

# ANNUAL REPORT



Deep Roots Co-op Market  
Greensboro, North Carolina



# Table of Contents

---

**2 Mission & Ends**

**3 Principles & Values**

**4 Co-operators**

**5-6 Board President's Report**

**7-8 General Manager's Report**

**9 Financial Statements**

**10 Engagement & Impact Report**

**11-12 Board Committee Updates**

**13-14 Commitment to Sustainability**

**15-19 Deep Roots' Journey**

# Our Mission & Ends Statement

## Mission

In accordance with the Cooperative Values and Cooperative Principles, we operate to serve the surrounding community, moving toward a healthy, equitable, and sustainable future.

## Ends Statement

The Deep Roots Market community will have:

- Access to healthy, locally grown, organic, and Fair-Trade foods and goods
- A sustainable community marketplace where all are welcome
- A vibrant example of the Cooperative Values and Principles
- A gathering place to build and strengthen community
- A working example of greater equity and justice



# Our Cooperative Principles & Values

## Co-op Principles



## Co-op Values

- Self-help
- Democracy
- Equity
- Honesty
- Social Responsibility
- Self-responsibility
- Equality
- Solidarity
- Openness
- Caring for Others

# Our Co-operators

## Board of Directors



Drew Dix  
President



Spoma Jovanovic  
Co-Vice President



Mollie Blafer  
Co-Vice President



Debra Smith El  
Treasurer



Khaila Daye  
Assistant Treasurer



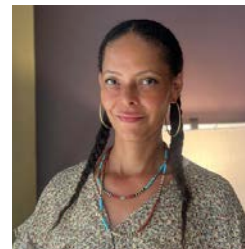
Brittany Peters  
Secretary



Lisa Hinton-Donkor  
Assistant Secretary

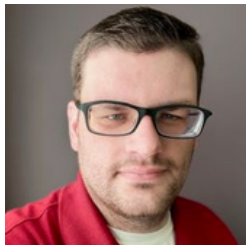


Cecelia Allen  
At-large



Andrea Davidson  
At-large

## Store Leadership Team



Matt Davis  
General Manager



Chantae McDaniel  
Finance & Operations



Tiffany Hargraves  
Owner & Guest Services



Keisha Harris  
Human Resources



Genesis McCarty  
Community Outreach



Chris Moss  
Point of Sale



Denard Smith  
Grocery



Matt Mikel  
Specialty, Beer & Wine



Tiffani Smith  
Wellness



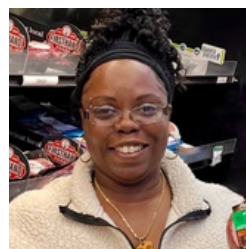
Wilton Whitmire  
Produce



Jamel Watkins  
Food Service



Matthew Fitzgerald  
Food Service



Pearl Boswell  
Meat & Seafood

# From Our Board President

As we look back on the past year, I am proud of our focus on continuing to meet common economic, social, and cultural needs through our jointly-owned and democratically-controlled co-op. It all happens due to the dedication of the people who make it possible—our owners, staff, local farmers, and community partners.

And this year, we celebrate our 50th anniversary, an incredible milestone!

## Celebrating Our Cooperative Community

Deep Roots Co-op Market remains grounded in its mission to provide access to healthy, sustainably produced food while supporting local producers and building a resilient community economy. This past year, we welcomed 476 new owners into our co-op, strengthening our democratic structure and proving that cooperation works as the best way to build a healthy, equitable, and sustainable future.

You, our owners, continue to be the heart of our market. Participation in owner events, volunteer efforts, and board elections drive the cooperative spirit that has defined Deep Roots for five decades.

## Some Highlights from the Year

Among our proudest accomplishments this year have been:

- The continued growth of our relationships with regional farmers, food makers, and artisans. By prioritizing locally sourced products whenever possible, we keep more dollars circulating in the local economy and help strengthen sustainable agriculture in the Piedmont Triad.
- Our Produce, Grocery, and Prepared Foods teams worked creatively to expand local offerings and highlight seasonal specials, providing more options for our shoppers and strengthening our identity as a truly community-based grocery, right in downtown Greensboro.
- Deep Roots remains committed to breaking down the income barrier to full participation in the coop. We made positive new changes to our LIME (Low Income Membership) Program in existence for 8 years, with the introduction of LIME+, with added benefits of full co-op ownership for those who qualify. Thanks to a generous grant from the Fund for Democratic Communities, we're able to offer a fully paid co-op equity share to any LIME Member who opts in (a \$160 value that extends all the lifetime benefits of full-share ownership).
- We've made very significant progress in reducing our debt load by launching an aggressive repayment strategy of loans from our personal and institutional lenders. This work continues, with a goal to have all loans fully repaid by the end of this year.



