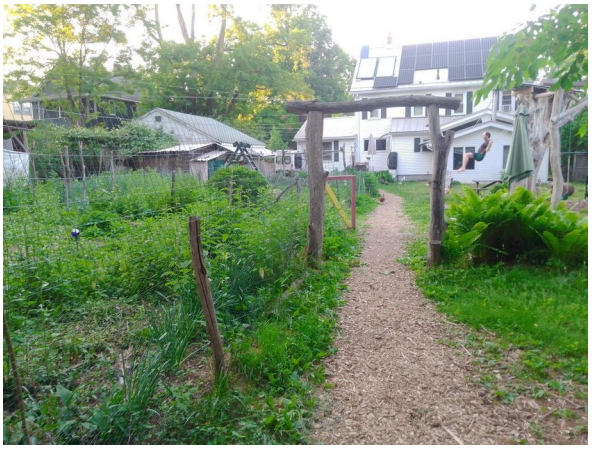
The Flo-Op Cooperative



The Flo-Op (pronounced flow-op) is a limited equity housing cooperative. It's democratically controlled by its members, operates for the benefit of its members and the wider community, and members get a limited amount of financial equity (money that is invested in the co-op that members get back when they leave). All members put $500 into their member equity when they move in.

In November 2023, we purchased a two-unit house located on 0.38 acres near the center of Florence, Massachusetts, on the rail trail.

We have a ground lease with Equity Trust, Inc., which permanently preserves affordability through the Community Land Trust (CLT) model. We own the buildings, and Equity Trust owns the land and leases it to us long term. Equity Trust is a temporary steward of the land, and within 10 years (of 2023) we plan to help start a Community Land Trust and the land will be transferred to that CLT.

Here are the four key principles we abide by:

1. Membership shall be voluntary and available to all persons who are willing to accept the responsibilities of Membership, who apply for Membership, and who meet the Membership requirements of the Cooperative.
2. Control and governance of the Cooperative shall be democratic. Members shall have equal participation rights in the consensus decision-making procedures.
3. The Cooperative shall operate as a Massachusetts cooperative corporation. Any economic surplus arising out of the operations of the Cooperative shall be used for the benefit of the Cooperative, its Members, property, maintenance or improvements, and to further the purposes and principles of the Cooperative.
4. The Cooperative shall strive to pay it forward by creating new affordable housing opportunities, either within the cooperative or by supporting like-minded organizations, as it pays off its debts and its financial situation allows.

We also uphold the Seven Cooperative Principles.

Our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws are like our constitution - we can't operate in conflict with them. The Ground Lease, an agreement with Equity Trust, is set up to preserve long term affordability and member-owner residency.

Here's one member's philosophy:

"This place we live, called a property and labeled 6-8 High St, is one tiny piece of the larger earth. Many dreamers have inhabited it before us, and have left by force or will. Member residents who live here at this time hold it in common. Our charge is to share what we have been given with others who treat it with respect, as best we can in a way that's sustainable for us, like welcoming bike path visitors with a bench, phone, food pantry, bike repair station, etc; welcoming kids to play in the yard on the swings and visit pets such as ducks and chickens; giving yard tours; hosting overnight and short-term guests; hosting potlucks, house concerts, music nights, workshops, meetings. We choose this lifestyle believing it will help us and our neighbors feel more whole and less trapped by insular consumeristic living."

You can reach us at 413-586-8031, or by email at flo-op AT weatherbeard DOT com. Or stop by our weekly potlucks every Monday night (website).

Photo taken just after we closed on the house in November 2023! From left to right, Sara Howard (member) with Mila the dog, Rebecca Fletcher (CFNE loan officer, who gave us a mortgage), Alex Jarrett (member), Ruthy Woodring (member), Jim Oldham (Equity Trust director).