



Images (clockwise from upper right):

- Farm2Table corner at the cafe (Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.)
- Anacortes Food Co-op and Anacortes manager Alex Pitz (Washington)
- Stapleton Co-op Market & Deli (Nebraska)
- Clifton Co-op Market (Cincinnati, Ohio)



# New Co-ops on the Scene

BY STUART REID

It has been an interesting year for new food co-ops. Although there were only six store openings, they have managed to cover the spectrum of what a food co-op can be—their stories appear below.

We welcome the Clifton Market, with 13,500 sq. ft. of retail in a neglected neighborhood of Cincinnati—and, by contrast, the Anacortes Food Co-op, opening in under 1,000 sq. ft. in a small island community off the northwest coast of Washington. Green Top Grocery just opened in Bloomington, Illinois, in a custom-built site with 6,600 sq. ft. of retail space. Farm2Table has started up in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, with a small space, limited inventory, and big dreams.

For the first time in memory, three of the new co-ops that opened in the past year are focused on lower-cost, conventional-product mixes. They share another important background. Clifton Market brought groceries to a former IGA storefront after a six-year absence; the Renaissance Co-op in Greensboro, North Carolina, opened where the last full-service grocery store closed 18 years ago; and in Nebraska, the Stapleton Cooperative Market & Deli opened in a storefront that closed 8 years ago.



## Anacortes Food Co-op: Woven Dreams

Originally calling itself Woven Dreams, this island co-op was opened in July of 2016 after only nine months of organizing. Thanks to the generosity of the original founder and members of the community, the co-op opened with no debt or outside investors. The Anacortes Food Co-op general manager, Alex Pitz, says, “It’s all about community. People believe in what we are doing and support the co-op. The co-op’s priority is to provide retail space for local farmers and artisans.”

The co-op has moved from its original site behind a local Japanese restaurant into a larger space where it can grow. “We supply local produce and products from Skagit, Whatcom, and Island Counties, as well as the Salish Islands,” says Pitz. “Everything is either organic or local, since we believe in and practice sustainable living and business.”

In case you were wondering where the name comes from, “Our dreams are interwoven together. They are threaded and knotted in the dream of a co-op serving local and sustainably produced products, before radiating outwards on personal paths. This co-op is just a step for many of us, but we hope it will become a permanent quilt we may leave behind for future Anacortes generations. A community is a series of colorful woven dreams—support links us together, making us and our dreams stronger.”

<b>Address</b>	2308A Commercial Av., Anacortes, Washington 98221 360-299-3562
<b>Web and Facebook</b>	<a href="http://www.anacortesfoodcoop.com/">http://www.anacortesfoodcoop.com/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/anacortesfoodcoop">https://www.facebook.com/anacortesfoodcoop</a>
<b>Open</b>	July 15, 2016
<b>Hours</b>	Tuesday- Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
<b>Gross/retail sq. ft.</b>	2,500 sq. ft. (gross?)
<b>Membership \$</b>	\$100 signup + \$25/annual fee 18% discount for member plus one in household
<b>Startup budget</b>	Unknown: no debt, donated funds, services; opened rent-free
<b>Sales</b>	\$200,000 (projected)
<b>Staff</b>	4 paid employees
<b>Members</b>	200



## Renaissance Community Co-op

Before opening in November 2016, Renaissance Community Co-op (RCC) had to overcome huge obstacles. Eighteen years earlier, this low-income community in northeast Greensboro, N.C., lost the only grocery store serving an area with over 60,000 residents, leaving behind a food desert. Organizers worked with the City of Greensboro on several new store bids and fought off development of a landfill near the site where the store now stands. When the idea of a community-owned cooperative grocery store came forward, it felt like the best path. The hard work of educating the community about co-ops began.

The Fund for Democratic Communities provided technical assistance, enlisting several other cooperative agencies to support their efforts, and the City of Greensboro came on-board as momentum grew. Says Dave Reed from the Fund, “The folks at FCI have been wonderful partners with us in shifting the conversation about what the cooperative business model offers to low-income communities.” Food Co-op Initiative invited RCC to share their story with co-op startups and developers at the Up & Coming conference in 2015.

The 7,900 sq. ft. (retail) store is now the anchor of the renovated Renaissance Shops center. The full-service grocery store includes a deli and a meat department with an on-site butcher. It offers primarily conventional products focused on quality at an affordable price. Mo Kessler, the board vice president, is very optimistic. “The RCC is proof that low-income communities can take ownership of their own economic destiny through cooperative businesses. Our store is already having a large impact on our community, and we expect big things in the future.”

<b>Address</b>	2517 Phillips Av., Greensboro, N.C. 27405
<b>Web and Facebook</b>	<a href="https://renaissancecoop.com/">https://renaissancecoop.com/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/RenaissanceCommunityCoop/">https://www.facebook.com/RenaissanceCommunityCoop/</a>
<b>Open</b>	October 14, 2016
<b>Hours</b>	8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. daily
<b>Gross/retail sq. ft.</b>	7,900 / 10,500
<b>Membership \$</b>	\$100 (household of 2)
<b>Startup budget</b>	\$2.48 M
<b>Sales</b>	\$1.0 M
<b>Staff</b>	10 full-time, 9 part-time
<b>Members</b>	1,300



## Clifton Cooperative Market

The Clifton Cooperative Market was founded to bring a major grocery store back to an underserved market in Cincinnati. An IGA supermarket had been in this space from 1939-2011. When it closed, another IGA operator bought the building and gutted it. In 2013, he ran into personal difficulties, and the construction stopped. A small group of Clifton residents and friends met in August 2013 and decided to research the possibility of incorporating as a co-op. In less than four years, Clifton Market recruited 1,300 owners and raised \$6 million in startup capital through intensive outreach, political arm-twisting, and a highly dedicated core team.

