



Case Study of Good Foods Market & Cafe

Keys to Success

-  **Project Description**
-  **Economic Value**
-  **Challenges & Advice**
-  **Benefits**
-  **Stewardship Meaning**

 Good Foods Market & Cafe in Lexington is a locally owned cooperative business, with 127 employees and 6,000 members, that has set an amazing example of a commercial establishment focusing on sustainability, local, natural, organic and whole foods. Store Manager Dan Arnett and his staff have examined the store's day-to-day operations to determine ways to cut energy and water usage, use biodegradable items in the cafe, recycle and find other methods of greening the cooperative.

For one project, Arnett requested that the city place several 15-yard recycling bins next to the rain garden behind the building for store and neighborhood use. "This has been so successful that the bins have to be emptied twice a week. Enough material was diverted from the landfill to cut down on internal costs. It's a saver."

One of the business' biggest storm sewer problems is cigarette butts, which pollute the water and damage habitats.

Receptacles for those butts are in front of the store. "We want to make personal responsibility easy," says Arnett.

Stormwater drains in the parking lot have signs stenciled on the pavement that read "drains to stream" as a reminder not to pollute the waterways. Metal plates in the pavement have an

insert to catch debris as the water flows through. The inserts are cleaned monthly and lined with absorbent material to filter the water and catch oil, grease and antifreeze, which is then treated as hazardous waste.

On the exterior of the building, bike racks (made from bicycle frames) encourage bicycle usage. Store windows are covered with a reflective film, causing infrared rays to bounce off, and assist with climate control and glare.

Inside, low-VOC paint was used. Signs in the store and sustainable shopping guides encourage environmental stewardship. Classes and tours tie

"We all want this store to be the best and do something special and responsible. Most people, when given the opportunity, will do the right thing."





together healthy living and sustainability. Arnett believes education is the key.

Energy efficiency was a top priority, so most of the coolers now use LED lights. There are no incandescent bulbs, and screw-out fluorescents are being phased out. Programmable thermostats were installed to create a more energy-efficient facility. The prep area floor tiles, which came from Lewisport, Ky., are made of recycled content. Before the tile purchase, transportation costs for the tiles were considered.

In the café, where there is a hot buffet and salad bar, the utensils are compostable and biodegradable—made from potato or corn starches. Customers are encouraged to recycle compostable trash. The to-go boxes are made of 100 percent post-consumer



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content and environmentally friendly, water-based inks were used during the printing.

Cash register tapes are BPA-free. The store prioritizes using organic and locally grown ingredients. One-third of the produce in the café and store is locally grown, depending on the season.

 Arnett is pleased with the results. “It’s better than break even and cheaper than not doing it, but we would make these green improvements even if they cost us.”

 As a result of the effort to recycle as much as possible from the store and provide neighbors with plenty of opportunities to recycle, two million pounds of paper, plastic, metal and glass are recycled each year from these bins. Being a member of KY EXCEL has also helped the business make many more contacts in its efforts to be green.

 Arnett admits there are challenges to all of the green projects. “There is illegal dumping at times, and it takes more work to source. Sometimes the product packaging



Display cases are brighter and use less energy with LED lighting.

costs could be inflated. There are more limited options for the green products. Don’t look at recycling as trash, but as a waste stream collection center. First do a waste stream audit to see what you are dealing with. Then determine what you, the city and a third party (consulting or a different waste service) can do.

 “The staff and customers really love responsible businesses,” continues Arnett. “Most people, when given the opportunity, will do the right thing.”

HELPFUL HINT: Lighting and HVAC systems can use huge amounts of energy, which result in expensive utility bills. Be sure these systems are energy-efficient and cleaned often.