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JAMAICA PLAIN

Hub institute to study impact of Hi-Lo Foods closure, Whole Foods opening in Jamaica Plain

Posted by Matt Rocheleau May 1, 2012 05:15 PM

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(Matt Rocheleau for Boston.com)

Whole Foods opened in Jamaica Plain last Halloween.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A Boston-based institute plans to soon embark on a study to examine the neighborhood impact of the closure of local Latino-specialty grocer Hi-Lo Foods and the subsequent arrival of that store's replacement, a Whole Foods supermarket.

The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston, which studies issues related to the state's Latino community, plans to launch the study in July.

PHOTOS

Jamaica Plain unveils new Whole Foods

"This research project will investigate gentrification and representation issues within Jamaica Plain's Latino population through a mixed-methods case study, examining the

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- [A time line of the controversial Whole Foods arrival in J.P.](#)

transition from a local Latino-serving market to a multinational organic foods store,” said an e-mail from Pablo Goldberg, who handles press inquiries for the institute.

The project is being called “Gentrification and Representation: Hi-Lo, Whole Foods and Latinos in Jamaica Plain,” and is led by researcher Glenn Jacobs.

“The study will include (1) how the needs and opinions of local ethno-racial groups have been represented; and (2) the ongoing local gentrification process,” he wrote.

Goldberg said that because the study has not yet begun, further details are not available.

Last February, Whole Foods signed a 20-year lease to move into where Hi-Lo Foods had operated for four decades catering largely to the Hyde Square area’s large Latino population. The building was owned and leased out by the parent company of Hi-Lo Foods, Newton-based Knapp Foods, Inc.

A coalition formed last year to oppose Whole Foods’ arrival to JP. After nine months of renovations and intense neighborhood debate, Whole Foods Market [opened](#) in Hyde Square on Halloween 2011.

News of the local research institute’s plan for a study was first reported by the [Jamaica Plain Gazette in February](#). The study was also mentioned in a recent [Businessweek story](#) about Whole Foods’ plans to open a store in the Midtown area of Detroit.

In that article, Eduardo Siqueira, an associate research director for the Mauricio Gastón Institute, told Businessweek that Hi-Lo’s closure and Whole Food’s opening “became a very controversial issue for our neighborhood -- the most polemical debate that I’ve seen in almost 20 years.”

Note: This story was updated at 2:40 p.m. Wed., May 2, to amend that the Jamaica Plain Gazette first reported, in February, that the institute was planning to conduct the study.

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