

## Executive Summary: Visioning Report

- The purposes and values of the Buffalo Mountain Coop should remain unchanged.

*As an integral part of the Hardwick-area local food system, the Buffalo Mountain Food Cooperative contributes to the health and well-being of individuals and families, working both within and beyond our store walls to make a positive social, environmental, and economic impact in the broader community.*

The Buffalo Mountain Coop isn't just a store. It's a community with a vision for a new food future. We consider the store to be a channel for realizing our goals, not the end goal of our work together.

- Member responses to the 2014 spring survey clearly demonstrated that they largely feel positive about the products and services offered by the coop, while still acknowledging that the coop could do more if space and resources supported expanded customer services.

LIKES	DISLIKES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of growth in sales and membership</li> <li>• Nice offering of local and organic foods</li> <li>• Coop's commitment to strengthening our local food system</li> <li>• Positive reputation; coop is valued and respected by members and by local businesses and food partners</li> <li>• Knowledgeable and hard-working staff</li> <li>• Broad product inventory offers a full grocery service</li> <li>• Lots of strengths on which to build</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size and limitations in the facility make coop operations difficult for customers and staff</li> <li>• Low participation in working membership functions</li> <li>• Limited efforts on local food system development</li> <li>• Small benefits to membership</li> <li>• Many local residents cannot access food at coop</li> <li>• Could improve energy efficiency</li> <li>• Weak communications and management systems</li> </ul>

- Key Aspects of the BMC Vision
  - Style and culture of store should stay the same; members like the feel of store
  - Make the store more accessible, safe, informative, and welcoming to customers
  - Encourage members to purchase their main grocery items at the store by offering a broad inventory of food and grocery products, expanding bulk food options, and strengthening the focus on high quality, healthy products
  - Improve and promote programs that help members buy reasonably priced whole foods and other basic goods
  - Work to expand the value and benefits of membership in ways desired by members
  - Expand meaningful working membership opportunities
  - Be more active in advancing local food system development projects
  - Collaborate with farmers and regional coops to address gaps in food production and strengthen their ongoing business viability
  - Increase efforts to improve energy efficiency and waste management at store
  - Strengthen internal leadership and business systems to ensure viability and efficient operations of coop
  - Strengthen outreach, advocacy and education to members and the broader community; grow membership with special efforts to attract younger persons and persons with limited income
  - Improve maintenance and modifications of our current physical facility to maximize customer satisfaction, foster safe and efficient working conditions for staff, and protect asset re-sale value should we need a new facility in 3 or more years ahead.

## **Priority Work in next couple years:**

1. Aggressively explore ways to fund capital improvements to current building
2. Develop Hardwick real estate and funding options for an improved BMC facility so we can take quick action when we decide it is necessary or when opportunity is presented
3. Evaluate staffing and wages and make needed adjustments
4. Modify collective structure to improve coop management
5. Identify and complete building modifications to mitigate operational problems and improve store layout and shopping experience
6. Improve internal and external store signage for more informed shopping experience
7. Complete detailed evaluation of store inventory, adopt purchasing guidelines, and identify desired store inventory changes
8. Expand bulk foods inventory
9. Transition to new store inventory within 18 months of reaching inventory agreements
10. Select and improve 2 internal business systems (e.g. store check out; inventory control; store layout; communication; equity payments)
11. Establish and promote a Basic Foods Program that could make food staples more affordable
12. Identify and implement several actions that expand benefits of membership and encourage members to purchase the major portion of their grocery needs at the coop
13. Assemble other food coops and important community partners interested in the local food system to work on identifying gaps in food production, storage and distribution
14. Complete a collaborative project to resolve one of the identified food gaps
15. Two new food products being locally produced and sold at BMC and other regional outlets
16. Expand working membership to fully tap the potential needed to significantly advance our vision; establish a protocol for members to identify and volunteer for work projects of interest to them
17. Expand outreach, advocacy and education functions to directly support select elements of our vision
18. Identify and implement actions to improve energy efficiency and waste management at BMC