

Troy Community Food Cooperative at the Pioneer Market

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the benefits of membership in the Co-op?

The Troy Community Food Co-op is owned by the people who use its services —YOU. Member-owners are entitled to:

1. Vote in board elections and other referenda that help set the direction of the Co-op.
2. Run for the Board of Directors and serve on committees.
3. Save on groceries through “member-owner only” sales promotions.
4. Receive a quarterly discount: One day per quarter member-owners will receive a discount off all groceries.
5. Receive a patronage refund: Once the Co-op is profitable, profits will be shared with the member-owners.
6. Receive discounts at local businesses through the Community Connections Program (the Connections Program will expand as the Co-op grows):
 - Member-owners of TCFC can open accounts at SEFCU.
 - Member-owners of TCFC receive a 10% discount at Some Girls Boutique in Troy.
 - Member-owners of TCFC receive a 2% discount on all purchases at Honest Weight Food Co-op.
7. Be a part owner, which means empowering the community:
 - Member-owner investments in the Co-op make the community stronger by pooling resources to solve our own food needs.
 - The Co-op will create jobs in Troy and a thriving market for the local agricultural community.

What is the cost of membership?

To become a Co-op member costs \$150. Your payment of \$150 is for the purchase of one share in the corporation. A cooperative is a special type of corporation formed by members of a community who pool their money to fill a need in the community. You will receive a member number and card. Your right to purchase at the Co-op may be shared with three other adult members of your household. Simply provide their names on your application.

Is there an installment plan for purchasing a member-owner share?

Yes, the cost of a share (\$150) can be paid in installments of \$25 down and \$25 per month. Member-owners must be current in their share payments to vote in board elections and on any referendum.

Can a business (private company) join the Co-op?

Yes.

Is there a limit to how many shares an individual or company may purchase?

No, but New York state law limits shareholders to only one vote regardless of the number of shares owned.

Can a business purchase membership shares for its employees?

Yes. It doesn't matter who pays for the share.

What is the timeline for opening?

As of January 8, 2010, the Troy Community Food Cooperative reached our \$2.5 million capitalization goal. That means we can move forward on building renovations and preparing to open in the summer of 2010. Capitalization includes member-owner shares, member-owner loans, grants, and loans from banks or other financial institutions. Typically, co-ops take four to five years to pool enough capital and build support within the community.

How many jobs does the Co-op plan to create?

We plan to have 21 employees in the first year and grow to 41 employees after five years.

Will the Co-op take student interns?

Yes. Once we open, having interns, offering job training, and collaborating with community volunteer programs will be a part of the Co-op's community investment. Volunteering and interning will offer professional experience, but no wages or discounts.

Does the Co-op allow corporate donations?

The Troy Food Co-op is not a "not-for-profit organization" (in other words, we are not a 501(c)3). So, the Co-op cannot accept donations directly. We do have a relationship with a 501(c)3 whose purpose is to help in co-op development. That organization is allowed to receive a corporate donation and pass it on to the Troy Community Food Cooperative.

Does the Co-op have alliances with the Chamber of Commerce, Capital District Local First, and other local business organizations?

Yes, we have memberships in both organizations and strongly believe in the ability of these member-driven groups to contribute to a viable and vibrant local economy.

Is the Troy Co-op a business partner of Honest Weight Food Co-op?

No, but according to the International Cooperative Principles, co-ops should collaborate with other co-ops. Honest Weight has been advising us as has the City Market/Onion River Co-op in Burlington, Vermont.

How is the Troy Co-op different from Honest Weight Food Co-op?

- The Troy Food Co-op does not have a member-worker program. Additionally, the Troy Food Co-op will not carry high-priced goods in order for non-members to subsidize (with their purchases) members receiving additional discounts.
- All Troy Food Co-op member-owners can vote in board elections and on referenda; at Honest Weight the member-workers vote.
- The Troy Food Co-op does not require individuals or businesses to attend an orientation before becoming a member-owner. Anyone who wants to become a member-owner of the Troy Community Food Cooperative can buy a share using the form in our brochure or the online form on the TCFC Web site.
- The Troy Food Co-op will sell at least 30% conventional groceries and around 70% natural/ organic groceries in order to be accessible to all incomes and people.

Will the Co-op have member-workers and discounts for them?

No. New co-ops do not have member-worker programs because of legal issues related to taxes on wages.

Will members of other Co-ops receive special benefits at the Troy Co-op?

No, not as of this time.

Will Coop's prices be lower than those of regular supermarkets?

The Troy Food Co-op believes it is important to have competitive prices and will do everything we can to have a good price range and price image that benefit both member-owners and others in the community who shop at our grocery store. We will carry out research on the local grocery market to ensure the most competitive prices possible. We recognize that it is difficult for small independent grocery stores to compete with larger chain stores that can afford to lose money in a competitive market because they earn high profits in markets with no competition.

Has the Co-op addressed the need for parking?

The City of Troy has pledged to convert the permit-only city lot on the corner of 5th Avenue and Congress Street (across the alley from Famous Lunch on the same side of the street as the Pioneer Market) to 2-hour parking. City officials have also said they will put up signs directing people to the Co-op.

In addition, on-street parking in front of the store will be for 15 minutes. As a part of operations, Co-op staff will carry groceries out to the curb for customers, make home deliveries, and take orders over the phone and online. This will help alleviate parking problems. TCFC is continuing to look at other options for parking, including additional parking for evenings and weekends.

Is the Co-op's business plan available for me to read?

Yes. Contact the Board Secretary at info@troyfoodcoop.com to arrange to see a copy.

Does the Co-op pay local taxes?

The Co-op pays sales tax as well as state and federal corporate income tax. Once we are approved as an Empire Zone Enterprise, the Co-op's sales tax liability will be limited to the county portion.

Does the Co-op allow people to volunteer on a project as a group?

Yes, the Troy Food Co-op encourages member-owners and members of the community to volunteer on projects and welcomes collaboration from businesses and organizations. The Co-op does not offer discounts in exchange for volunteering.

Is there a special membership category for restaurants?

Yes, they can be members. We will develop a wholesale (discount) program as part of operations.