*Drew Dix  
President, Board of Directors*

# From Our Board President

- On March 2nd, 2026, the city of Greensboro officially honored Deep Roots Market with a proclamation marking our 50th anniversary and legacy of dedication to the community.
- Working closely with our new GM, Matt Davis, we executed careful financial stewardship and operational strategy. Rising supply costs, shifts in consumer buying behavior, and increased competition require constant adaptation. But through it all, Deep Roots Market remained stable while continuing to maintain a top-notch store experience.
- Deep Roots growth has come from much more than what's on our shelves this past year- we continue to expand as a vibrant community hub. Local nonprofits, educational organizations, and community groups utilized our Community Room more than ever for meetings and planning sessions. We're proud to assist their own community impact.

## Staff and Leadership

Perhaps most importantly, I would like to extend sincere gratitude to our General Manager and his management team and staff, whose selflessness and dedication make Deep Roots a unique and welcoming place to shop and work. Their commitment to service and positive attitude make a huge difference!

The Board of Directors also remains committed to strong governance and long-term strategic planning. This year, we continued our work on board training, policy development, and cooperative education to make sure we continue to represent the interests of our owners.

## Looking Ahead

As we move into the coming year, we are looking to focus on :

- Strengthening the financial balance sheet and continuing to explore operational efficiencies.
- Expanding owner engagement and cooperative education- including a Mobile Market for product and service distribution to outlying areas.
- Increasing our support for local and regional food systems.
- Continuing to improve the shopping experience for everyone and growing our owner base!

So, congratulations on helping us reach the 50-year mark!

And thank you to all owners, staff, vendors, and community partners for making this year possible. Your commitment means we stay strong.

In cooperation,



Drew Dix, President, Board of Directors  
Deep Roots Co-op Market

# From Our General Manager

Deep Roots Community of Owners,

This year marks an extraordinary milestone in the history of Deep Roots Market: our 50th anniversary. For five decades, our cooperative has served as a community gathering place, a champion of local farmers and producers, and a testament to the power of community ownership. What began as a small group of people brought together by a vision for healthy food, economic democracy, and social responsibility has grown into Greensboro's thriving cooperative that continues to embody those founding values.

As we celebrate this golden anniversary, we honor the generations of owners, staff, board members, volunteers, and community supporters who have shaped Deep Roots into what it is today. Their dedication, passion, and belief in cooperation created a lasting institution that has weathered economic cycles, industry changes, and shifting consumer trends while remaining steadfast in its commitment to people, local food, and community.



*Matt Davis*  
*General Manager*

Reaching fifty years is an achievement few independent businesses can claim. It's a powerful reminder that when people come together around shared values and a common purpose, they can build something that endures. Every owner who shops at the market, participates in governance, attends events, or simply shares our story contributes to this legacy.

As we reflect on the past year and look toward the future, we celebrate not only our accomplishments but also the cooperative spirit that has sustained Deep Roots Market for half a century. We are proud of our history, grateful for your support, and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for the next fifty years.

I am filled with gratitude for your continued support, engagement, and commitment to our cooperative mission. As owners, you are more than just customers; you are stewards of a community-owned enterprise dedicated to strengthening our local food system, supporting sustainable agriculture, and fostering a healthier, more connected community.

2025 brought both opportunities and challenges for the co-op. The grocery industry in general, especially the natural foods sector, continues to face inflationary pressures, rising labor and operating costs, increased competition, and changing consumer habits. Despite these headwinds, we have remained focused on our mission and long-term sustainability.

Over the past year, we have continued to invest in our store, our staff, and our community. We strengthened relationships with local farmers and producers, expanded access to fresh and responsibly sourced products, and worked diligently to maintain the high standards of quality and service that our owners and shoppers expect. Our team has remained committed to creating a welcoming shopping experience while staying true to the cooperative principles that distinguish us from conventional retailers.

# From Our General Manager

One of our greatest strengths continues to be our commitment to purchasing from local vendors, suppliers that are inclusively owned, and/or those that share our principles and values. Every dollar spent at Deep Roots helps circulate resources within our regional economy, supporting independent farmers, food producers, and small businesses. Through your patronage, you help create meaningful economic impact that extends well beyond our store walls.

We have also continued to invest in our staff by increasing wages, maintaining benefits, and prioritizing training opportunities, recognizing that they are essential to the success of the cooperative. Their dedication, resilience, and commitment to service have enabled us to navigate challenges while continuing to improve operations and shopper experience. On behalf of the Board of Directors and leadership team, I extend my sincere appreciation to every member of our staff.

