

CHARLOTTESVILLE COMMUNITY FOOD CO-OP

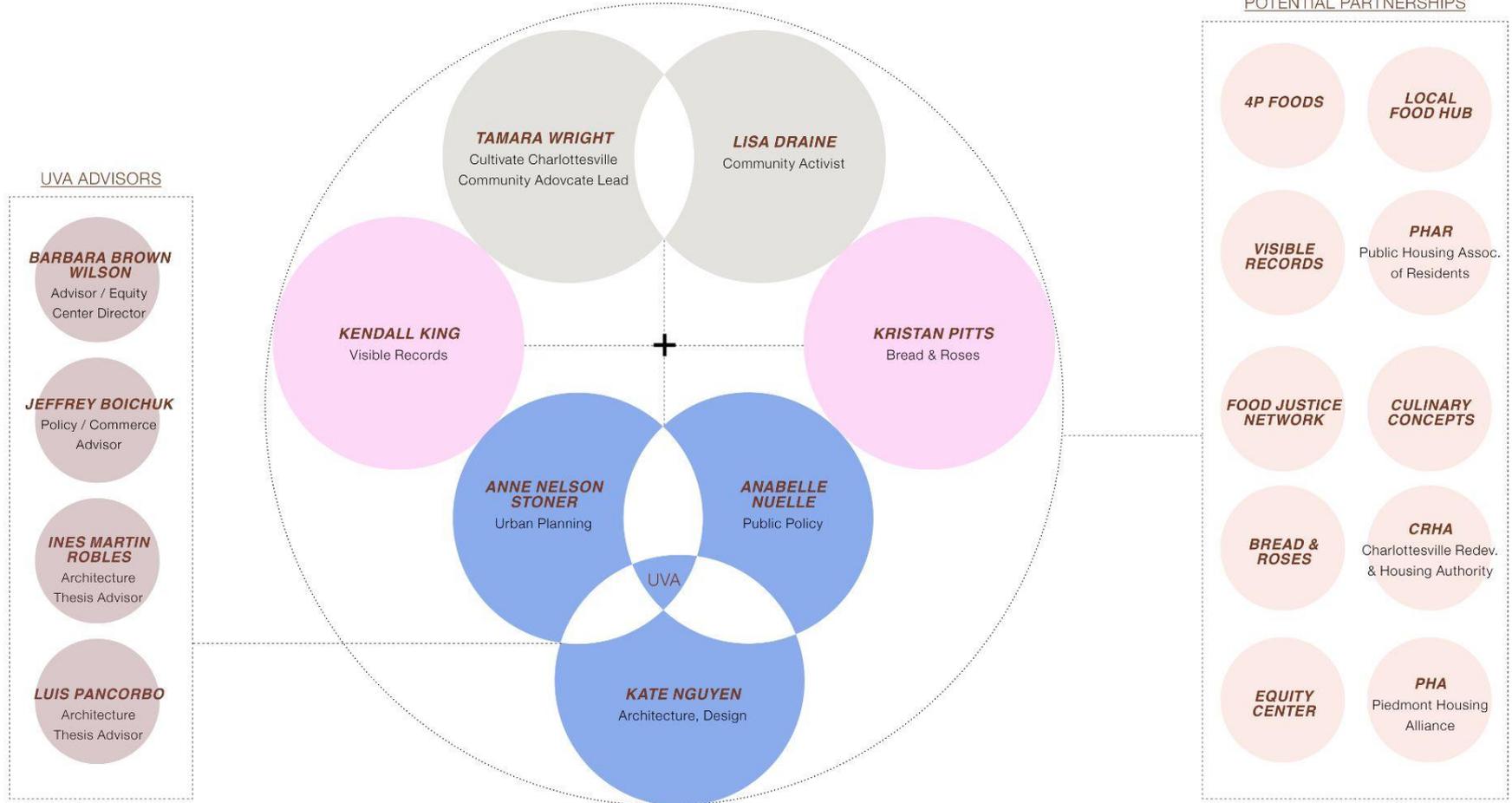
Center for Civic Innovation
Pitch Presentation
February 23, 2022

Starting point: Is Charlottesville ready for a food co-op?

