

Setting Limits How Best Can Walmart Serve Lompoc Valley?

As a retired surgeon, I have noticed similarities between invasive weeds and cancer, condensing these thoughts in an essay, "Weeds, The Cancers of the Plant World." My intention was not to trivialize the impact of cancers, but to discuss how the aggressive, unchecked growth of weeds crowds out and eliminates existing plants by depleting the soil of essential nutrients. , leaving wastelands such as the nearby stands of Veldt Grass and Pampas Grass. Similarly, the aggressive growth of cancer depletes the body of essential nutrients, destroying organs, and can result in death. Weeds and cancers can be controlled by appropriate intervention without aiming at total destruction.

Walmart can be seen as a cancer in the retail world. As resources are absorbed by Walmart, other merchants are depleted. The movie "The High Cost of Low Price" demonstrates Walmart's effect on communities. The article, "What Happens When Wal-Mart Comes to Town" (Record 1/18/10), describes the impact on small communities when major discount stores come in. Wal-Mart's expansion has contributed to a 37% decrease in small firms in areas studied.

Proposed benefits of Wal-Mart's expansion include:

1. Providing affordable grocery shopping options
2. Enhanced employment opportunities
3. Increased sales tax revenue
4. Improved shopping convenience

Joseph White (Record 7/25/10) quotes from the Walmart Expansion Project Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR), describing the 40% overbuilding of supermarket space likely resulting in the closure of the West Ocean Avenue Vons store further contributing to urban decay adding to Lompoc's vacant retail spaces.

1. FoodsCo currently provides the "affordable grocery shopping options" mentioned in the EIR.
2. That closure would eliminate thirty eight full-time jobs with full health and other benefits, partially replaced by minimum wage part-time Walmart positions.
3. Food items are not subject to sales tax
4. Existing supermarkets already carry enough merchandise for one-stop shopping, and plazas have a wide variety of options

Walmart can be controlled. Along with Joseph White, I urge the City Council to support EIR Alternative 1; leave Walmart in its present condition!

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