

Whole Foods is Coming to Town

By Lee Borrowman

After serving as tantalizing grist for the rumor mill over the past few months, Whole Foods Markets announced on May 9 that it has signed a lease for the space formerly occupied by Albertson's in Lafayette. Although city officials said Friday that they have not been contacted regarding this incoming business, so it's a bit premature to throw away those Safeway Club Cards, local consumers who prefer organic foods and natural products are already rejoicing.

The first Whole Foods Market opened in 1980 in Austin, Texas. The Fortune 500 company now boasts 194 store locations in North America and the United Kingdom, with 9 distribution centers and 7 regional bake houses in the US. Whole Foods Markets is ranked #5 on Fortune Magazine's 2007 list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For.

Whole Foods – Whole People – Whole Planet

A lofty motto, but Whole Foods Markets' track record does indicate that it actively supports sustainable agriculture, re-use and recycling, and the use of environmentally sound products, and it has a program in place that offers financial incentives to employees who engage in voluntary community service.

Individual stores hold 5% Days (or CommUnity Giving Days), donating 5% of that day's net sales to a local or regional non-profit or educational organization.

What About Supporting our Local Family-owned Businesses?

Is there room for another grocery store in Lafayette? Will community friend and mainstay Diablo Foods suffer a loss of business once Whole Foods Markets moves in? Similar fears arose when Trader Joe's arrived, and were dispelled as shoppers came from outlying areas, drawn to Trader Joe's, and shuttled from one end of the parking lot to the other to shop at both stores rather than just one (c'mon, you know you've done it, too). Local optimists believe that there are enough shoppers in Lamorinda, some of whom currently trek to Whole Foods in Walnut Creek every week, to make this work.



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