In October 2018, Charlottesville City Council passed the “Food Equity Initiative”, spearheaded by the Food Justice Network (FJN). It aimed to improve access to healthy food for low-wealth residents and reduce disparities within the local food system. The plan included a recommendation to create a community-owned food co-op in one of the City’s under-resourced neighborhoods. A group of leaders from the Food Justice Network, the Public Housing Association of Residents, the Blue Ridge Health District, and City government began this work. However, planning stalled when the pandemic forced food justice advocates and their organization to pivot to address the crisis. The Center for Civic Innovation’s Fellowship offered an opportunity for Tamara Wright, Lead Community Advocate for Cultivate Charlottesville’s Food Justice Network, and Lisa Draine to jump-start the food co-op conversation.



CORE CO-OP TEAM



What is a food co-op?

A food co-op is an **autonomous association** of persons **united voluntarily** to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations, through a **jointly-owned** and **democratically-controlled** enterprise.

A cooperative is not a non-profit, it is a business with a different ownership and investment structure than a publicly traded company where any profit is distributed back to all members.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES

1. VOLUNTARY & OPEN MEMBERSHIP
Anyone can join!
2. DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL
Members elect representatives!
3. MEMBER ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION
Members contribute to the capital of the co-op!
4. AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE
Democratic control by members!
5. EDUCATION, TRAINING, & INFORMATION
Act as a community resource center!
6. COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES
Work in partnership with other co-ops!
7. CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY
Work towards sustainable development of community!

What's different about a co-op?

User-Owned

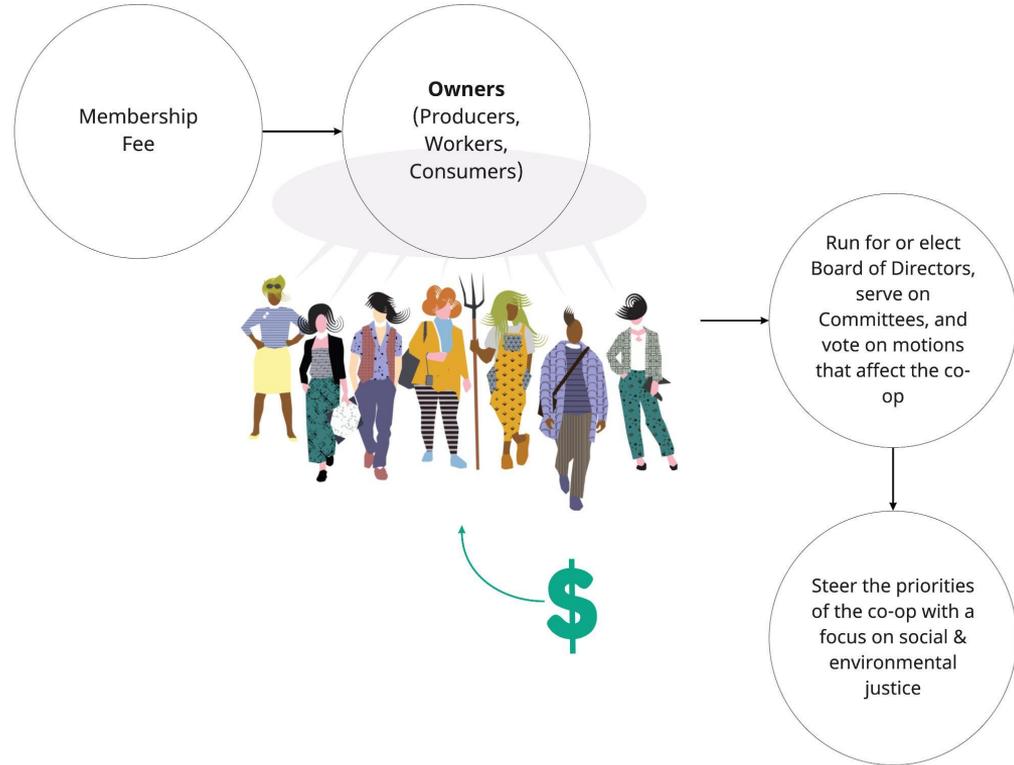
The people who use the services also own it.

User-Controlled

The people who use the co-op control it on a democratic basis.

User-Benefit

The people who use the co-op benefit from its success.



