to be a sustainable community for a growing number of stakeholders.

Interpretation: The scope of our Ends Policies is large and long-term. The role of management is the day-to-day efforts that ensure that the Brattleboro Food Co-op engages in activities that contribute to the strengthening economic vitality of our community, and that the Co-op is intentionally and increasingly inclusive of the people and organizations in our community.

The Co-op, as a sustainable community:

- 1. Meets the needs of Co-op shareholders*
- 2. Provides access to healthy food and related products*

Interpretation: The Co-op will carry the products that meet the expectations of our shareholders, in an appropriate format, at a competitive, fair market cost.

- 3. Promotes cooperation, cooperative ownership and adherence to the Cooperative Principles*

Interpretation: We must run our business according to cooperative business structures that are common to other food cooperatives and other types of cooperatives. Our mandate includes helping our shareholders grow in their understanding of what cooperation means, as well as practice cooperation through links with other cooperatives.

- 4. Embraces environmental responsibility*

Interpretation: We endeavor to run our business in a way that promotes an increasingly healthy environment.

- 5. Encourages diversity and addresses viewpoints in a fair and non-discriminatory manner*

Interpretation: This is a confirmation that the Co-op is a non-partisan organization that seeks to welcome all people, and that everyone's ideas are given a fair hearing.

- 6. Maintains an atmosphere that encourages interactions*

Interpretation: The co-op is sincere in its encouragement of feedback, and it strives to foster a friendly ambiance and a caring customer service culture.

Towards the Creation of a Regenerative Market & Marketplace

Summary of the Principal Themes

Healthy Food. *BFC Goal:* To Champion healthy food. [Ends 2]

Healthy food is the top shareholder priority.
There is less processing, no additives
and less impact on the environment.

Local Economy. *BFC Goal:* Proactively contribute in a material way to the strengthening of our local economy [Ends 1,2,4]

Purchasing foods from local producers supports the viability of local agriculture, and keeps monetary resources in the community.

Environmental Responsibility: *BFC Goal:* Impact minimally, restore, regenerate [End 4]

This is the underlying theme for the 100 year plan. Sourcing our foods and related products locally reduces the distance food has to travel to reach the consumer, and smaller producers tend to cause less negative environmental impact. Operating the store in a way that has less and less negative environmental impact, that helps to restore and regenerate our environment, is the ultimate goal.

Outlying Communities. *BFC Goal:* Maximize service to our outlying communities, minimize environmental impact [Ends 1,2]

We will research alternative service delivery modes to reach the smaller markets that the co-op currently serves, which will expand service to our customers and provide healthy food options for more people. This will help relieve pressure on our downtown location, reduce traffic, and help retain a human scale in our business.

Role in the Community. *BFC Goal:* Ensure that BFC is an effective partner in creating a sustainable community [Ends. 3,4]

We will work alongside local organizations and businesses, to contribute to a healthier community environment.

Upgrade physical plant & operations. *BFC Goal:* Attaining maximum achievable efficiency [Ends 1, 4]

A more efficient operation will help lower overhead costs, reduce impact on the surrounding environment and attain the stated Ends Policies of the Brattleboro Food Co-op.

Brattleboro Food Co-op's First Steps

Operational Long Range Plan

I. **Healthy Food:** *To Champion healthy food.* [Ends 2]

A. **Education**, the Key to Long-Term success: *Increase consumers' understanding of the true economics of healthy foods and how to choose and prepare them, especially organic and local foods.*

1. In-store programs
 - a) Enhance our merchandising programs to promote healthy foods and healthy ingredients.
 - b) Develop effective programs to educate co-op staff about choosing and preparing healthy foods.
2. Outreach
 - a) Broaden our current outreach programs.
 - b) Expand our healthy food programs for kids in the schools.

B. **Product lines**

1. Update the coop's product selection guidelines according to stated Ends policies and shareholder priorities.
2. Justify all products and product lines to updated guidelines.

C. **Expand Organic Lines**

1. Establish baseline data: organic vs. non-organic.
2. Seek to increase the number of organic products in all categories.
3. Encourage more production of organic foods through sales volume and by working with producers.
4. Maximize the use of organic and healthy ingredients in our deli prepared foods.
5. Maintain our organic certification, market it more aggressively.

