

OPINION

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A cooperative vision downtown

The Medford Market fits well with a changing urban core

Medford residents who have wished for a food cooperative similar to Ashland's now have one in sight.

More community support will be necessary to make the Medford Market a reality, but for now it has a downtown location identified, a Web site and a growing body of members. The organization has signed a lease on the old Hubbard's hardware store at Main and Riverside.

Membership won't be necessary to shop at the co-op, but more members will make opening day come that much sooner.

A food cooperative can offer several benefits to a community — as a source of locally grown food for consumers, a market for that food for local producers, and as a center for community life. In Medford, the chosen location also offers a welcome addition to the growing downtown neighborhood.

The prospect of people living downtown in significant numbers, in the Bella Vita development or as part of Middleford Commons, offers a built-in clientele for a food store. Add the many people who work downtown, attend college downtown and shop downtown, and it's easy to see a co-op as part of a more vibrant urban center evolving in the next few years.

Co-op organizers say they need to raise \$1.8 million to \$2 million to open, from a combination of grants, loans, memberships and the sale of shares to the public. Residents who want to see the venture succeed should put some money behind it.