Financial stewardship remains a top priority. Throughout the year, we focused on controlling expenses, improving operational efficiency, and positioning the cooperative for long-term success. While the retail environment remains competitive, we are committed to making thoughtful decisions that balance financial responsibility with our mission-driven goals. This focus resulted in the repayment or forgiveness of just over \$180,000 in outstanding owner loans, marking the most yearly progress we've ever made toward owner loan repayment, and an overall profit of just over \$230,000, making 2025 our first profitable year since 2011.

Beyond the store, Deep Roots continued to support community organizations, educational initiatives, and local partnerships that align with our values. Whether through our food access program, nonprofit collaborations, or educational outreach, we remain dedicated to building a stronger and more equitable food system for everyone.

Looking ahead, we see opportunities to deepen owner engagement, strengthen our financial position, improve the shopping experience, and expand our impact within the community through outreach and education. We will continue evaluating ways to enhance our offerings, invest in our facilities, and respond to the evolving needs of our owners and shoppers.

None of this would be possible without you. Your ownership, feedback, volunteerism, and patronage are the foundation of our cooperative. Thank you for believing in the power of community ownership and for supporting a business that prioritizes people, local food, and shared prosperity.

On behalf of the staff, leadership team, and Board of Directors, thank you for being part of the first 50 years of Deep Roots Market. We look forward to the next 50 years and beyond of serving our community together.

Sincerely yours in cooperation,



Matt Davis, General Manager  
Deep Roots Co-op Market

# Financial Statements

The financial information contained in this report is confidential and intended only for Deep Roots Market Co-op Owners

## 2025 Summary Balance Sheet

|                                     | TOTAL               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                       |                     |
| Current Assets                      |                     |
| Bank Accounts                       | \$328,923.10        |
| Accounts Receivable                 | \$0.00              |
| Other Current Assets                | \$351,950.96        |
| <b>Total Current Assets</b>         | <b>\$680,874.06</b> |
| Fixed Assets                        | \$128,950.25        |
| Other Assets                        | \$110,832.76        |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                 | <b>\$920,657.07</b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>       |                     |
| Liabilities                         |                     |
| Current Liabilities                 |                     |
| Accounts Payable                    | \$161,844.58        |
| Credit Cards                        | \$1,934.91          |
| Other Current Liabilities           | \$347,242.02        |
| <b>Total Current Liabilities</b>    | <b>\$511,021.51</b> |
| Long-Term Liabilities               | \$235,583.86        |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>            | <b>\$746,605.37</b> |
| Equity                              | \$174,051.70        |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b> | <b>\$920,657.07</b> |

## 2025 Summary Profit & Loss by Quarter

|                                   | JAN - MAR, 2025       | APR - JUN, 2025       | JUL - SEP, 2025       | OCT - DEC, 2025       | TOTAL                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Income</b>                     |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| 40050 Sales                       | 1,647,833.35          | 1,592,380.23          | 1,554,048.26          | 1,585,093.09          | \$6,379,354.93        |
| <b>Total Income</b>               | <b>\$1,647,833.35</b> | <b>\$1,592,380.23</b> | <b>\$1,554,048.26</b> | <b>\$1,585,093.09</b> | <b>\$6,379,354.93</b> |
| <b>Cost of Goods Sold</b>         |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| 50000 Cost of Goods Sold          | 1,071,257.61          | 1,009,032.44          | 970,361.34            | 1,033,229.79          | \$4,083,881.18        |
| <b>Total Cost of Goods Sold</b>   | <b>\$1,071,257.61</b> | <b>\$1,009,032.44</b> | <b>\$970,361.34</b>   | <b>\$1,033,229.79</b> | <b>\$4,083,881.18</b> |
| <b>GROSS PROFIT</b>               | <b>\$576,575.74</b>   | <b>\$583,347.79</b>   | <b>\$583,686.92</b>   | <b>\$551,863.30</b>   | <b>\$2,295,473.75</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| 60000 Personnel Expenses          | 328,187.64            | 314,380.84            | 411,969.85            | 376,092.09            | \$1,430,630.42        |
| 70000 Occupancy Expenses          | 87,288.92             | 81,207.02             | 90,869.95             | 80,280.34             | \$339,646.23          |
| 71000 Operating Expenses          | 62,773.13             | 56,735.03             | 57,927.90             | 73,494.35             | \$250,930.41          |
| 72000 Administrative Expenses     | 21,832.32             | 29,755.27             | 26,321.16             | 32,147.08             | \$110,055.83          |
| 73000 Marketing & Outreach        | 2,428.56              | 5,216.47              | 2,393.38              | 2,338.50              | \$12,376.91           |
| 78000 Governance                  | 245.24                | 2,816.63              | 423.80                | 133.03                | \$3,618.70            |
| 79900 Depreciation & Amortization | 2,817.87              | 2,817.87              | 2,817.87              | 7,537.04              | \$15,990.65           |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>             | <b>\$505,573.68</b>   | <b>\$492,929.13</b>   | <b>\$592,723.91</b>   | <b>\$572,022.43</b>   | <b>\$2,163,249.15</b> |
| <b>NET OPERATING INCOME</b>       | <b>\$71,002.06</b>    | <b>\$90,418.66</b>    | <b>\$-9,036.99</b>    | <b>\$-20,159.13</b>   | <b>\$132,224.60</b>   |
| <b>Other Income</b>               |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| 80000 Other Income                | 8,643.85              | 4,589.52              | 1,788.96              | 102,205.15            | \$117,227.48          |
| <b>Total Other Income</b>         | <b>\$8,643.85</b>     | <b>\$4,589.52</b>     | <b>\$1,788.96</b>     | <b>\$102,205.15</b>   | <b>\$117,227.48</b>   |
| <b>Other Expenses</b>             |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| 90000 Other Expenses              | 6,417.81              | 7,354.26              | 6,261.96              | -2,058.17             | \$17,975.86           |
| <b>Total Other Expenses</b>       | <b>\$6,417.81</b>     | <b>\$7,354.26</b>     | <b>\$6,261.96</b>     | <b>\$-2,058.17</b>    | <b>\$17,975.86</b>    |
| <b>NET OTHER INCOME</b>           | <b>\$2,226.04</b>     | <b>\$-2,764.74</b>    | <b>\$-4,473.00</b>    | <b>\$104,263.32</b>   | <b>\$99,251.62</b>    |
| <b>NET INCOME</b>                 | <b>\$73,228.10</b>    | <b>\$87,653.92</b>    | <b>\$-13,509.99</b>   | <b>\$84,104.19</b>    | <b>\$231,476.22</b>   |

