
CHICAGO MARKET


A COMMUNITY

CO
OP



FAQs





You've got questions.
We've got answers.

Question still not answered?

For more information, contact us directly at info@chicagomarket.coop, or reach out to us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Frequently Asked Questions:

- What can Shoppers Expect?
- Ownership
- Board of Directors and Governance
- Funding
- Employment
- Store Policies

WHAT CAN CHICAGO MARKET SHOPPERS EXPECT?

What will the co-op be like? How big will it be?

The co-op will be a big, bright, welcoming store that will have all of the products you need for your whole grocery shopping experience: local produce, meat and dairy, prepared foods, frozen foods, baked goods, a coffee and juice bar, and more. Our vision is that Chicago Market will be between 10,000 and 15,000 square feet (a typical Chicago storefront is about 1,000 sq. feet; a traditional grocery store can be as much as 75,000 square feet). This will ensure that we can carry a wide variety of products, sell local meat, baked goods and prepared foods, provide many other services and be large enough to negotiate reasonable pricing for our shoppers.

Where will the co-op be located?

We are currently working on our Ownership growth and site selection processes. Our identified trade area will make Chicago Market easily accessible to people from Roscoe Village on the south to Edgewater on the north, and from the lakefront to as far west as Albany Park. We have yet to finalize our site, but we've visited and evaluated dozens of locations and we are negotiating with some of our top choices now.

When is the store going to open?

As with any new business, things take time! Chicago Market has completed an in-depth market study to give us important data about the different factors that can help us succeed in different locations. We have developed careful criteria and a process for evaluating individual sites, and we've considered lots of them now. We've visited dozens of sites, we've met with local alderman and community groups. We're now actively beginning negotiation discussions with a few top location choices. Check out our [timeline](#). Our current goal is to open between late 2017 and late 2018, but everything depends upon our ability to find a site that meets all or most of our criteria, at a cost our Owners can afford and that will allow us to succeed in the long term.

What kind of products will it carry?

Chicago Market will sell a wide range of products. We will sell produce, meat, dairy, bakery items, prepared foods, frozen foods, grocery items, alcohol, and bulk foods. Our emphasis will be on local foods, purchased in accordance with our purchasing values. But we also plan to carry everything that a family needs to buy during a weekly grocery trip, from granola to garbage bags.

Will Chicago Market have...?

Will Owners be able to special order? Will the co-op have delivery? Will we have a community meeting space? Will we have a community kitchen? Child care? A garden or greenspace? Services like nutrition consultants and butchers? Products that are vegan or gluten free? We'd love to offer all of these items (and more) and will be exploring these and other suggestions with our General Manager and Owners once we open. If you care about bringing a particular product or service to Chicago Market, and if you are willing to work to make it your dream grocery store, the best thing you can do is become an Owner and join one of our volunteer committees, or email info@chicagomarket.coop for more information.




Local.



Sustainable.




Yours.



What makes it different from regular grocery and natural food stores? How will it compare to other co-ops?

Unlike traditional grocers, a co-op is owned and governed by the people in its community and are rooted in principles like democracy, sustainability, accountability and community. Co-ops are local people working together for better food, stronger communities and a healthier world. With our focus on the local food shed of the Midwest, you'll find a much greater selection of seasonal and local items in our store than you would find in a national chain. Our farmer partners will be more than "suppliers;" our store will be a place where you'll feel they are part of our community, like your favorite farmers market. You'll find a greater commitment to sustainable operations and to community development initiatives such as shared kitchens and program spaces, educational, health and social programs, and programs to welcome economically diverse shoppers to our store.

Chicago Market will be one of the largest co-op grocery stores in Illinois. We will be significantly larger than other Chicago area cooperatives, and hope to offer services (including onsite butchering, preservation, shared kitchen and meeting spaces) that other cooperatives currently do not.



What will transit, bike and parking options be?

Chicago Market is deeply committed to serving both the walkable and public transit communities. From the beginning, that's been part of our business plan, and the guidelines that have been developed by our Site Selection team include both density of customers within walking distance and proximity to public transit and bike parking. At the same time, we hope to make our store a citywide destination, and many of our Owners have told us that parking is important to them. It is a priority of ours to have proximity to public train and/or bus services. We'll be looking at bike access when we pick our location, including existing Divvy stations.

