



## Parking Problems at Whole Foods

By Cathy Tyson

Lafayette residents wondering what is up with the new Whole Foods need only look as far as the parking lot to check on its status. A couple of weeks ago there was a meeting with the store's representative and their outside consultant, to discuss the parking issue. In a nutshell, there aren't enough parking places as the lot is currently laid out to meet the City requirement.

Lafayette, like all other cities has regulations based on the type of land use that a building requires. Currently there are a total of 383 parking spaces on the non-Safeway side of the shopping center. The existing businesses, McCaulou's, Noah's, Jamba Juice and Peet's, to name a few, take up a substantial number of those spots.

The current Municipal Code requires one parking spot for each 250 square feet of net

floor area for retail businesses. Unfortunately the Planning Department has not been provided a floor plan as yet, to determine the exact amount of spaces needed. But it's safe to say, considering the size of the existing building, there won't be enough parking spaces as the lot is currently configured.

"I'm hopeful that we can work something out," said Ken Hines, Vice President of Store Development for the Northern California Region.

The City clearly wants Whole Foods to come to town. There are a few options that they might consider to solve the problem. According to Planning and Building Manager Niroop Srivatsa, one alternative would be purchasing nearby off-site parking for employees. Second, they could look at the layout of the parking lot and see if there was a way to adjust the

striping to add more spaces. Finally they can request a variance from the Planning Commission, and if approved, pay a hefty fee per spot, that would go into the City's future Parking Garage Fund.

An additional issue is that the Fire District has increased its space requirement for fire lanes since the opening of the shopping center many years ago. Whereas employees used to be able to park in the rear of the building, that's no longer possible under the new regulations. This represents a loss of about 20 spaces.

At the moment the ball is in Whole Foods' court. There is no deadline for them to resolve this issue.