City Market/Onion River Co-op

- Location: Burlington, VT
- Population: 42,525 people
- Nearly 12,000 members/owners
- Brings in over \$53M in annual net sales, \$20.5M of which are local sales
- \$0.65 of every dollar in sales stays in Vermont
- Raises over \$215,000 annually through round-up program at check out
- Established 1973 (49 years)



Roanoke Co+op

- Location: Roanoke, VA
- Population: 99,229 people
- Over 5,400 members/owners
- Sales reached nearly \$7M, over \$3.2M to owners
- Over \$470k purchased from local vendors
- Over \$36k raised through round-ups
- Over \$1.6M paid in local wages
- Established 1975 (47 years)



Durham Co-op Market

- Location: Durham, NC
- Population: 269,702 people
- Over 6,000 owners
- Approx. \$7M in net sales, \$386K net income to owners (2021)
- Round-ups are used to provide a 20% discount low-wealth members
- ~\$1.5M paid in personnel expenses (2021)
- Established 2005 (17 years)



Our Context

- A broken, unaccountable food system
- Corporate consolidation of the food system
- Unemployment
- Dramatic inequality in wealth
- Diminished democracy in political systems
- Food apartheid in underserved communities
- Legacy of discriminatory policies
- Inequitable distribution of health-related diseases

17%

OR (1 IN 6)
CHARLOTTESVILLE
RESIDENTS FACE FOOD
INSECURITY.

vs. 11%

VIRGINIA
RESIDENTS
FACING FOOD
INSECURITY

33.3%

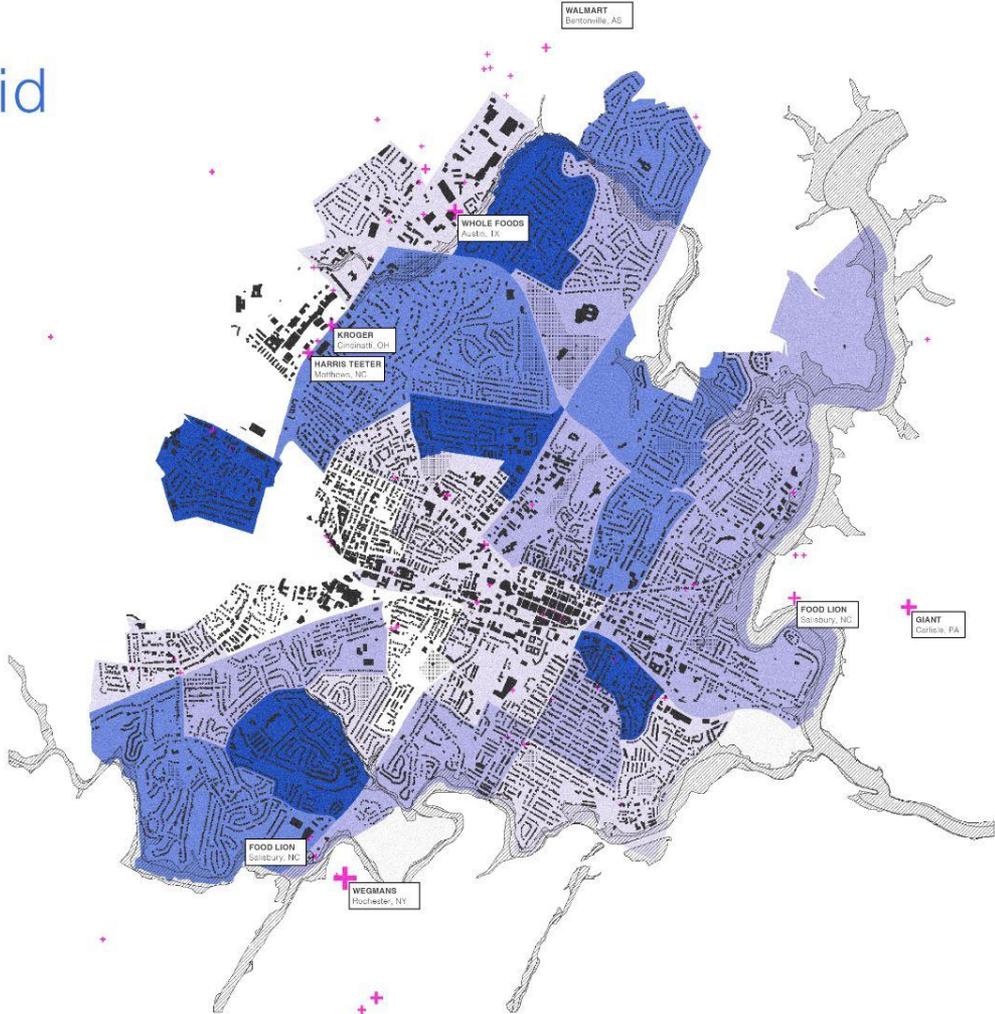
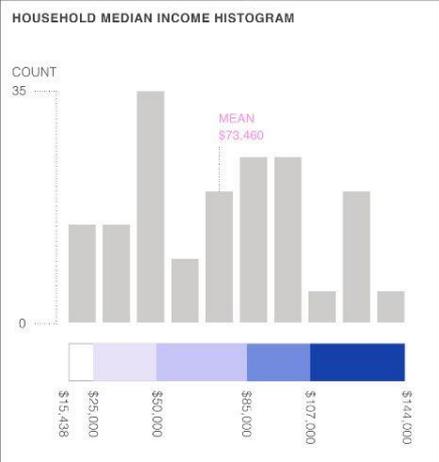
CHARLOTTESVILLE
RESIDENTS LIVE BELOW
THE POVERTY LEVEL.