Can I volunteer?

Yes! We are an organization founded and built by volunteers, and we welcome your interest. Email volunteer@chicagomarket.coop and tell us a bit about yourself experience, skills, passion, what you'd like to learn about or get involved with. We hold regular Volunteer Training Sessions 1-2 times each month, 60-90 minutes each, that let you learn more about our coop and meet like-minded folks. We send out regular updates on our top volunteer needs, and if you "Connect with our team" at the bottom of any of our website pages, you'll be added to our email distribution list.

How do I bid to provide professional services or introduce my product to the co-op?

If you have general questions about the coop, or you are looking to provide services, send an email to info@chicagomarket.coop. If you're interested in selling your products at the store, send an email to grocery@chicagomarket.coop.

I have an idea or question about... Ownership, Site/Architecture, Marketing/Collaborations, Events/Programming. Who should I contact?

Email info@chicagomarket.coop and share your ideas and questions with us. We welcome input from our Owners and community!



OWNERSHIP

How does Ownership work? Do I have to pay every year?

Ownership is a one-time commitment, a \$250 or \$500 investment that covers your whole household. The \$250 (Founding Owner) or \$500 (Cultivating Owner) levels provide the same benefits and rights; we offer the Cultivating Owner level for those who feel that much more strongly that they'd like to see us get started and succeed, and we'll create a special acknowledgement for these folks in our store. A household is defined as all of the children and adults who live at the same physical address constitute a household. If you share a refrigerator, you're a household. Household Owners can all shop and access the same discounts, promotions and programs available to other Owners.

Do you have a payment plan?

We are committed to making Ownership accessible for all members of our community. Owners can pay all at once or choose to take advantage of our payment plan. With the payment plan, you choose how many payments you want and how much you want to pay. You can split the total cost of Ownership into as many as 10 payments of \$25 each. Once we are open, we are committed to working with our Owners and our larger community to find even more ways to welcome economically diverse neighbors into our store, as shoppers and as Owners.

Why should I buy an Ownership now instead of waiting until Chicago Market opens?

Because we need Owners to contribute capital to build the store. If everyone waits to become an Owner, we won't have a store. We've got more than 850 Owners right now, and our goal is to have more than 1,500 to announce our site and 3,000 by the time the store opens. We need your help to recruit more people who care about local food in order to ensure the success of our co-op.

What do I get for my Ownership?

So much! First, you get an amazing co-op grocery store to shop at. You give members of your community great jobs, give farmers the opportunity to have a fulltime, reliable local market, which helps them to plan and grow their business. You give the Earth the benefit of sustainable farming, production and distribution practices. You support good paying jobs and programs that will benefit your community.

Owners will receive discounts on classes and workshops. You also have decision-making power: you can vote and run for the Board of Directors. Owners will receive a share of Chicago Market's profits, in the form of a patronage refund (an annual check based on the amount of your purchases at the coop). Before the store opens, we're regularly offering Owners get discounts at partner businesses, access to great local food events and the chance to find out before anyone else where Chicago Market is going to be and what it will look like.

Can a business be an Owner?

Yes! We welcome local businesses that share our values and want to create change in Chicago's foodshed. Businesses get the same benefits as individual Owners. You'll designate a Voting Owner-representative of the business to vote in any elections. Your business gets the same Owner discounts and yearly patronage refunds for business-related purchases. Chicago Market business Owners also get the benefit of our huge network of locally focused Owners and followers. We will support our business Owners through a special directory on our website, as well as through social media and other regular communications. We hope to do events with business Owners, and to offer special discounts and deals for Chicago Market's community in collaboration. You'll help Chicago Market open a big, bright, beautiful coop, but at the same time, we'll grow a stronger local, sustainable economy together.



Local.



Sustainable.



Yours.




What happens if I move away, too far to shop at Chicago Market, or I simply no longer want to be an Owner?