II. **Local Economy:** *To proactively contribute in a material way to the strengthening of our local economy.* [Ends 1,2,4]

A. **BFC "Buy Local" Campaign**

1. Promote increased department manager use of the newly established "Buy Local" guidelines.
2. Fully implement Phase II of the co-op's "Buy Local" campaign. This involves establishing baselines for current performance.
3. Develop plans for Phase III, which is the marketing campaign.

B. **Supporting Community Initiatives**

1. Identify and evaluate appropriate community initiatives.
2. Support and become involved in initiatives that are in BFC's interest.

Some examples are: a) "Localvore" movement
b) CSA's (Community supported agriculture):
find ways to adapt this model to BFC operation.
c) Windham Environmental Coalition

C. Other opportunities that we will explore

1. Working with local farmers to develop more effective programs that will assure regular delivery of fresh local products throughout the growing season.
2. Creating pickup and distribution routes from local market farms.
3. Identifying local grower and producer needs that may create synergies with BFC goals, such as cooperative cold storage/root cellars, community kitchen/cannery.
4. Pooling resources with Connecticut Valley Neighbor Co-ops to achieve effective and substantial support of local economy.
5. Creating other outlets in our town, such as a food stall in the River Garden.
6. Participating in Equal Exchange's domestic fair trade program.

III. Environmental Responsibility: *Impact minimally, restore, regenerate.*

[Ends, 4]

A. Education

1. Develop educational programs to enhance shopper awareness of the environmental implications of product choices.

B. Products

1. Promote local products, from local producers and growers.
2. Promote products produced with sustainable techniques.
3. Promote bulk purchasing.

C. More Efficient Facility

1. Determine scope of a renovation or new construction project.
2. Commission an energy audit to determine objectives.
3. Research technologies and designs to minimize energy use.
4. Consider the desirability of LEED certification.

D. Property

Consider modifications such as:

1. More green space
2. Pedestrian friendly access improvements
3. Protected bicycle parking
4. Regenerative design of the parking lot

E. Other

1. Evaluate and reduce waste stream, using "Waste is Food" concept, internal and customer focused: reuse, recycle, compost.
2. Research and redesign product packaging materials and processes.
3. Improve traffic flow, study feasibility of a vehicular bridge across the Whetstone Brook.
4. Support alternative transportation modes: support and/or promote ride share, public transportation, fuel efficient cars for commuting and shopping, home delivery.

IV. Outlying Communities: *Maximize service to our outlying communities, minimize environmental impact.* [Ends 1,2]

A. Identify outlying communities with substantial ties to BFC.

Examples: West Brattleboro, Marlboro, Wilmington, Mount Snow, Jamaica/Townshend, Town of Rockingham, Keene, Chesterfield, others to be identified.

B. Explore alternative service delivery modes.

Examples:

1. Buying clubs
2. BFC Satellite stores
3. Home delivery
4. Start-up support for independent cooperative food delivery initiatives

V. BFC's Role in the Community: *Ensure that BFC is an effective partner in creating a sustainable community*

[Ends 3,4]

A. Create stronger ties with the local business community.

1. Town Government.
2. BaBB.
3. Others to be identified.

B. Support other cooperative and earth-friendly businesses

C. Develop creative new approaches to providing increased access to healthy food for people with low income.

VI. Upgrade physical plant & operations: *Attaining maximum achievable efficiency* [Ends 1,4]

A. Physical plant

1. Retail
2. Administrative
3. Services
4. Amenities

B. Operations

1. Policies and procedures reviewed and changed to contribute effectively to achieving regenerative goals and objectives.
2. Improved working conditions for safety, health and morale.
3. More effective security.

C. Determine feasibility of including other on-site features such as:

1. Cooperative Housing.
2. Cooperative Child Care

D. Feasibility determinations regarding other off-site facilities

Board, Management and Staff Roles in Redevelopment Projects

*Adapted from Bill Gessner's
"Expansion and Relocation Toolbox"*

Board of Directors

Although authority and overall responsibility lies with the board, a great deal of decision making is delegated to management, especially in a redevelopment project, for it is impossible for the board to be both board and manager.

