

Voices from around the country (US)

"Vermont welcomes Wal-Mart. But not in a cornfield; not in a big box on a city's outskirts, threatening the vitality of other local communities . . . where cities ringed with suburban malls look for ways to breathe life back into ghost downtowns."

– Editorial, *Burlington Free Press*, August 30, 1997

"They were not playing fair. They came in and ravaged all the small businesses. And when it came to the point where they were not satisfied, they left."

– Bryan Lee, President, First National Bank of Nowata, Oklahoma, March 5, 1995

"I cherish the lovely times I spend here in Old Saybrook. It would be an absolute shame to allow a commercial development of this sort to forever change our town."

– Katharine Hepburn, 1995, commenting on Wal-Mart plans in connecticut

"Wal-Mart has become a lightning rod for foes of commercialization and bigness. In some communities the arrival of large discount chains has meant the withering and demise of smaller local businesses . . . the beginning of blight in areas which previously enjoyed a rural atmosphere."

– Editorial, *The Observer*, Smithfield, Rhode Island, June 8, 1995

"Something must be done to help all of the people who are working at Wal-Mart and are being mistreated by this management . . . If everyone who has been treated as I have been would not be so hesitant about speaking out and their families and friends would stop shopping at wonderful Wal-Mart, they would not be so successful."

– Robert Howell, 59-year-old former Wal-Mart employee, May 3, 1995

They're just businessmen making money. Culturally it hurts.

Economically it really hurts. We're at their mercy. We were dependent on them."

– Sue Ann Ryan, Director, Chamber of Commerce, Bixby, Oklahoma, March 5, 1995

"In the ten years before Wal-Mart opened, we had a total of 20 business failures. In the ten years after Wal-Mart was here, we had 185 business failures. You could buy a bicycle in eight locations in this town. Today, if you want to buy a bicycle, you can only buy it at Wal-Mart."

– Glenn Falgoust, Donaldsonville, Louisiana, *60 Minutes*, April 30, 1995

"Wal-Mart's merchandise has not only homogenized consumption patterns throughout the country, it is homogenizing our experience of the landscape."

– Ellen Dunham-Jones, *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall 1997

"It may be argued that the entry of Wal-Mart should be accepted because it represents free enterprise. This is a reasonable argument when Wal-Mart enters large and growing markets. However, it is not reasonable to assume that when one store dominates a market, that a monopoly can be avoided. In fact, monopoly conditions have been considered inconsistent with the concept of free enterprise for over a century."

– Tom Muller, economist, August 1997 impact study, Woodstock, Virginia

"America is absolutely overstored."

– Kurt Barnard, retail consultant, *US News & World Report*, July 14, 1997

"One of the sayings that Wal-Mart has is 'Respect for the Individual.' I would really like to know which individual, because I didn't see anyone in the store that I worked at knowing the meaning of the phrase."

– Lynn Marie Berg, worked at Wal-Mart for 5 years, November 1998

"I had a heck of a business – four people in sales and two full-time bookkeepers. Now I've got a part-time bookkeeper and a part-time salesman. My business is down 35% since Wal-Mart came to town .

. . . It's devastating. The merchants downtown are just hanging on, and I don't see it getting better."

– Rodney Norman, Norman's Hardware, Hazelhurst, Mississippi, June 1988

"It's just devastated our downtown. The mom and pops are closed up . . . overall I'd have to say it's been a negative for our town."

– Mayor Harry Hammond, Europa, Mississippi, June 1988

"What the residents are objecting to is a powerful, monied corporation that is absolutely insensitive to the needs of the neighborhood and only interested in making money trying to use its wealth and legal power to push onto this neighborhood a commercial venture that wasn't ever intended."

– Sheila Slomski, Mesa, Arizona, January 1999

"The U.S. is really saturated with retailers in our bigger cities. In the late 1960s there was five sq. ft. of retail space for every person in the U.S. Now there is around 20."