Of course, we hope you'll remain an Owner of Chicago Market in order to help us grow and succeed. Some co-ops also offer reciprocal benefits to other co-op Owners, so you should look for a food co-op near your new home and ask! Chicago Market's Board of Directors recently clarified our buy-back policy in this way: Chicago Market may in the future decide to buy back shares of those who want to sell their ownership if the Chicago Market Board determines that it has enough money available to do so without jeopardizing the co-op's operations. However, we do not anticipate buying back shares until some time after our store opens. An Owner may sell or transfer their ownership to another person at any time. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to us at info@chicagomarket.com to connect directly.

What happens with my \$250 if the co-op fails to open?

While we're optimistic about the future of Chicago Market, this is a reasonable question from any Owner. The answer is simple: If Chicago Market fails to open, we will return money to our Owners, minus the expenses incurred in our startup efforts (e.g., Ownership campaign, site search, producing collateral, running our website, hiring real estate agents and other specialists). Everyone on the Board is an Owner of the co-op, so we're as committed as you are to carefully managing our costs and our financial health.



What is the definition of a "household"?

All of the children and adults who live at the same physical address constitute a household. If you share a refrigerator, you're a household. Household Owners can all shop and access the same discounts, promotions and programs available to other Owners. They do not have voting rights nor can they run for our coop's board of directors (though there are many Chicago Market households who choose to purchase separate Ownerships under their individual names so that they can maintain individual voting rights).

What happens if I move away, too far to shop, or I simply no longer want to be an Owner?

We hope you'll remain an Owner of Chicago Market in order to help us grow and succeed. Some coops also offer some level of reciprocal benefits to other coop Owners, so you should find a food coop near your new home and ask! You can also contact us to discuss how to be refunded on your Ownership share.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND GOVERNANCE

How does the Board of Directors operate?

The Board is made up of 15 people. The first board was elected in late 2014. Elections are held annually, per our bylaws, at our Annual Owners Meeting. The board appoints board members as needed between elections, to fill any unexpected vacancies; these appointed board members are then ratified by election at the next following Annual Owners Meeting. Check out our entire board [here](#).

At this phase of our growth, we are a working board that is actively engaged in the process of building Chicago Market. We gather community input, and work with other volunteers to oversee the development and strategic direction of the coop. Being a Board member means representing our community of store Owners with responsibility and transparency. Per our bylaws, duties of the Board of Directors include but are not limited to "overseeing the operations and finances of the Coop, establishing policies to guide operational decisions, hiring, monitoring, evaluating, compensating and firing the General Manager, securing good conditions of employment and reasonable employee benefits for all Coop employees, and assuring the purpose and mission of the Coop are properly carried out."

How long is a term for the Board of Directors?

Each director serves a 3-year term, and terms are staggered so that one-third of the Board is up for election each year.

Is there diversity on the Board of Directors?

Chicago Market has a strong commitment to diversity, and we desire to have as many communities represented on our board as possible. Our board is diverse in age, income, gender, religion and sexual orientation, as well as representing vegan/non-vegan lifestyle choices. But: we know that we can do better! As an Owner-run organization with an elected volunteer board, people have to put themselves forward to run or volunteer. If you'd like to volunteer, talk about joining our Board of Directors or connect us with your community, please email us at engage@chicagomarket.coop. We especially encourage the interest of Owners of color and those who are part of the amazing variety of cultural communities in our neighborhoods.

FUNDING

How will Chicago Market be funded?

Chicago Market will be funded through a variety of sources. Owners will make up a big part of our funding, in the form of their Ownership equity, but also through Owner Loans. These are long-term loans to the coop under a variety of competitive interest rates and are paid back by the coop's financial success. It's more akin to social investment than speculative investing, and it follows the core coop philosophy: Owners contributing to the common good for the benefit of all Owners. We anticipate launching our Owner Loan Campaign as soon as we have reached appropriate mile markers, including having a site identified and publicized. Beyond that, coops are funded by a combination of loans from their Owners, loans from banks and foundations, city funding (such as TIF) and grants from organizations that support healthy food and access to local products. For more information, drop us a line at board@chicagomarket.coop.

EMPLOYMENT

Who is going to run the store?

The Board will oversee a General Manager who will run the store day-to-day.

Will people be able to volunteer in the store?

