



The Whole Foods Market in northwest Columbus.

Will Whole Foods hurt the North Market?



When Whole Foods Market opened its first Ohio store at Sawmill and Rt. 161 in September, other organic and gourmet retailers wondered if they would lose customers to this niche-market heavyweight. Whole Foods spokeswoman Sarah Kenney says the new store is a success, but its impact on other retailers is not yet known. Some fear Whole Foods will be another nail in the coffin

for the North Market, which already has lost business to such specialty stores as Fresh Market, Wild Oats and Trader Joe's, according to retail analyst Chris Boring of Boulevard Strategies.

Now, the North Market is possibly facing an even bigger threat: There's talk of a Whole Foods store locating a couple of blocks from the market's Vine Street location as an anchor to a development of condos and shops.

On the other hand, a Whole Foods-anchored shopping development could create a destination for food shopping—the same way Easton or Polaris are retail magnets. Boring's study of the proposal suggests the North Market is destined to lose business to Whole Foods, but the combined attraction of two gourmet food facilities could bring in enough new customers to minimize the damage.

—Alice Hohl