



PHOTO COURTESY WHOLE FOODS

Santa Barbara will get its first Whole Foods — most likely by early next year — in the spaces once occupied by Circuit City and Make It Work on upper State Street.

# A 'Whole' new world

## *Upper State St. to house upscale grocer*

**BY SARA HAMILTON**

*Staff Writer*

Whole Foods, the upscale organic and natural foods retailer, has made it official: it's putting down roots in Santa Barbara.

"The decision was made very recently," said Keith Creighton, Whole Foods marketing director for the southern Pacific region. "All the information is still coming together. Whole Foods spent a lot of time looking for

the perfect Santa Barbara location, and this was it: 3761 State St."

The newest Whole Foods branch will be on State Street and Hitchcock Way, occupying anywhere from 25,000 to 30,000 square feet that used to house Circuit City and Make It Work. Former tenants indicated that the two offices are being combined into one larger space for the Austin-based retailer.

see **WHOLE FOODS** on page 22A

# WHOLE FOODS

*Continued from page 1A*

In November, Florida-based Regency Centers — which owns the building that housed Make It Work and Circuit City — contacted those businesses with a 90-day notice to vacate.

“When we moved in, we were aware of the fact that it wouldn’t be forever,” Make It Work founding partner Eric David Greenspan said.

Though Whole Foods has been widely reported to be opening this fall, Creighton said the Santa Barbara location may end up opening as late as winter.

Whole Foods operates 275 stores across 38 states and the District of Columbia as well as in Canada and the United Kingdom. It has taken a while for Whole Foods to warm up to the idea of expanding into the Tri-Counties, but the company is on a roll now, with three locations in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties opening in a four-year span.

Whole Foods opened its 36,000-square-foot store at 740 Moorpark Road in Thousand Oaks in 2005.

Since then, Linda Hagelis of Ventura’s Hagelis Group struggled to convince the company to set up shop at the Collection at RiverPark in Oxnard.

In 2008, her five years of pleading paid off when Whole Foods finally signed a 20-year lease for 50,000 square feet of space in Oxnard. The site is currently un-

der construction and is scheduled to open in fall 2009.

“There is a huge void for this type of use in the area, with the closest stores of this type being in Thousand Oaks-Westlake Village and Santa Barbara,” Hagelis said, adding that Whole Foods is very particular about the sites where it will build.

The health-food retailer has a laundry list of requirements that a potential property should meet. The company prefers that 200,000 or more people live within 20 minutes of the store, which should ideally be 40,000 to 75,000 square feet.

Hagelis said some of Whole Foods’ other criteria include a large number of college-educated residents, good visibility, easy access, abundant parking and locations in high traffic areas.

It’s that last point that caused a bit of a stir early last year.

At a Santa Barbara Planning Commission meeting in May 2008, the board decided that Regency Centers did not have to submit an environmental impact report for the Whole Foods development, opting instead for a less rigorous study.

That city draft report estimated that the project will bring 180 more trips per day to the already-busy intersection of State and Hitchcock, which upset a handful of local organizations.

The unrest has since subsided, and Creighton sees a bright future ahead for the new location. “It’s still very early but we’re really excited,” he said.