vs. 13.1%

IN THE **US** BELOW
POVERTY LEVEL

Charlottesville Food Apartheid

Apartheid vs. Desert: used to highlight the racially discriminatory political structures that past and present impact food access and control.



Distance from low-wealth communities to grocery stores

<u>Community:</u>	<u>Harris Teeter</u>	<u>Trader Joe's</u>	<u>Walmart</u>	<u>Kroger</u>	<u>Wegmans</u>	<u>Food Lion (5th St.)</u>
Madison Ave:	2 miles	2.1 miles	5 miles	1.3 miles	2.8 miles	2.5 miles
Riverview:	3.9 miles	4.5 miles	6.6 miles	3.6 miles	3.6 miles	1.7 miles
Friendship Court:	2.8 miles	3.2 miles	5.6 miles	2.4 miles	2.1 miles	1.8 miles
South 1st Street:	2.8 miles	3.6 miles	6.2 miles	2.8 miles	1.6 miles	1.3 miles
6th Street:	2.7 miles	3.4 miles	5.8 miles	2.6 miles	1.9 miles	1.7 miles
Westhaven:	1.6 miles	2.4 miles	5.3 miles	1.6 miles	2.2 miles	1.9 miles

Chain grocery stores will not fix our food system.

According to recent research, simply opening a new grocery won't change what people purchase and eat.¹

Nor will they change how people live. Of all the sales chain grocery stores see each year, how much money actually stays in Charlottesville?

- Local retailers return approximately **52% of their revenue back to the local economy**, versus 14% for national chain retailers.²
- Big box retailers won't create comparable economic opportunity for our communities or open doors for local farms and suppliers.



Benefits of a Food Co-op in Charlottesville

1. **Provides resilient employment**

Especially for our low-wealth communities who have few in-town employment opportunities

2. **Builds local wealth, develops local skills and assets**

Local owners will benefit from profit, not far-off investors.

3. **Improves access to local and nutritious food**

4. **Builds community and ownership around food**

5. **Flexible, innovative, and place-based business model**

6. **Democratic and accountable to the community**

7. **Supports local farms**

Especially BIPOC farmers

8. **Provides a community space**

For organizing, non-profits, educational programming, events, etc.

Charlottesville Community Food Co-op Mission + Values

MISSION STATEMENT

The Charlottesville Food Co-op is a community owned and led grocery cooperative. The co-op's purpose is to provide improved equitable access to nutritious food, build local wealth, support the local food system, and foster connection to each other, our land, and our food.

VALUES

- Create an open, inclusive, and diverse store that welcomes our community
- Make high-quality, nourishing food affordable and accessible, especially to our low-wealth communities
- Support the local economy and local food system, especially BIPOC farmers and their access to land
- Model environmental sustainability in our practices and products
- Foster a healthy workplace based on dignity, wealth-building, and care
- Push the status quo by prioritizing inclusion and equity for those who have been excluded, from our food, land, and beyond

