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Rohnert Park Community Voice  
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## Citizens Get Another Chance To Say No to Walmart in Rohnert Park

By Rick Luttmann

Four years ago, Rohnert Park area citizens were able to stop Walmart's plans for expanding their current store into a SuperCenter. But now Walmart's back with its proposal, so citizens will have another opportunity to say no, and to tell our city government that there's already enough Walmart in this community.

There will be a public hearing on Walmart's expansion application before the Rohnert Park Planning Commission on Thursday, Aug. 14, at 6 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers at 130 Avram Ave.

There are many reasons why a Walmart SuperCenter is a bad idea, not only for Rohnert Park but the entire county:

- Job loss and wage decline in the retail and grocery industry across the county.
- Working poverty: Walmart workers make significantly less than a living wage for Sonoma County and less than other local grocers pay.
- Gender inequity: Walmart is being sued for gender discrimination in California.
- Health care and public subsidies: Less than half of Walmart workers have employer-provided health care insurance and many must rely on health care services provided by local and state government taxpayer funding.
- Increased traffic congestion and reliance on the automobile, which undermines transit-oriented development on the Highway 101 corridor.
- A significant increase of greenhouse gas emissions. • Extra burden on law-enforcement services.
- Unethical business practices such as the massive bribery scandal in Mexico and the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh that killed over 1,100 workers. (For more information, goto [livingwagesonoma.org](http://livingwagesonoma.org).)

This time around, there is even more reason to oppose Walmart's plans. Walmart is now in the process of opening a neighborhood market in the Mountain Shadows Shopping Center in the space formerly occupied by Pacific Market and before that Roger Wilco. How many grocery stores does Rohnert Park need? We already have plenty – more than most communities our size.

Other differences since 2010 include: the Graton Rancheria Casino is now completed and functioning; the US 101 interchange at Golf Course reconstruction has been completed; and SMART has re-laid tracks and is running experimental trains.

There are those who claim Walmart will bring jobs to the community. Wrong, entirely, if we look at net jobs created. Walmart will take jobs from other stores, and there will be no net increase. The principal effect will be to lower the quality of jobs. Walmart's practices drive low-end wages even lower. Walmart, in fact,

When it comes to promoting fairness, environmental sustainability and democracy, Walmart jobs are triple offenders: they are non-union poverty-wage positions, they support a corporation with a climate footprint half the size of France, and they undermine community jobs on Main Streets all over the world.

And it's just out of greed, because in fact Walmart could give each of its 1.4 million U.S. employees a \$5,000 annual raise and still have \$17 billion in annual profits. One family, the Walton family, owns more wealth than the bottom 40 percent of Americans. How much is enough?

Two factors that resulted in such a fabulous accumulation of wealth are the low wages paid to employees and the intense pressure put on suppliers to keep cutting wholesale prices to Walmart even at the cost of reducing suppliers' wage scales. Last time around, there were some residents supporting Walmart's proposal on the grounds that they wanted access to Walmart's low prices. But this argument no longer applies, as Walmart's "low-priced" (really?) groceries are soon to be available at its new Mountain Shadows location. Those who think Walmart has the lowest prices ought to do some comparison shopping. Rohnert Park has several discount groceries, including FoodMaxx, Grocery Outlet and Costco. Certain near-sighted self-centered shoppers come out to whine about being entitled to get their low prices regardless of the high cost to the community. Surprise: Here's what Consumer Reports found: Walmart's slogan says "Save money. Live better." But you might be happier shopping at Costco. The reason: In our exclusive survey about the quality of merchandise, value and customer service of 10 stores including Walmart, Sears, Target, Kmart, and Sam's Club, Costco was the only store to earn an outstanding grade for the quality of merchandise both online and in stores. We already have a Costco in Rohnert Park.

Please consider addressing the planning commission about why you oppose the super center. Alternatively, you can file your comments with City Hall. You can review the supplemental EIR and forward

comments to the planning commission at <http://www.ci.rohnert-park.ca.us/index.aspx>? Rick Luttmann is a math professor at Sonoma State University.

leads the list of the 20 companies with the most low-wage workers.