Directors of a cooperative business have the same legal responsibilities as directors of any other corporation or business. Because of the unique nature of cooperative business, however, co-op board members must attend to some additional duties. Unlike investor-owned businesses that operate in order to make a profit, co-ops operate in order to meet the needs of their members first, and then, make a profit as well. Directors must ensure that the members are educated about the cooperative, and about their rights as members. The board has an official responsibility to communicate with members about plans and vision.

*It is essential for successful functioning of your cooperative
that you work as a team.*

- Develop initial commitment to the project
- Develop a shared vision and clearly articulate that vision to the membership and management for organizational alignment.
- Develop an effective, supportive and supervisory relationship with the general manager, being clear on roles, responsibility, authority and accountability.
- Establish guiding policy and parameters, and monitor effectively
- Provide broad guidance and delegation to general manager.
Review and approve final plan.
- Communicate with and represent members in the project through newsletter, mailings, surveys, informational meetings and community relations/events
- Uphold accountability through regular reporting and monitoring of plans.
Receive and review worst-case scenarios
- Approve major financing agreement
- Honor and respect all requirements for confidentiality related to real estate issues, executive personnel issues, and competitive marketplace issues.
- Set the tone for commitment, focus, empowerment, good energy, leadership, and fun.

General Manager

Essential Tasks

Managing the current store and building profitability will remain the g.m.'s major responsibility. However, it falls upon the manager to take a leadership role in planning. As the project moves through the various stages, the g.m. will gradually shift the main portion of time and energy from running the store into managing the actual project, including the development of a time line, budget ("Sources and Uses") and financing plan.

Project Management and Management Reporting

Typically the Board will empower the general manager to plan and implement a redevelopment project, subject to key decision points that involve the Board. The g.m. may wish to hire outside expertise. This person or team of people would report directly to the general manager.

The general manager becomes the champion of the project, and will provide effective leadership while building enthusiasm for and further commitment to the project. The g.m. will determine the most effective way to organize and achieve the goals of the project within parameters and policy. This will involve building a strong team that includes people in and outside of the co-op. Internally, this is the board, staff, and members. Externally, it will include consultants, professional and technical resources, and community resources (banks, government, and property owners, etc.).

The Board must provide support and hold the general manager accountable by requiring regular reporting.

Staff

Staff plays a very important and widely varying role in the planning and implementation of a redevelopment project. Initially, during the planning and feasibility stage, they will need to begin taking on additional responsibility for running the current store, as the general manager shifts time into the project. As actual work begins on the new space the g.m. will be less visible, less available and more distracted, and therefore must make sure to communicate with staff at all stages of the project. If they understand the growing importance of their jobs, and their responsibilities, they will be less likely to resent the g.m.'s absence and could become some of the strongest supporters.

Staff involvement is valuable in building the commitment level for the project goal. They need information at appropriate times and the opportunity to give feedback and advice during the planning and feasibility stages. Staff members will have valuable input into the design of the project.

Staff will need to honor all confidentiality requirements related to the project including real estate, personnel, and competitive marketplace issues. In addition, they will need to take on additional responsibilities in preparing for and in operating the redeveloped store. There will likely be many opportunities for increased responsibilities and new positions and it is important that skills and systems throughout the organization be strengthened.

Next Steps **in our** **Community Engagement & Member Linkage**

July

Board Meeting

Initial discussion of management recommendations
for the Operational Long-Range Plan.

August

Board Meeting

Concluding discussion of management commendations.

October

Newsletter

Presentation of the recommendations to shareholders.

Annual Meeting

Board, Shareholder, Management discussion of the recommendations.

In-store information tables,
possible open meeting opportunities for further discussion with shareholders .

November

Continued: In-store information tables,
possible open meeting opportunities for further discussion with shareholders.

Poll on recommendations; sent by mail to shareholders to gage level of support.

January

Results of poll announced in Food for Thought.

and

Onwards

Project planning begins.

Plans & Ideas for the Next 100 Years

Please add your limbs, apples & new trees ideas.