# Cooperatrive Engagement & Impact

Throughout 2025, Deep Roots remained dedicated to fostering community engagement, supporting local producers, and enriching the owner experience. Our focus was on building meaningful connections between vendors, community organizations, and our valued owners to strengthen collective growth and success.

One of the major highlights was hosting over 35 sampling events at the co-op. These events offered local vendors the opportunity to share their products directly with the community. From foods to specialty items, these samples not only introduced customers to new products but also strengthened relationships with local businesses. This reflects our commitment to supporting local and providing fresh, quality products to shoppers.

We also put lots of effort into educational visits with local farmers and suppliers. A notable visit was to First Hand Foods, one of our largest local meat suppliers. During this visit, staff members got to tour the farm, learn about their sustainable practices, and speak directly with the farmers who produce a large part of our humanely-raised beef, pork, and specialty meats. This hands-on experience reinforces our commitment to supporting local farmers.

Our dedication to serving the community goes well beyond the store. Over the past year, we've supported several local organizations that truly make a difference. Such as The Precious Cargo Foundation, which we aided through their maternity drive; Kids Poetry Basketball, gained fundraising efforts to support youth literacy programs; Out of the Garden Project, providing meals for children experiencing food insecurity; and the Walkertown Community Center, supplying household items to those in need. Partnerships like this are truly impactful, and we're proud to be part of making a positive difference in the community.

Customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with NCG surveys ranking us as the #3 co-op in the country for response volume. Owners & shoppers have shared testimonials expressing their appreciation for our staff and store environment.

Comments include:

- "I feel the employees care about the customers. They work to get accurate answers and understand the store layout," and "Great customer service, fresh produce, and a welcoming environment."
- "Entering Deep Roots is always a pleasure due to the cleanliness, ease of locating items, and variety of options. I was able to complete my shopping and join as a member quickly. Everyone was kind and helpful."



*Genesis McCarty  
Community Outreach Coordinator*

# Board Committee Updates

## Finance Committee

### *Introducing LIME+ and New Deep Roots Owners*



Thanks to a generous grant from the **Fund for Democratic Communities**, low-income community members can now enroll in the new LIME+ program introduced in the summer of 2025, where the lifetime equity investment is fully paid by the grant. What that means is that in addition to LIME+ members receiving discounts on regular purchases, they can now (for the first time) also vote in annual elections, receive other owner benefits and discounts, and run for a seat on the Board of Directors.

At the end of 2025, Deep Roots was proud to have 86 new LIME+ members. We appreciate that the F4DC grant benefits people who have suffered the most from the unfortunate impacts of our uncertain economy. We also recognize and appreciate all the Deep Roots owners and other shoppers who round up at the cash register to ensure LIME+ members continue to receive the best possible shopping discounts.

