



## Case Study: Cleveland's Evergreen Cooperatives



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Creating meaningful and sustainable green jobs for an underserved community.

The Evergreen Cooperatives are envisioned as a cluster of thriving, worker-owned, and environmentally-sensitive businesses in Cleveland. Designed to help an historically marginalized community surrounding the city's "University Circle" create wealth and secure meaningful jobs, the cooperatives are utilizing green business models to make a positive economic and environmental impact on the community while providing services to some of Cleveland's top educational and medical institutions.

#### Evergreen Cooperative Laundry

Evergreen Cooperative Laundry is the first business in the new cluster, currently employing 7 workers but with 50 in its business plan. A feasibility study of potential customers for a green, water-efficient cooperative laundry found that there was real demand for this vendor model among University Circle institutions, due to the high costs of doing laundry in-house.

Evergreen Cooperative Laundry is the most efficient industrial-scale laundry in the region. Among its environmentally friendly features:

- The system uses .8 gallons of water per pound of laundry, compared with an industry average of 4-6 gallons.
- Water is continually filtered and reused in an advanced graywater system, and incoming water is heated from used water, saving 35% on heating energy.

- Ducts re-channel heat from the dryers to warm incoming air.
- The cooperative is housed in a remodeled LEED-Silver building specifically designed to accommodate the heating, cooling, and ventilation needs of the laundry service.

### Ohio Cooperative Solar

Ohio Cooperative Solar leases, installs, and maintains photovoltaic arrays on some of the city's largest education, municipal, and health buildings. It currently has 14 employees, but expects to have 100 employee-owners within the next three years as institutions strive to meet Ohio's mandated solar requirements. The cooperative also provides weatherization services for residential and commercial buildings, which ensures employment throughout the year.

### Green City Growers Cooperative

Green City Growers started with entrepreneurs who "thought that the time was right to bring the greenhouse industry back to Northern Ohio." The idea was to localize fresh produce production, in line with the Cooperatives' interest in sustainability and carbon reduction. This cooperative is still in the works (and has already secured over \$10 million in loans and grants), but potential customers they have interviewed include food retailers, wholesalers, and food service companies. The Growers also hope eventually to enhance neighborhood access to fresh produce.

The scale of planned production is surprisingly impressive for a downtown site; the plan is to build a 5.5 acre, year-round, hydroponic greenhouse—larger than the average Wal-Mart superstore, and the largest urban, food-producing greenhouse in the country—to grow, among other profitable crops, 5 million heads of lettuce per year. Green City Growers has worked with the city to assemble the needed acreage out of the city-owned land bank, and is on track to have all the land under Growers management by fall 2010. Greenhouse construction is anticipated by 2011.

For more information, visit the [Evergreen Cooperatives website](#), or read an [article in The Nation](#) about the Cleveland Model.

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