



1600 E. Madison  
Seattle, WA 98122  
[www.centralcoop.coop](http://www.centralcoop.coop)

November 16, 2015

**Contact:** Susanna Schultz  
**Phone:** 206.329.1545 x226  
**Email:** [susannaschultz@centralcoop.coop](mailto:susannaschultz@centralcoop.coop)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tacoma Food Co-op and Central Co-op announce a formal exploration of a potential merger that would grow the regional cooperative economy and better serve their communities**

**Seattle, WA** – Today, Tacoma Food Co-op and Central Co-op announced that their boards have been exploring the possibility of holding a member authorization vote to merge the two grocery cooperatives into a regional cooperative. The trustees of both natural grocery retailers believe that by joining forces as one co-op they will better serve both communities and build a business that is stronger and more resilient than either organization standing alone. The boards are working on the details of a plan of merger which, if pursued, will trigger a special election by their members. A majority of votes cast by members at both cooperatives will be required to authorize any merger plan. If such authorization is given by voters, each board will still have to decide to act on the authorization at the end of the special election.

“As a community-owned business, we believe that people are stronger when they act together,” said Central Co-op Board President, Dean Decrease. “Central Co-op and Tacoma Food Co-op share the same values and the same vision for a sustainable food system and a cooperative economy. The world of natural foods is increasingly competitive and if we combine our efforts together both stores will be much better positioned to thrive going forward. This will mean more good jobs, community ownership and local-control.”

The Tacoma Food Co-op was opened four years ago, and as a small store has struggled with delivery schedules and limited buying power. Central Co-op opened its original location on Capitol Hill in Seattle almost 40 years ago – and while it has strong financials and strong relationships with suppliers, their current site has limited growth opportunities. Together the two stores will be able to share a depth of administrative resources, spread out the costs of doing business, enjoy greater buying power, put collective strength into growing the cooperative movement, and contribute to the local economy by offering jobs with exemplary pay and benefits while supporting regional producers.

“Since we were created democratically by Tacomans in 2006 and opened our doors in 2011, Tacoma Food Co-op has worked to fulfill our member-owners vision of a model cooperative market in a sustainable food system,” said Tacoma General Manager, Jeff Bessmer. “However as a young organization in an increasingly competitive environment, our ability to give our member-owners and community everything they have envisioned all along is limited. This merger will allow our local co-op to leapfrog more than a decade into the future, providing the healthy and essential goods, classes, and community building Tacomans want and need, honoring the hard work of hundreds of cooperators by realizing the local co-op they dreamed of.”

### **About Central Co-op**

Founded in 1978, Central Co-op is a community-owned natural foods cooperative located at the top of Seattle's Capitol Hill. A complete grocery store dedicated to sustainable practices and the Washington food economy, Central Co-op features a certified organic produce department, humanely raised meat and wild seafood, an in-house deli and juice bar, a large selection of bulk goods and herbs, an extensive health and wellness section and unique gifts. Open to everyone, seven days a week, and now offering delivery in Seattle through Instacart. Central Co-op has more than 13,000 active owners, and in January of 2015 became the first grocery store in the nation to pay better than \$15/hour at entry-level. More information is available at [www.centralcoop.coop](http://www.centralcoop.coop).

### **About Tacoma Food Co-op**

In the fall of 2006 a group of Tacoma residents recognized the need for an affordable urban grocery that would provide local, organic, and natural foods. The steering committee that formed from this meeting decided a cooperative business model would best meet that need. In the fall of 2009, member-owners elected their first Board of Directors, the elected body responsible for making major decisions of the Co-op. On August 26, 2011 after a huge membership drive and lots of support from the community, Tacoma Food Co-op opened its doors at the corner of 6th Avenue and Junett in Tacoma. Over the first two years the Co-op grew to its current size, expanding its offerings of affordable local, organic, and natural foods. The Co-op currently has 2,300 member-owners, offers weekly classes and events, and works with many local producers and allies. More information at: [www.tacomafoodcoop.com](http://www.tacomafoodcoop.com).

-End-