We hope the LIME+ program will continue to grow to meet the needs of our neighbors. If you know someone who could benefit from the program, please encourage them to sign up!

### *Making Progress Paying Back Owner Loans*

We are making progress! Toward the end of 2024, the Deep Roots Board of Directors and General Manager developed a multi-year plan to retire outstanding owner loans that were secured starting in 2011 to support Deep Roots' operations in challenging times and move to the downtown location. Our goal was to distribute \$80,000 in debt repayment by the end of 2025, an ambitious step for sure, but one that represented a strong commitment to our larger goal.

So, how did we do? We are happy to report that by the end of 2025, \$151,134.73 was paid out on outstanding loans. Even more impressive, however, was that many owners forgave the interest and/or principal due, amounting to \$83,112.29.

And two of our local foundations converted their loans to a gift in one case, and a grant in the other, to remove \$39,000 of debt from our books.

In total, Deep Roots retired \$273,247.02 of debt by the end of 2025! We have a lot more work to do, but with the generosity of our owners and tightening operational expenses, our plans remain to be just as aggressive in paying back the remainder of our owner loans in 2026.

A big thank you to all our owners and foundations who have been patient with us through the years! Your faith and investments in Deep Roots are what made it possible for us to sustain our democratically run market that both depends upon and supports local businesses and shoppers.

# Board Committee Updates

## Marketing & Outreach Committee

### *Mobile Marketing with a New Van*

**The Cemala Foundation** graciously agreed to convert an outstanding loan into a 2025 gift to Deep Roots in the amount of \$12,700, specifically for the purchase of our first van! We are appreciative to be part of The Cemala Foundation's vision to encourage collaboration and community building in civic undertakings.

Our Ford E-350 van now sits proudly in our parking lot when it's not on the road for special events or deliveries that reach people who may not have easy access to Deep Roots. A newly established Board committee is hard at work and in conversation with community groups and government entities. The goal is to design long-lasting partnerships, using the van, to support local farmers and vendors while delivering the best of that local effort to the wider community.



## Board Development Committee

### *Board Development Opportunities*

Our Board Development Committee does more than run the election voting process. We recruit future directors, support applicants through a clear and accessible process, and help new board members get trained and ready to serve. In the past few years, we've strengthened our approach by listening to owner feedback, which has led to more applications and a smoother experience for everyone.

Staying true to our co-op values, we've made becoming a board member more inclusive. LIME+ members are now able to run for the board for the first time, and we've expanded our outreach to bring in candidates from a wider range of backgrounds. We've also tightened key policies, like how we handle ties, to keep the process consistent and transparent.

Remember, Deep Roots is guided by an elected Board of Directors that serves three-year terms. We invite all owners to consider serving on a board committee to learn more about how the board operates to improve the co-op's contributions to the community and serve the needs of owners and shoppers. Each year, we also encourage owners to consider running for a board position. No prior experience required, just a genuine willingness to learn and contribute to the co-op's future.

# Commitment to Sustainability

Deep Roots Market is a leader in sustainability in the Triad. Our commitments to supporting local producers, eliminating food waste, and reducing plastic waste are a few aspects of our commitment to the planet. What follows is more of what we do!

## Local Producers

Our co-op supports over 150 local producers. From farmers, cheese makers, beer, soap, bakers, and wellness products - we have a diverse offering from the best local producers in the Triad and the state. While the number fluctuates, we source over 5x more in local products than the typical grocer. That makes a huge impact on local businesses.

## Bulk Buying

We currently offer 360 items in our bulk department, making it the largest bulk section in the Triad. Shopping bulk offers zero-waste shopping as you can bring your own containers and bags.

## Filtered Water

Our store has a water filter machine that produces Reverse Osmosis, Deionized, and High PH water, allowing customers to reduce plastic waste by refilling water jugs. This machine is utilized by the store to use filtered water in our produce department wet wall, produce prep room, kitchen, and coffee bar.

## Taproots Rewards

Several years ago, Deep Roots launched its Taproots Rewards Program as a benefit for our owners and the planet. It is a points-earning program that offers owners coupons as they accrue points.

For each dollar you spend, you get 1 point - 2,000 points = \$5 off!

The Taproots Program offers double points for the following items:

- local
- B-Corp
- Fair Trade
- bulk
- cooperatively-produced items

Owners also earn bonus points when they:

- Bring their own bags
- Bring reusable containers for bulk
- Recruit a new owner
- Volunteer at the co-op



*Brittany Peters  
Chair, Sustainability Committee*

# Commitment to Sustainability

## More Sustainable Features at Deep Roots Market

### Food Waste

All the food scraps from the produce department are picked up by local farmers and fed to livestock or composted. All expired/unsold food at the co-op is donated to Food Not Bombs and Out of the Garden Project, which distributes it for free to those in need.

