US co-ops fund Main Street

IN a world seemingly gone “global”, most people do not know that local member-owned co-operatives in the USA have assets of one trillion dollars. Those co-op funds back the economy of Main Street, not Wall Street.

For an example of the role of co-ops on Main Street, USA, let’s look at the co-ops in Davis, Yolo County, California.

There are few cities in America where co-operatives claim such a high proportion of the local economy as Davis. And there are few counties in California where co-operatives play as high an economic role as Yolo County.

Aggregate the economic activity of all the co-operatives in Yolo County and it totals more than a billion dollars a year.

At one time, G Street in the Davis downtown was actually called Main Street. If we look just at the enterprises on “Main (G) Street” it is a great example of how co-operatives strengthen the local economy.

The strong co-op heritage of the area is firmly on display on G Street now with a clock outside the Davis Food Co-op.

This was unveiled in 1997 to celebrate 100 years of co-ops on the street by Daniel Glickman, US Secretary of Agriculture.

One of our great local treasures is the Artery, a retail co-operative of more than 60 members who own and work in the shop, which sells their arts and crafts.

Family-owned hardware stores such as Davis ACE are more efficient by belonging to the ACE Hardware Corporation. ACE is a national supply co-operative owned by locally-owned hardware stores with 80,000 employees.

The Davisville Almond Growers’ Association was founded in 1897 at the Masonic Hall at 221 G Street. The Davis Association went on to create Blue Diamond, the world’s largest nut co-operative, with many farmer members in Yolo County.

The Davis Farmer’s Market has its offices at that same address. With about 180 farmer and producer members, this is Davis’s most popular outdoor enterprise.

Davis Enterprise, the local daily newspaper for the area, obtains news from Associated Press. AP is one of America’s oldest continuing co-operatives, dating back to 1846.

Taco Bell is supplied by the $5 billion dollar franchisee-owned United Foodservice Purchasing Co-op.

To most people, Davis Food Co-op is “the Co-op”. It is one of the few thriving supermarkets in a California downtown. With over 9,000 members “the Co-op” is a Davis institution.

Yolo Federal Credit Union is the only financial institution based in Yolo County. It uses its $180 million in assets locally.

Ken’s Bike is a member of YaYa Bike, a national purchasing co-operative of independent bike shops.

These are just the co-operatives on G Street. There are about 40 co-operatives in Davis and Yolo County. The residents of Rancho Yolo, a mobile home park in East Davis, are planning to purchase the 262 space park. Four other mobile home parks in the county want to go co-op.

The California Center for Co-operative Development has just started in Davis. The Center is funded through the US Department of Agriculture to develop co-operatives.

The Davis Co-operative Community Fund and the Davis Co-operative Development Fund have each grown to over $100,000 in assets.

Co-ops are local leaders in many ways: Dos Pinos Housing Co-operative is the lowest cost home-ownership opportunity in Davis; Leisureville Mobile Home Park is the only park in the county where the space rents are lower today than 12 years ago; Pacific Coast Producers (PCP) brought a closed multinational tomato processing plant back to life to become one of the largest employers in Woodland.

US Secretary of Agriculture Daniel Glickman unveiled a commemorative clock to reaffirm the 100 year co-op heritage in Davis, California.