There is no work requirement to be a co-op Owner at Chicago Market. Once the store opens, we will hire people to work in the store. There are laws against using volunteers as substitutes for regular paid labor, and we hope to build a professional, well-paid staff that offers fair wages, skills development and career advancement for people in our community. There will be plenty of volunteer opportunities via community initiatives, programs and partnerships. And meanwhile, in our current setup and building phases of Chicago Market, there are a ton of opportunities for volunteers - our entire organization is built around them. Email volunteer@chicagomarket.coop for more information.

When will you be hiring? Will you pay more than other stores? Will you offer health insurance?

Most of our employees will come on board when we have a store in place; we may have a few paid positions before that, so watch our email and social media accounts for openings. We are committed to paying fair wages and benefits, and bringing great jobs to our community. Our goal is to provide a real living wage to our full and part time employees, and to hire people who are excited about a career in food and serving our community. This will be more than just your average retail job.

Local.

STORE POLICIES

What will be your purchasing guidelines?

The Board of Directors, in collaboration with a robust group of volunteers, has created a set of Purchasing Values that will guide everything Chicago Market puts on our shelves. Check them out [here](#).

Sustainable.

Will you only sell local foods?

Our first and foremost goal is to feature the wonderful local foods we have in our area and to nurture relationships with growers and producers in our hyperlocal, local and Midwest region. We will not be all organic, however we expect to have a very large inventory of organic food. Our emphasis is on local, sustainable and organic items but most importantly, we will have clear and transparent information about everything so you'll always know what you're buying. One of our goals is to promote honest food and transparent labeling so we can empower consumer choice and discretion with the best information. Chicago Market advocates for socially responsible food with integrity and chooses to prioritize non-GMO products during sourcing and procurement.

Yours.

What are you doing to welcome lower-income, economically diverse folks into the co-op community?

Chicago Market's Mission Statement includes the following: "we support service to diverse communities, goodpaying jobs, local economic development, environmental stewardship, accountability and social responsibility." At this time, we're unable to offer discounts on coop Ownership, but we do offer a plan that allows up to 10 months of smaller monthly payments toward the onetime fee. Further, we invite everyone, not just Owners, to join us at most of our events and programs, or as volunteers so they can engage with us and help actively shape our community. Once the store opens, we hope to accept services like SNAP and LINK, and to offer other services or opportunities for economically diverse customers as many of our coop brethren do (including sponsored or reduced price Ownerships) and more. Meanwhile: if you have ideas or want to get involved in this area, we'd welcome that! Email volunteer@chicagomarket.coop to get involved.

Will Chicago Market support fair labor practices on farms and from producers?

Yes. Chicago Market's Purchasing Values includes: "We build relationships with vendors whose business practices support the environment, the community and fair labor. Being socially responsible at Chicago Market means we consider what practices are part of our supply chain as we source the products that stock our shelves. Our suppliers raise crops in ways that nurture and protect the soil, air and waterways while caring for their farm workers and providing a fair wage. Their animals are treated humanely from birth to processing."




How will Chicago Market compare to Farmers Markets? Will you compete with Farmers Markets?

Chicago Market acts in cooperation with, and not in competition with, farmers' markets. We'll offer a large, new, predictable marketplace for farmers to grow their customer base. They'll be able to count on shoppers for their goods seven days a week, year-round and rain or shine. We've already spent time hosting "Listening Sessions" with local farmers and producers because our Mission calls for us "to treat farmers and vendors not as cogs in a supply chain, but as members of our community." We've got other ideas for partnering with farmers, like buying short-dated produce after farmers markets and processing it into soups and other prepared foods to reduce food waste.

Our store will feature local and regional produce, fruits, meats, eggs and cheeses from the kinds of farmers you see at farmers markets. But it will also carry shampoo, frozen foods, dried pasta, bulk foods and wines and beers to round out your meals and household shopping. Plus, it's open every day of the week, indoors, year-round, rain or shine! We like to think that our coop will be a grocery store with a neighborhood farmers market mentality.

Are there other food co-ops in Chicago?

The Dill Pickle Coop is located in Logan Square. Sugar Beet Coop is in Oak Park. And there are others, like us, in development. Consistent with international coop principles, we support other coops every chance we get, and we are part of [Chicagoland Food Coop Coalition](#).





Contact us.

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chicagomarket.coop

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