### Staff Commuter Bonus

Staff members are given a bonus each time they commute to work via bicycle or public transit.

### Electric Vehicle Charging Station

We have a charging station in our parking lot for electric cars.

### Bike Benefits Program

Customers who are part of this program receive a 5% discount when they ride their bike.

### Less Plastic Waste

The co-op is continuously working to reduce the plastic waste it generates. The produce department uses compostable produce bags, the hot bar uses compostable to-go packaging, the bulk department uses paper bags, and the cashiers use paper bags or reuse cardboard boxes. We also implemented a fee for paper bags to help offset the co-op's supplies expenses and to encourage shoppers to bring their own bags or use free boxes.



*Check out the 2025 Food Co-op Impact Report  
on our website at [www.deerootsmarket.com](http://www.deerootsmarket.com)*

# An Overview of Deep Roots' Journey

*an article by Joel Landau*

Deep Roots Cooperative has a fascinating and colorful history! It's been a struggle at times, but despite obstacles, Deep Roots has journeyed forward despite five other retail grocery cooperatives in the Triad, including two here in Greensboro, succumbing to the challenges of competing in this age of large chain grocery stores. Our success is a tribute to the many people who have stepped forward over the years, contributing their time, effort, vision, patronage, and money in pursuit of a collective cooperative vision. The following is an overview of our 50-year history.

In the 1970s, a "Buying Club" formed in the Friendly Avenue home of C.L. Hickerson. It then moved to the basement of Mary Hobbs dorm at Guilford College. In 1976, in response to continued growth as well as water leakage in the basement, the decision was made to move to a storefront at 1837 Spring Garden Street. This effort was led by Martha Legare, David Sower, and John Margenot.



*Joel Landau, Co-op Owner  
Former GM & Board President*

By 1978, it was incorporated as a Cooperative under the statutes of Washington DC. The store had also moved three doors east to 1831 Spring Garden Street. The store was small, at 1,100 square feet, stocking mostly natural foods in bulk, displayed primarily in large ceramic crocks. The store was only open six days a week, from noon to six o'clock. There were two part-time co-managers who alternated days and were paid minimally. Most of the work was done by member volunteers, with monthly member potlucks/meetings for socializing and decision-making. In large part, it was an expanded version of the Guilford College Buying Club.

In 1982, Greensboro saw The Fresh Market open its first store; it originally emphasized natural foods, carrying most everything Deep Roots had, plus much more. At the same time, one of the co-op's co-managers resigned under scrutiny, resulting in a rift in the membership. The result of these two events was a Deep Roots financial crisis. Sales, which had been just enough to cover expenses, dropped forty percent, leaving us unable to pay all the bills. In June of 1982, Joel Landau was hired to replace the co-manager who had resigned; he shared duties with the remaining co-manager, Dianna Rawleigh.

In 1982-3, Joel and Dianna established a Marketing Committee, headed by member C.B. Claiborne, an associate professor of marketing at NC A&T. The committee developed many suggestions for improving the business; along with other operational changes (such as expanded hours and streamlined ordering), sales slowly picked up.

In the Spring of 1983, co-manager Dianna Rawleigh moved to California. The Board adopted a new management structure, switching from two part-time co-managers to one full-time General Manager (GM) and one part-time Assistant Manager. Joel was hired as the first GM.

# An Overview of Deep Roots' Journey

Deep Roots' primary vendor through the 1980s was Mt. Warehouse, itself a Co-operative, located in Durham, NC. Mt. Warehouse was a wholesale distributor for the Appalantic Federation of Cooperatives, serving six states, with over one hundred member co-ops, primarily buying clubs. Meanwhile, while several NC co-op storefronts closed during the 80s and early 90s, Deep Roots continued to grow. In the late 80s, a small produce section was established; it was the first all-organic produce section in Greensboro.

In 1988, Joel, with Board approval, established our Owner Equity system. Each "Owner" henceforth bought one share of the business, replacing the previous system of "Members" paying dues each year.

In 1989, Joel resigned as he moved out of town; the co-op was on solid financial footing with annual sales growth of twenty-five percent, though still a small store.

In 1990, the new GM arranged a relocation to a 2,400 square foot facility at 3728 Spring Garden Street. The move took place in September. Joel had moved back to Greensboro the month before and been hired as Assistant Manager. This larger store enabled us to expand our produce, refrigerated, frozen, grocery, baked goods, and wellness departments. We also installed a self-service water purifier, the first one in Greensboro. Unfortunately, this relocation wasn't adequately financed.

