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Columinate Supports Ohio Startup Gem City Market

Consultants bring innovation, passion to the groundbreaking project

Dayton, OH September 30, 2019: A groundbreaking engagement is underway between Columinate consultants and Gem City Market in Dayton, OH. The consulting cooperative is providing managers-on-contract to support a 2020 store opening; and will deliver an innovative General Manager training program to support Gem City Market's long-term manager who will be hired in the Spring. "This is a great collaboration between people who really know the industry and community members who really know their city," says Lela Klein, Gem City Market board member and Executive Director of Co-op Dayton, the community incubator supporting the market's development.

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—Mark Goehring, Manager

working with people who have really done this before, who have stood in our shoes. We bring the expertise about our city and our community — and Columinate is listening."

Gem City Market is a story of pluck and passion. "We know a lot about food co-ops but the Gem City Market opening is, in many ways, the first of its kind. We are excited to be involved!" says Columinate Manager Mark Goehring. The project was first announced in 2016 to help address food insecurity issues; the store will be an investment of some \$5 million into the neighborhood and provide fresh, affordable, local food. Gem City Market already has 2,200 members and plans to employ 27 people by its targeted fall 2020 opening. Meanwhile, Columinate is designing a General Manger training program to prepare the candidates for leadership roles at the grocery store. Finding and keeping talent is difficult in food retail, and top candidates are often recruited from elsewhere. "With this program, Gem City can hire someone from within their community, which would be a real win," Goehring says. "Then we can support that person's success. There is a

With more than 40 consultants and decades of experience serving mission-driven organizations, many of them food co-ops, Columinate brings proven know-how to the co-op market in Dayton, OH. Columinate's team includes Interim General Managers and a Project Manager, both working closely with Gem City Market's Board and engaged membership to develop a retail strategy and build out the store. "It's great to work with Columinate because there's the decades of experience and we're



(from Left) Corrine Saunders, Kenya Baker, Lela Klein, Wynston Estis and Amaha Sellassie participate in the Gem City Market ceremonial groundbreaking.



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lot of empowerment built into the engagement.”

Indeed, all involved are inspired by the collaboration’s synergy and—perhaps most importantly—a sincere shared mission. “The approach to operating a cooperative grocery store in an unserved community is still being developed. It’s an amazing, important challenge to all of our skills to ensure the success of Gem City’s efforts,” says Wynston Estis, who is serving as contracted Project Manager/Interim General Manager (IGM).

“I’m continually impressed by the talent and motivation of the Gem City team,” says James Morrell, the IGM who will lead the store opening team. “This project is an important step in the development of the revitalization of the city of Dayton, and I believe that it will begin to address the actual needs of its citizens across all demographics.”

Supporting a startup like Gem City isn’t only exciting, it’s valuable. “We’re building on our success of using similar contract-management models to support existing co-ops,” Goehring says. “We can see the vision and the positive impact of a successful store. They are really right-on at Gem City Market. They’re trying to do something that’s hard—going into a really tough, competitive marketplace. Yet the positive impact of effort is going to be great. To help them realize this vision and to be working alongside them is inspirational. The deep, on-the-ground community engagement effort led by Kenya Baker has been impressive – and the best is yet to come – the opening of a successful new store.”

With competitors including nearby dollar stores, Gem City Market has its work cut out for it; Columinate members will share strategies, tools, and skills to illuminate solutions that will guide the co-op forward, and perhaps beyond. Says Tim Sullivan, Columinate operational support consultant: “The greatest possibility is that Gem City Market will be successful and we can translate their model to other communities.”

View Announcement Online at <http://co-op.link/gcm>

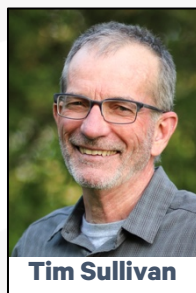
About Columinate

Founded in 1994, Columinate, catalysts for common good, works with mission-driven organizations on their most critical issues and opportunities: strategic planning; marketing; leadership development; retail operations; technology; feasibility and viability; governance; and diversity and inclusion. As a shared service cooperative, formerly CDS Consulting Co-op, the strength of our organization lies in our over 40 consultant members. Columinate shares insights and actions that save clients time, energy, and resources for the work that matters most. Food co-ops, electric co-ops, credit unions, schools, nonprofits—we don’t only partner with these organizations, we share in their purpose. For additional information, success stories, strategic solutions, and services, visit us at www.columinate.coop.

Featured Consultants



Wynston Estis



Tim Sullivan



James Morrell