



"I don't think Whole Foods recognizes how they're going to change the demographics," and the small business environment, the four-year JP resident said in an interview afterward.

He added that the planned opening of a Whole Foods store "is an assault on the very things JP stands for ... I don't see how this international company is going to serve us. It will benefit those who can afford it."

The residents asked to speak with regional president Laura Derba, but were told she was not in the office.

In late April, Derba will release a community-wide letter likely to include dates for company-hosted meetings with residents, said Whole Foods spokeswoman Robin Rehfield. At those gatherings, which Whole Foods hopes to start in May, residents will be able to speak directly with company officials, she said.

"We are very aware of what's being said on both sides," Rehfield said in a phone interview Tuesday afternoon. "I think it should be known that we read every comment on media articles, blogs, Facebook, Twitter and elsewhere."

With keys in hand, Whole Foods is in the process of assessing what renovations and changes it will make to the facility and what will be needed to bring the space up to code, she said. The company received approval to begin construction this week – two months after the company **publicly confirmed** it had signed a 20-year lease with property owner Knapp Foods, Inc.

Knapp was the parent company of the building's former Latino-specialty grocer, Hi-Lo Foods which operated there for 47 years before closing in February.

Earlier this month, Whole Foods **issued a response** that it was "disappointed" by a neighborhood council's **decision to publicly oppose** plans for a store at 415 Centre Street.

But the company was also "encouraged" that the measure passed by a one-vote margin and said in a statement: "We are greatly appreciative of the resounding support we have been receiving today in response to the council's decision, from JP residents and businesses alike."

Rehfield said because the company does not keep records of each e-mail, online comment, phone call and voicemail left with any number of company employees, Whole Foods is unable to quantify or measure the support it has received for a JP store.

"**Whose Foods? Whose Community,**" the grassroots opposition group that has **led the charge** against a Whole Foods store, formed in early February. Over the past four weeks, the volunteer "coalition for an affordable and diverse JP" began collecting signatures online and in person.

Another petition, dubbed "**JP for All**" was created on March 7 to show support for a Whole Foods in JP. That effort has garnered 413 signatures over the past two weeks and was founded on the idea that "Whole Foods and a Latin grocer are not mutually exclusive ventures, but businesses that can co-exist and benefit each other in a neighborhood as diverse as Hyde/Jackson Square."

"We believe there is a majority of residents who do feel that Whole Foods can fit into the Jamaica Plain community," without causing the fabric of the area to change, said the group's creator Rick Stockwood, a resident and small business owner in Hyde Square.

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He attributed the lesser number of signatures on the petition he created to it being both newer and online-only.

Both grass-root groups said they will continue to organize and outreach.

Meanwhile, the [Hyde Square Task Force](#), a neighborhood nonprofit that serves over 1,000 city youth annually on a \$2-million budget, received a donation of around \$8,530, or 5 percent of Tuesday's combined net sales from two of Whole Foods' existing Boston stores – one in Brighton and the other in Back Bay.

"We are very happy with the donation as it will continue to support our youth leadership programs," said the nonprofit's Executive Director Claudio Martinez Wednesday.

On Tuesday evening, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council held its [first meeting](#) of an ad hoc committee formed earlier this month that will explore its next steps in regards to "the general issue of Whole Foods" moving in and report back to the council.

"At this first meeting, the committee will work to establish the goals of the ad hoc group, as well as determining the best way to include members of the community in the process," the council wrote on its website prior to convening.

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