In 1991, sales were strong, but the undercapitalization and the new GM's mismanagement resulted in another financial crisis. Out of cash by the end of the year and unable to meet Board goals and deadlines, the GM resigned. Joel Landau was rehired as GM.

In 1992, under new management, the co-op quickly resumed positive cash flow. Joel negotiated a loan with Self Help Credit Union to consolidate debt. That spring, in an attempted takeover of the co-op, the recently resigned GM managed to hijack the Board's annual election ballot. After his election maneuver failed, he baselessly and unsuccessfully sued Deep Roots for not paying a loan back on time.

In mid-1994, Joel again stepped down. Deep Roots was in its sixth straight year of twenty-plus percent growth, and the co-op topped one million dollars in sales for the first time. He was replaced by Francis Murphy, who guided the co-op as GM into 1998. Francis was replaced by Suzie, who, in short order, was followed by Dan Groome. In 2000, against Dan's recommendation, a relocation was planned for a roughly 12,000 square foot facility on West Market Street, near Walker Avenue.

The next year, due to planning miscalculations, the co-op had a major financing deficit and had to abandon the project. Significant funds had been spent and debt accumulated of over half a million dollars.

In 2003, the much larger full-service natural foods store Earth Fare opened in Greensboro, cutting significantly into Deep Roots' sales. This, combined with debt from the failed relocation, left the co-op nearly devoid of sufficient cash to maintain operations.

# An Overview of Deep Roots' Journey

The Board eliminated the GM position to save money (Judith Prizio had been ably serving as GM at that time). The Board voted to liquidate the store in order to pay off the large amount of debt, but instead, the co-op's senior management formed a management team (Janis Cross, Kathie Gentry, Chris Roland, and Deborah Sierpieko) and continued operating the business, albeit without a GM.

In 2006, staff arranged a payoff for the bank loan from the failed relocation, greatly reducing the co-op's financial liabilities. Later that year, the Board hired Joel to fill the vacant GM position, marking Joel's third tenure as GM. His primary directive was to relocate to a larger facility and to do so without the benefit of cash reserves to draw on. Sales had picked up again, but there was minimal cash and still outstanding debt (owner loans) from the failed relocation. A relocation was deemed necessary because the co-op had outgrown the facility and owners wanted additional products and services; in addition, it was anticipated that another large natural foods store would eventually come to town, and the co-op would be hard-pressed to compete at that location.

Also in 2006, the Board and GM began implementing "Policy Governance" to clarify their respective roles and expectations, and to provide a clear basis for evaluation of the GM.

In 2007, Pete Davis of CDS was commissioned to assess the Greensboro market potential. Based on Pete's assessment, over the next couple of years, dozens of potential sites were looked at. Besides the usual factors of size, location, and access, the co-op's limited cash required finding a developer willing to cover the upfitting costs, a task usually left to the tenant. Fortunately, we found one.

In 2008, the co-op terminated its original DC incorporation and reincorporated as an NC corporation. Additionally, that year, the last of the failed relocation debt was paid off. Annual sales surpassed two million dollars for the first time. However, the Great Recession began that spring, and sales flatlined for two plus years.

In 2010, a site was found for a new store, and the National Cooperative Grocers Association Development Cooperative was contracted with for expert relocation services. Tami Bauer of CDS was commissioned to help develop an Owner Loan Program. Additionally, Dakota Worldwide was hired to do a market study specific to the newly selected site.

In 2011, a contingency lease was signed with developer Bob Isner and partners for the current site at 600 North Eugene Street. The contingencies were to be met by May, and the lease finalized at that time. Accordingly, the Owner Loan Program was launched, and commercial loans were arranged to complete the financing. Deep Roots began extensive neighborhood outreach and community building for the new site. Then, unfortunately, the developers had to restructure their financing, resulting in a series of extended delays.

Meanwhile, sales resumed upward growth. The new location's Site Plan had to be revised due to community concerns and to accommodate the planned Downtown Greenway (which ran along the front of the store). The co-op served as a poster child for the economic development promised by the Greenway promoters. Indeed, Deep Roots' establishment brought several other businesses to the area.

# An Overview of Deep Roots' Journey

In 2012, management undertook a complete rebranding of all Deep Roots written material as well as a complete revision of Deep Roots' Personnel Policy Manual. Also: Whole Foods opened its Greensboro store that April; Deep Roots' new site lease was finalized, with a well-attended groundbreaking in August; and the food house of Weaver Street Market was contracted with for daily delivery of items for the soon-to-be new store's hot bar, cold bar, and prepared foods section.

