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BBJ reports Walmart eyeing Roxbury for first Boston store

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 13, 2011 04:45 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The [Boston Business Journal](#) has reported that Walmart's plans to open its first store in Boston have picked up recently and that the retailer is focusing on a possible location in Roxbury.

Sources cited in the media outlet's report published Friday were either unable to be reached or declined comment this week.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino has been strongly opposed to Walmart setting up shop in the city and officials in his office said he stands by his comments in the business journal's recent report.

District 7 City Councilor Tito Jackson, who grew up in Grove Hall, and State Representative Carlos Henriquez, a Roxbury native, each told Boston.com this week that they had mixed feelings about reports that Walmart may try to open a store in the community they now represent.

"It's not a decision we can just snap to. There needs to be a conversation about it," Henriquez said. "While we do need jobs, we can't ignore there will be a negative effect."

"Roxbury, in particular, has had a difficult economic time for a very long time. But, we aren't going to just jump at anything."

Both elected officials said they had no more information about Walmart's possible plans other than what has been reported. They are open to hearing proposals from Walmart, but the community needs "careers," not just jobs.

"We want jobs, but we want quality jobs that pay a reasonable wage and allow women and people of color a chance to advance," as well as receive benefits, Jackson said. "We also want companies that are going to sustain the small business ecosystem in the community."

He added, "We have a high standard for organizations that are going to move into this community."

A Walmart spokesman declined to comment other than to say the company remains interested in opening a store in Boston [as it has for years](#).

The BBJ reported that Walmart is working actively with Back Bay commercial

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real estate firm, The Dartmouth Company, to seek sites for a new store. Officials there declined to comment earlier this week.

Another source the BBJ cited, Darnell Williams, who is the chair of Roxbury's Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee and president of the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, was not immediately available to comment.

The business journal report says that Walmart in the past two months has been eyeing "parcels along Melnea Cass Boulevard, particularly near the intersections at Harrison Avenue and Washington Street."

In April, the city's redevelopment authority issued development proposal requests for two vacant parcels there. No proposals had been submitted as of Thursday, officials said.

Such submissions usually come very close to the deadline because, once submitted to the city, the plans can be requested for public review. The proposals for the two parcels along Melnea Cass Blvd. are due at the end of July.

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