

# Whole Foods Relies on Sustainable WilsonPro Connectivity Solution



Whole Foods Market has come a long way from its humble beginnings in Austin, Texas. Starting out as a small, one-store grocery in 1980, Whole Foods Market is recognized today as the undisputed world leader in the sale of natural and organic foods—running 499 stores and employing thousands of team members throughout North America and the United Kingdom.

A purpose-driven company, Whole Foods Market has worked hard over the years to establish its standard of excellence among food retailers—as well as its list of core values.

Key among those core values is their commitment to satisfy and to delight their customers.

For Whole Foods Market, working to create an inviting and fun store environment is all part of the ideal customer experience. It's no surprise that customers look to the store as more than a place to buy healthy food items. In many cities, it's even viewed as a community meeting place.

When taking the needs of customers and employees into consideration, the retailer uncovered a critical fact: **Reliable cellular connectivity is critical to the Whole Foods Market ecosystem.** Here's why.

## The Challenge

Whole Foods Markets are found in all types of cities and neighborhoods. Often, the stores are built into existing multi-story brick structures shared with other tenants within an urban setting.

In one instance, Whole Foods was launching a new store location in New York City.

Because of its address in such a bustling metropolis, the store enjoyed a fair amount of foot traffic with visits from residents and tourists alike. Locals particularly appreciated the special emphasis on the high-quality organic food and products supplied by local vendors.

This store's location at street level would also invite its share of unique cellular signal problems.

With retrofitted, energy efficient windows and other environmentally friendly building materials these factors would have a negative impact on cell signal coverage throughout the store.

The lack of cellular connectivity was an inconvenience at Whole Foods Market. For one, Whole Foods customers often visit the store's website or rely on the phone app while shopping to stay

informed of weekly sales. With the onset of Prime Member Deals through Amazon, making buying decisions with phone in hand would become even more prevalent.

With weak or non-existent cell signal, customer frustrations would only rise. In turn, employees would be compelled to help resolve these concerns rather than focus on delighting customers.

Concerns about the lack of wireless coverage weren't limited to just existing store locations.

The inability to connect to cellular networks also hampered the construction process for new Whole Foods stores. Coordinating last-minute details before a grand opening, finishing work by electricians, plumbers, and other contractors, were contingent on having cell service.

There had to be a better way. Whole Foods leadership wanted a scalable, yet cost-effective solution to unforeseen cell signal problems at current locations and those under construction. They considered options like relying on a guest WiFi network, but this required a user login that many customers opted not to use.

Pursuing an active DAS solution would be cost-prohibitive—particularly at scale for the number of stores they had in mind. Also, for the fact that many Whole Foods Market locations are not free-standing stores but are part of a multi-story or mixed-use development. This meant that any infrastructure changes would require signoff by the building's owners or management.

## The Solution

As leaders from Whole Foods Market conferred with experts and weighed their options, they worked with a WilsonPro certified design consultant. He was able to demonstrate the many advantages of a passive DAS WilsonPro solution and why it was best suited for their stores.

“It was not only from a price perspective, but realistically speaking for the expectation they had for coverage. There was no need for a capacity solution. And a lot of times, there would be a residential dwelling just above (the store) and there were factors to consider,” explained their design consultant.

“It really would depend on where we might have permission to run cable or place an antenna. What the best-case scenario was for the system design as a whole—20-story building or not.”



The solution for the NYC Whole Foods Market would involve overcoming the sheer amount of infrastructure above the store itself which was preventing cell signal from getting through to the ground-level location. Permission was given for access to the building's rooftop to gain optimal antenna placement for viable cell signal reception—without a direct cable pathway.

## The Results

Starting with one pilot installation, Whole Food's confidence in WilsonPro grew rapidly and they began incorporating a WilsonPro cellular amplifier solution into roughly 27 of its stores. Today, a preliminary site survey for the viability of a WilsonPro system is now part of planning behind many Whole Foods store openings across the nation—from Washington to Florida.

Choosing WilsonPro as a solution provider allowed Whole Foods to overcome its challenges with cell signal reception—all without reconfiguring store layouts or limiting the selection of future locations. They were also able to boost cell signal for all customers in the store, no matter their carrier with WilsonPro's solution.

More importantly, customers and team members can stay connected throughout the store, which is an ideal outcome for a purpose-driven company whose values are established in sustainability.

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