The co-op's 10,600 square foot store opened in March of 2013, with a highly publicized opening and subsequent Grand Opening. For the first time, the co-op had a salad bar/hot foods/ready-to-eat prepared foods section, along with café seating. Compared to the previous store, it also had greatly expanded sections of produce, frozen, refrigerated, beer/wine, and groceries while maintaining its large sections of wellness, health and beauty products, bulk foods, and herbs and spices in bulk. It also featured a Community Room, open to the public and available for meetings and classes. The store's product selection prioritized locally grown and manufactured items. The store was set up to be a hub for the local economy and community, and continues in that capacity.

In August of 2013, Joel Landau stepped down as General Manager. Before departing, he trained an interim management team (Matt Felling, Nicole Villano, and Mac McBee) to temporarily run the store while the Board searched for a new GM.

In 2014, the Board hired a new General Manager. During 2015 and 2016, there were extended periods of roadwork and sidewalk construction in front of the store and on adjoining streets, limiting access to the store and negatively impacting sales. Also, Weaver Street Market stopped delivering to Greensboro, and Deep Roots began making all its food bar items on site.

In 2016, a major shift in the store's product mix was initiated by the GM, bringing in many highly processed foods, contrary to the co-op's mission and foundation. This elicited strong opposition from owners and staff. In the Fall, the GM stepped down, and in December, five board members resigned.

In January of 2017, the remaining board members brought on new directors and reorganized the Board. The store's direction was refocused on its historical mission of providing natural foods; Joel Landau was elected Board President, and the Board hired Nicole Villano as General Manager. Nicole successfully managed the co-op through a period of precarious finances. She stepped down in 2024; longtime staff member Matt Davis was hired as GM and remains in that position, overseeing the dissolution of our remaining debt, increased community outreach, and maintaining our commitment to excellently serving the Greater Greensboro community.

The relocation effort was heavily leveraged, given the financial difficulties of the early 2000s. Also, since the landlords had taken on the upfront cost of upfitting the new store, our rent was accordingly higher in order to pay them back over time, adding to our financial challenges.

# An Overview of Deep Roots' Journey

Due to a variety of factors, the co-op needed to take on even more debt in the early years at the new location. Finances were extremely tight for several years. Nevertheless, we stayed current with our commercial lenders - those loans have been paid off. We are currently making good progress in paying back our 100+ owners who lent money to the relocation effort. We look forward to becoming current on our debt, which will then allow us to expand our community services and take on more new projects, such as our recent purchase of a van. The van, starting this spring, will be used to help us better participate in community events and to bring quality, healthy foods to underserved parts of town.

Despite myriad challenges over the years, Deep Roots has shown great resilience, thanks to the commitment of dedicated owners and customers, management and staff, and board members. The co-op has grown from a tiny niche store with a handful of customers each day into a vibrant full-time retail operation with over 8,000 owners in our Greensboro community. Here's to another 50 years of working together in service to our Greater Greensboro community!

Worthy of Note:

For the record, following the initial management of Martha, David, and John, the co-managers that preceded Dianna and Joel were Brenda Joyner, Frosty Grey, Becky Kessler, Ric Marshall, Judith Prizio, and Tom Smith. The rapid turnover in co-managers was largely a result of it being a low-paid part-time job. The switch to having a full-time General Manager enabled someone to earn enough to continue in the job, and also provided beneficial continuity and expertise in the position.

Throughout the first decade of the 2000s, Royall Spence provided the co-op with invaluable financial assistance and logistical support. We are also grateful to our landlords: Bob Isner, Vernon Powell, and George Carr. They have provided tremendous support, financial and otherwise. Throughout this century, Deep Roots has sponsored Taste Fairs, bringing the community together for fun activities, live music, free food, and the opportunity to sample the wares of, and learn about, many local vendors.

In 2009, Deep Roots successfully petitioned Greensboro's City Council to establish an Eat Local Month, promoting and encouraging people to dine at restaurants with locally sourced food. We've also done televised presentations before City Council on the benefits of organically grown food. The co-op has led the way on sustainability issues. For instance, we've set up an Electric Vehicle Charging Station, available to the public, in our parking lot. We also have a place for glass recycling.

-----  
*Joel Landau served as Deep Roots' General Manager three times, totaling eighteen years. He also served on the Board of Directors for nine years, including six as Board President. These days, he remains active with Deep Roots committees. You might also see him singing and playing his guitar at venues around Greensboro.*

Coming in 2027...



*“The heart beet of our community”*

**where local community  
and good food take root**

**Deep Roots Co-op Market**

600 North Eugene Street

Greensboro, NC 27401

[www.deerootsmarket.com](http://www.deerootsmarket.com)