– Ken Stone, Professor, Iowa State University, October 7, 1998

"Seniority and doing a good job mean nothing here. The Wal-Mart Open Door policy means that if you OPEN your mouth, you'll be OUT the door."

– Dale Stiles, Wal-Mart employee, *Arkansas Times*, September 3, 1992

"It just isn't the Wal-Mart way to give a rip about the community in which they are doing business. If things go a little sour, they just close up and go somewhere else – where the bucks are. It's all business at Wal-Mart . . . they have all the compassion of a sledgehammer."

– Tom Larimer, Editor, Carroll County, Arkansas newspaper, November 7, 1991

"They claim retail zoning will bring jobs and tax income to our community. These are part-time, minimum wage jobs that produce very little in income taxes."

– Mayor Ed Boyle, North Olmsted, Ohio, October 25, 1997

"If superstores would configure themselves in a more environmentally friendly way, they would encounter less resistance."

– Constance Beaumont, *Land & People*, Fall 1995

"They destroyed all of their competition and now we can not get anyone to reopen here. We have no place to buy a man's dress shirt, or blue jeans for men . . . They have also pulled out of other towns since then. They are not nearly as stable as they would lead you to believe."
– Archer Hoyt, Past President, Hearne, Texas Chamber of Commerce, October 1993

"My personal opinion is that our community would be more quaint, have a greater variety of products, if we had never had a Wal-Mart."
– Robert Donaldson, Village Councillor, Ruidoso, New Mexico, September 1, 1997

"Growth must come at a pace that a community and its residents can sustain, and in a location and manner that compliments the integrity of a community. If Wal-Mart can conform to these community needs, it is welcome. If not, we are not interested in letting it open its doors."
– Stan Cox, Simcoe, Ruidoso, Canada, 1995

"Developers are making huge shopping centers in small towns that are too close to each other. 10 to 12 to 18 miles apart. Somebody is going to be hurt."
– Mike Noila, Jr., Senior VP, developer Manley-Berenson of Puerto Rico, December 1994

"If a community genuinely doesn't want a Wal-Mart store, we won't go there. We will never mistake a vocal minority, however, for the majority."
– Don Shinkle, Wal-Mart Vice President, Corporate Affairs, November 4, 1995

"I was in business for 34 years until Wal-Mart came in. Many days the only person that turned the door knob was the mailman and expenses went on as usual and my accountant tried to talk me into quitting business in 1992, but I did not want to. My year 1993 federal tax report showed a loss of \$26,000, and that made me see the light."
– Richard L. Smith, Weston, West Virginia, letter to the editor, May 4, 1995

"The death knell for any downtown business district is the invasion of regional and large discount retailers which locate outside of the older, established business area. If immediate and effective efforts are not made to breathe life into downtown districts, they can deteriorate into ghost towns within a few years. Just look around at other south Georgia downtowns."

– Editorial, *The Times-Enterprise*, Thomasville, Georgia, August 21, 1994

"Wal-Mart in Plainville (CT) will be a disaster for this community and its neighbors. Wal-Mart doesn't contribute to a community, it subtracts from it. The discount department store's predatory philosophy of undercutting local merchants is designed to put them out of business and eliminate alternatives."

– Editorial, *The Herald*, Plainville, Connecticut, October 19, 1994

"Let's see – assuming a Wal-Mart-induced commuting delay of 15 minutes a day, 250 days a year, and billing at \$20 an hour, that comes to \$1,250 per commuter per year. For doctors and lawyers who can charge \$200 an hour, it's about \$12,500 per year. We'll take it in the form of personal checks, thanks, with a surcharge for air pollution, pain, suffering and ugliness."

– Donella Meadows, column in the *Valley News*, Plainfield, New Hampshire, June 12, 1993

"You need to be empathetic to the fact that people are going a little crazy. You're going out, and all you see are these giant Wal-Marts. They are every few blocks, and it is not the kind of environment people want to live in."

– Republican strategist Christine Matthews, quoted in the *New York Times*, May 4, 1999