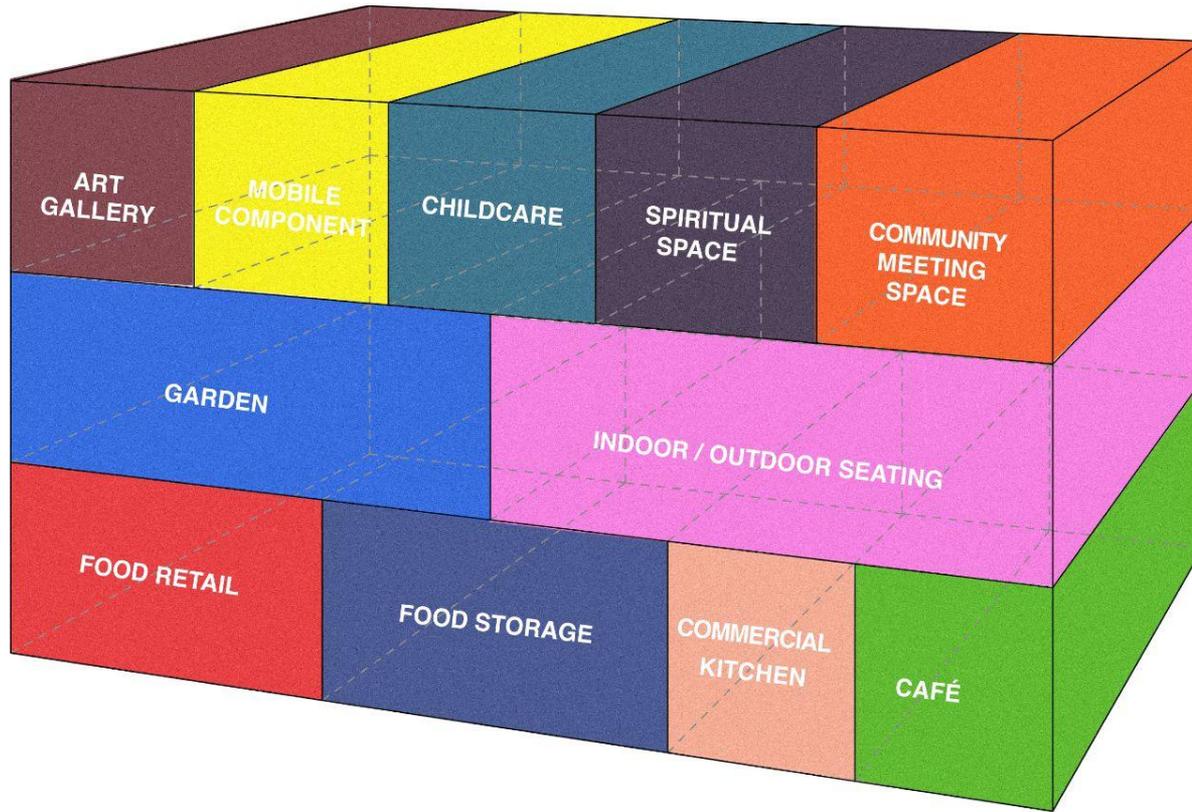
Vision — Ownership

- + Multi-stakeholder
 - Owned and operated by member employees, suppliers, and shoppers.
- + Fair & equitable membership and pricing model
 - Tiered membership pricing for same ownership.
 - Open to all!
- + Round-ups to provide discounts on local food for low-wealth shoppers
- + Wealth-building for BIPOC residents who have been harmed by systemic racism through membership & employment
- + Opens opportunities for Virginia's BIPOC farmers
- + Aims to keep local money in local pockets
- + Democratic control and governance

Vision — Programming + Offerings

- + An assortment of fresh, nutritious, affordable foods including produce, ready-made, and convenient foods
- + Community commercial kitchen: cooking classes & recipe sharing
- + Workshops with Black & Brown farmers
- + Space for community groups to organize
- + Space for community to enjoy food together
- + Community garden cultivation
- + Youth engagement
- + Job training
- + Education about food systems, food sovereignty, and food equity

Vision — Brick + Mortar



- + Welcoming
- + Inclusive
- + Sustainable construction
- + Community-oriented construction
- + Accessible
- + Walking distance to low-wealth communities
- + Clear signage & wayfinding

Process



Work to Date + Next Steps

WE HAVE...

Established a core team and project management flows.

Met with local leaders and stakeholders to establish key community partnerships.

Researched the food landscape of Charlottesville.

Researched precedents and lessons learned from other food co-ops.

WE ARE...

Seeing fiscal sponsorship.

Applying for preliminary grants.

Planning a comprehensive community engagement process including a “Summer Design Thinking Experience” with local youth.