

Millstone Cooperative

Creativity * Open Communication * Environmental Sustainability
Social Justice * Communal Ownership

Member Prospectus

The Millstone Cooperative is an intentional housing community currently located in Somerville, Massachusetts. Millstone holds several core values: vegetarianism and environmental sustainability, open communication, social justice, creativity, and communal ownership of property. We currently have eleven active members and a large extended community. We strive to make Millstone a safe and welcoming space for members of different Boston communities to gather and work for a better world.

Millstone is based on many of the same principles as the North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) and the cooperative movement going back as far as the Rochdale Worker Cooperatives of the mid-19th century. NASCO has been successful in founding and connecting student cooperatives across the country. Recently, NASCO's membership has expanded to include non-student or mixed student/community cooperatives. Many of our members were introduced to cooperatives as students and want to continue and expand this tradition as community members.

Our long-term vision is to cooperatively own several properties in the Boston area. Our first project is to purchase a Millstone house for approximately 15 residents. We are also working with another local cooperative, Teal House, whose owners would like to sell the property to the members. Beyond the immediate goal of purchasing these properties, we see a pressing need to expand this model to include other communities in the Boston area, providing a sense of community and the opportunity for affordable housing to many people. Again, we draw inspiration from the NASCO movement and its success in accomplishing this goal.

What is at the heart of Millstone?

Our core values and internal functions:

- Our commitment to **open communication** keeps us growing as a community. We believe that a consensus-based decision-making process is fundamental to a healthy community, and we have weekly house meetings where we make decisions that address daily maintenance, deep philosophical concerns, and the future development of the eco-op. Our communal meals five nights per week keep us connected on a daily basis, helping us build the friendships and trust essential to any successful community.
- We strive to live an **environmentally sustainable** lifestyle. Our co-op is **vegetarian** (although not all members need be vegetarian) and provides options for members who are vegan. We buy organic and in bulk, compost our food waste, and use non-toxic household products. We also take seriously our responsibility as an urban intentional community to utilize existing resources (such as public transportation, nearby shopping stores, and local organic farms) as a way of developing and practicing a model for sustainable city living.

- **Communal ownership** of our house is fundamental to having a long-lasting co-op. Cooperative ownership of property is an effective alternative to the landlord-tenant relationship and rising housing prices. By setting up a non-profit organization, we ensure that no one member or group of members can profit from these properties. This egalitarian structure keeps the property available to co-op living.
- In our community and beyond, we support and encourage movement towards **social justice**. Our monthly potlucks provide a place for members of Millstone, members of the nearby cooperative houses, students, and the general progressive community to talk about their own activism, and get new ideas, strength, and support. Millstone has been a meeting place for local activist groups such as Bikes Not Bombs, Tekiah, and the Boston Co-op Network, as well as an informal discussion group on sustainable lifestyles. We are starting a monthly Movie Night to show socially responsible and provocative movies and provide both a social space and a space for discussion on global issues.

Moreover, we believe communal living is in itself a form of social action. In many ways, we are working to build a new society. This involves educating our members and the community about cooperative living, consensus, and conflict resolution. We are also building several 'models' which others can use, such as a plan for taking collective control of property and for building a strong group committed to addressing injustice together. We see our efforts as part of a larger national cooperative movement. In the long-term, we hope to serve as a resource for other groups creating their own vision of alternative community living.

- By sharing space, materials, and inspiration, we can develop our individual and collective **creative talents**. We are building a fulfilling social space for self-expression and enjoyment.

Who are we?

Current members of the Millstone Cooperative:

Currently there are eleven of us committed to building the Millstone Co-op. **Adam** recently started law school at Northeastern University after working in the labor movement the last few years. Very active in Bikes Not Bombs and Critical Mass, Adam has been a member of five student/housing co-ops, including 2-D (the student co-op at Princeton University) and Stone Soup in Chicago, and former president of NASCO Properties, 1998-99. **Başak** is an international student at MIT, combining graduate study of architecture and urban planning to create more livable and sustainable cities and buildings. She was also a member of 2-D. Her partner **Nirmal** is a writer, working for a publishing company in Boston. **Eowyn** is a doctor in her third year of family practice residency in Lawrence; she is a former member of Rowe Community and Boston's Beacon Hill Friends House. **Monica** works in film and TV, aiming to use multimedia to stimulate discussions of our society, and especially of the media. **Nati** is an astrophysics graduate student at MIT, volunteer for Bikes Not Bombs, and former member of 2-D. **Arthur** is a social psychologist who has been active in the peace, environmental, and community movements, and has experience in intentional communities for over forty years. **Dylan** is working in mathematics as a post-doctoral fellow at Harvard and has lived in the student co-operatives in Berkeley (USCA). **Micha** is a community organizer working to build solidarity between the Jewish community and Labor movement; he was on the board of directors of OSCA at Oberlin and lived at the Big Top Co-op in

Dorchester, MA. **Rachele** is a Unitarian Universalist minister and is currently developing a non-profit organization for arts ministry in the community. She has been on the board of directors for the Inter Cooperative Council in Ann Arbor, MI and Students Cooperative Association in Eugene, OR. **Clara** works for Oxfam America, a social justice organization focusing on the root causes of world hunger and poverty.

Do you like what you've read?

As the community expands, we will be looking for new members:

- **How do I get involved?**
 - (1) Come to dinner. Come to one of our monthly potlucks if you like. Otherwise, you are welcome at dinner any evening, Sunday through Thursday. Please call in advance so we know to expect you.
 - (2) Set up a "clearness" meeting. These gatherings are helpful for us to get to know you and for you to get to know us. This time will give all of us a chance to ask questions that may not come up in a casual conversation concerning your relationship with the community.
- **What are the responsibilities of being in the community?** As a member of the community, you will be asked to participate in the chores that maintain our lifestyle on a daily basis. Depending on your schedule, you could cook one night, shop, take care of recycling, garbage or compost, or do general house cleaning. Members can expect to spend between 4 and 6 hours a week on household chores. Additionally, the cooperative continues to look to the future, to see how we can expand our model of cooperative living and make a greater impact in the Boston area. Currently we are focused on the logistics of purchasing our house.
- **How long do we expect members to commit to the community?** Ideally, potential members would be open to the idea of committing to the community for several years. It can take a long time for a group to realize its potential, and the longer someone can invest in the community, the more they will get back. At the same time, we realize that it may take some time living in community to decide whether or not it's a good long-term arrangement, so we would also welcome people who can't make an initial long-term commitment but are willing to make the cooperative a high priority in their lives during the time they are involved.