

Old North Grocery Co-op to Open in 2010

With support from the Missouri Foundation for Health (and other proposals pending) and assistance from several other partners, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group is making plans to open a grocery co-op at St. Louis Avenue and N. 13th Street in 2010. When the current owner of the former Someone Cares Mission building at 2718 N. 13th Street purchased the property at the end of 2007, he invited ONSLRG to find a positive use for the building. Since the desire for a neighborhood grocery usually tops the list of surveys of what Old North residents would like to see in the neighborhood, the idea of a grocery co-op seemed like a perfect fit for the space. Now that the 13th Street Community Garden has been planted in the empty lots to the south of the building, residents will be able to buy food at the future co-op that is grown right outside the doors of the store.

ONSLRG has received significant help from the Community Partnership Project of the University of Missouri-St. Louis and MU-Extension (especially Kay Gasen & Kara Lubischer), including Community Building Fellows. Architectural students from Washington University (Hitomi Inouye, Daniel Jacobs, and Antonio Pacheco) took on the task of preparing drawings and 3D models to show how the building could be redeveloped to accommodate the co-op.

A planning committee of ONSLRG staff, neighborhood residents and outside friends meets on a monthly basis to coordinate the many tasks that will need to be carried out between now and the planned opening later this year.

What exactly is a co-op—and how is it different from a regular grocery store?

By structuring the store as a co-op, the business would allow community residents and consumers from other neighborhoods to purchase memberships as a way of providing financial support for a community amenity. Co-op members would then have a voice in the operation of the business (including votes in election of the Board) and would receive discounts on purchases at the store. The co-op model that we envision would not require members to work at the store, although volunteers would be warmly welcomed.

Would you have to be a member to shop there?

The Old North Grocery Co-op will be **open to the public, regardless of membership status**, with a goal of making affordable and healthy foods accessible to all residents in Old North and its surrounding neighborhoods. ***If you would like to be a part of this effort, please contact Sean Thomas (sean@onsl.org or 314-241-5031).***



Plans for Old North Grocery Co-op



Above: the interior of a grocery co-op in Knoxville.
Below: the building at 2718 N. 13th Street



How can I help?

Since the build-out of the space won't be cheap, grant dollars and contributions from individuals will be key to the success of this venture. If you know of any sources of support, please contact the ONSLRG office. Additionally, we would greatly appreciate contribution of new or used commercial refrigerators, and other store fixtures, as well as contributed construction oversight/supervision, volunteer labor (especially professional skills, such as electrical or carpentry).