The store features a cheese station, salad bar and sushi and deli counters,



as well as the wide selections of produce, beer and wine, household cleaning products, health and beauty products, baby food, and pet supplies. The café inside the store is called the Busy Bee, a nod to the eatery that operated for more than six decades on Ludlow Avenue.

Early sales levels have not yet reached projections, but with aggressive outreach and promotion and over 40,000 students returning in the fall, the co-op is confident that they will be successful. Marilyn Hyland, longtime board member and fundraiser, is starting a new capital campaign with the goal of raising \$200,000 in additional working capital. “People believe in the store now and can see what they are investing in.”

Clifton Market has not stopped looking for better ways to serve their community. They just announced an on-line grocery delivery for only \$10 and curbside pickup service for \$2. Deemed “the best grocery delivery value in town” by local media, it is already becoming a popular option for shoppers.

<b>Address</b>	319 Ludlow Av., Cincinnati, Ohio 45220 513-861-3000
<b>Web and Facebook</b>	<a href="http://cliftonmarket.com/">http://cliftonmarket.com/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/CliftonMarket">https://www.facebook.com/CliftonMarket</a>
<b>Open</b>	January 27, 2017
<b>Hours</b>	7:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m. Sunday–Thursday 7:00 a.m.–11:00 p.m. Friday–Saturday
<b>Gross/retail sq. ft.</b>	13,500 / 23,000
<b>Membership \$</b>	\$200 (household)
<b>Startup budget</b>	\$6 M
<b>Sales</b>	\$13 M (projected)
<b>Staff</b>	60
<b>Members</b>	1,300 at opening; 1,740 currently



### Farm2Table Co-op & Café

Promoting vital and healthy community through a cooperative experience between producers and consumers, this tiny co-op in a small city opened its kiosk in Annie’s Fountain City Café, with shelves stocked with healthy non-perishables. The co-op has no employees yet, but the staff at Annie’s rings up purchases for them. This is the second stage in Farm2Table’s plans to open their own storefront with full product lines. The Farm2Table began with monthly food pre-orders, and these are still available for co-op owner/members.

<b>Address</b>	90 Main St., Fond du Lac, Wisconsin 920-602-4044
<b>Web and Facebook</b>	<a href="http://www.farm2tablefdl.com">www.farm2tablefdl.com</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/f2tcoopcafe/">https://www.facebook.com/f2tcoopcafe/</a>
<b>Open</b>	February 1, 2017
<b>Hours</b>	Monday–Friday 5:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Wednesday 5:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Saturday 6:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Sunday 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
<b>Gross/retail sq. ft.</b>	Kiosk space
<b>Membership \$</b>	\$25 yearly, \$200 lifetime
<b>Startup budget</b>	Cash flow
<b>Sales</b>	\$1,800 (annual)
<b>Staff</b>	Café staff and volunteers
<b>Members</b>	43

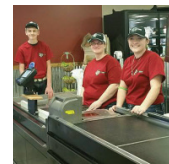


### Green Top Grocery

Our most recent opening is Green Top Grocery in Bloomington, Illinois. This co-op showed great promise from the start, with a strong market projection and a determined board and staff. After setting a new record for owner loans to a startup—over \$1.4 million—Green Top board and staff have been sharing their story and successful campaign strategies with other startups. Green Top contracted with National Co+op Grocers Development Cooperative for project management during its implementation stage and through the store opening.

As one shopping fan put it, “It’s here, it’s here! A brilliant concept come to life, with an awesome selection of gorgeous produce, delicious local meats, and just about anything healthy and/or organic you can think of. A true sense of community when you step through the doors. Support local and share in the pride of this wonderful asset to Bloomington-Normal!”

<b>Address</b>	921 E. Washington St., Bloomington, Illinois 61701 309-306-1523
<b>Web and Facebook</b>	<a href="http://greentopgrocery.com/">http://greentopgrocery.com/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/GreenTopGrocery/">https://www.facebook.com/GreenTopGrocery/</a>
<b>Open</b>	May 4, 2017
<b>Hours</b>	7:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. daily
<b>Gross/retail sq. ft.</b>	6,600 / 10,000
<b>Membership \$</b>	\$200
<b>Startup budget</b>	\$3.6 M
<b>Sales</b>	\$3.9 M (projected)
<b>Staff</b>	37 total, 15 full-time
<b>Members</b>	1,594



### Stapleton Cooperative Market and Deli

When you live in a small town out in Nebraska range country, access to groceries becomes a great concern. Eight years after the lone local store closed, the Stapleton Cooperative Market and Deli has restored full grocery service to the town of 305, so that residents no longer have to drive 30 miles to North Platte, the nearest option. There was a clear need, a supportive community, and a highly effective founding team. The co-op actually sold more shares than there are people in Stapleton—and at \$500 to become an owner, the investment was among the highest set by a food co-op. An anonymous donor purchased the building and is making it available rent-free for as long as needed. With a successful campaign to raise \$200,000 along with lots of volunteer time and labor, the co-op was able to open with no debt. □

<b>Address</b>	230 Main Street, Stapleton, Nebraska 69163 308-636-2999
<b>Web and Facebook</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Stapleton-Cooperative-Market-and-Deli-760746050719463/">https://www.facebook.com/Stapleton-Cooperative-Market-and-Deli-760746050719463/</a>
<b>Open</b>	March 13, 2017
<b>Hours</b>	Monday–Friday, 9:00–7:00 Saturday 9:00–5:00 Sunday 11:00–3:00
<b>Gross/retail sq. ft.</b>	3600 / 4800
<b>Membership \$</b>	\$500
<b>Startup budget</b>	\$200,000
<b>Sales</b>	Above projections
<b>Staff</b>	8
<b>Members</b>	310