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## Whole Foods Slowly Moves Closer to Completion

By Cathy Tyson



First Lucky's, then Albertsons, hopefully third time's the charm when Whole Foods opens in downtown Lafayette. Photo C. Tyson

That led to the purchase of a .72 acre employee lot at the corner of Deer Hill Road and First Street. Although conveniently located near the store, the lot is bounded on three sides by roads making getting in and out a potential challenge. This led to traffic studies by both Lafayette and Whole Foods. "This has contributed to the length of the process," said Smith. When complete the lot will meet all requirements including landscaping, fencing and drainage.

Project Planner Lindy Chan explained the current status, "The applicant is submitting materials based on their conditions of approval and I believe we are awaiting comments from various agencies, such as the health department, central sanitary, Caltrans, etc. The City of Lafayette is also reviewing the plans and providing comments." This part of the process varies and can take up to a month; once the City has signed off on the plans, the Building Inspection Department will review them and issue permits.

In 2011 look for the store to open with its bakery, color-coded sustainability-rated seafood, ready to go take-out meals and not a plastic bag in sight. The new store will also feature outdoor tables similar to the Walnut Creek Whole Foods location. Shoppers can enjoy a slice of pizza outside and the public art that is required under the Public Art Ordinance.

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Residents wondering what's up with the mysterious construction trailer at the corner of the Whole Foods Market parking lot should wonder no more. Work is slated to begin on the long awaited grocery store in the near future.

"It should open in the early part of next year. We're just awaiting a final building permit from the City," said Adam Smith, Whole Foods Project Manager. "We're very excited."

To the untrained eye, it's impossible to see the massive amount of work it took to get to this point. The original proposal was referred to the City Engineer, Circulation Commission staff, City Traffic Consultant, City Landscape Consultant, Central Sanitary District, EBMUD, Fire Protection District, County Health Department, Caltrans, the Chamber of Commerce and Lafayette Police.

Then there were parking considerations. As reported in March 2008, the Fire District had increased its space requirements for the fire lanes at the rear of the store. The loss of these twenty spaces made complying with current Municipal Code of one parking spot per 250 square feet of net floor area for retail businesses impossible. There were just not enough spots in the existing lot to accommodate shoppers and employees.