

Central Co-op vies with New Seasons grocery for Capitol Hill site

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Developer Gerding Edlen plans a commercial and residential project at the Capitol Hill light rail station.

Central Co-op is making a bid to become the anchor tenant for a mixed-use development at the Capitol Hill light-rail station, pitting it against Portland-based grocer New Seasons, which has encountered opposition from some labor and advocacy groups.

Seattle Times business reporter

Central Co-op is putting together a proposal to become the anchor tenant for a mixed-use development at the Capitol Hill light-rail station, pitting it against New Seasons, the Portland-based grocer that is interested in the Broadway location but has encountered opposition from some labor and advocacy groups.

Central Co-op announced its strong interest Sunday evening at its annual owners meeting.

Dan Arnett, cooperative president and CEO, said, “We believe, frankly, that we’re not only the best option for the site but there’s a cultural link. It’s where our organization was founded.”

Central Co-op, which specializes in organic and local foods, was started on Capitol Hill in 1978 and currently has more than 15,000 member-owners. It has one location on 16th Avenue and East Madison Street in Seattle, and a second one in Tacoma after [merging with Tacoma Food Co-op](#) last year. Its

workers are unionized.

“We are determined to get that site,” said Arnett, who added the co-op has met with people on the development team and is working with them to assemble a proposal.

The co-op said it plans to keep its Madison Street location open even if it gets the Capitol Hill site. It renewed a lease last year that’s good for 20 years with the possibility of an additional 20 years.

Central Co-op’s bid has the support of the United Food and Commercial Workers union’s UFCW21.

New Seasons, a small-format grocer that emphasizes regional and organic food, is not unionized. It is opening its first local store this fall on Mercer Island.

Earlier this year, several labor and advocacy groups [sent a letter](#) to the Sound Transit board, opposing New Seasons’ possible selection for the development, citing news articles about the grocer’s “anti-union climate” and health and safety- violations records.

Sound Transit said then it “does not involve itself in tenant selection by the developer. ... The Sound Transit Board chose the developer based on the strength of their proposal, which includes more than 400 new apartments with a significant portion of those being in the affordable housing category.”

Gerding Edlen, the developer of the property, confirmed that, in addition to New Seasons, “we have received interest from other potential anchor tenants. We have not determined our anchor tenant yet.”

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