

## SOUTHWEST SPRINGFIELD NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

### Response to Wal-Mart "Fact Sheet" May 30, 2006

Southwest Springfield Neighbors Association (SWSNA) has obtained an advance copy of a "fact sheet" which may be distributed by Wal-Mart at its open house of May 30, 2006. The "fact sheet" addressed 4 areas: General Information, Traffic Impacts, Roadway Infrastructure Improvements, and Economic Impact. Here is our response.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Wal-Mart claims it has the zoning—B-1 and S-2—to proceed with its plans for the proposed Supercenter. We disagree. In our opinion, **the Springfield Zoning Ordinance does not authorize Wal-Mart to place a 2 acre detention pond in an S-2 zone, exclusively to serve an adjacent B-1 use.** Also, we believe that the S-2 area will in fact be used for B-1 purposes, in violation of the ordinance.

- We disagree with Wal-Mart's contention that no variance—shorthand for "**NO CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL**"—is required for direct roadway access to the site. Wal-Mart claims that "access to adjoining roadways was approved in conjunction with the Cobblestone approval process in 1993." If Wal-Mart is talking about Resolution 35-93, passed on March 18, 1993, that Resolution says no such thing. Rather, that Resolution approved a sketch map with a single access point to "large commercial lots" (whatever that means), not *three access points* as proposed here. Moreover, a variance at the sketch plan stage is insufficient to remove this project, 13 years later, from City Council scrutiny. We are now at the preliminary plan stage. **Section 153.201 (d) of the Subdivision Ordinance says that "action by the planning commission to approve a preliminary plan containing variances shall not be deemed final until the preliminary plan is approved by the City Council."**

- Why are we at the preliminary plan stage? It's because Wal-Mart needs a change in the current preliminary plan, approved in 2003. That plan shows a public road, Yucan Drive, (the road north of Green Toyota) bisecting the Wal-Mart site. **Wal-Mart needs a new preliminary plan to eliminate Yucan Drive.** But many nearby residents purchased their homes on the assumption that the Wal-Mart site would be bisected by Yucan and was therefore inappropriate for development as a big box store.

- There is no such thing as a "Cobblestone Regional Drainage Facility" as claimed by Wal-Mart—there's just a series of detention ponds in Cobblestone Estates and other adjoining subdivisions which are already overflowing their banks even without Wal-Mart's contribution of water. This water will likely be polluted with motor oil from the parking lot and automotive facility, and fertilizer from the garden center. **It isn't going to be pleasant living next to these detention ponds.**

- Wal-Mart has yet to address our noise study, which shows indisputably that if they run this store anything like the North Dirksen store, they will violate Illinois EPA noise regulations. **Their claim of "noise attenuation to include rear landscape berm" is laughable--unless the berm is as high as the store itself. That's why we refer to this as the "Mount Cobblestone Proposal."**

## TRAFFIC IMPACTS AND ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

- While we have not seen the current traffic study and have made a Freedom of Information Request to obtain it, all previous studies were methodologically flawed, were based on questionable assumptions, and were apparently designed to trivialize the adverse impacts of thousands of Wal-Mart shoppers on our neighborhoods. There is no reason to believe the current study is any better. **We believe its approval by the City and IDOT was as much an exercise in politics as engineering.**

- Wal-Mart says that “adjoining roadways and intersections will operate at satisfactory levels of service” after Wal-Mart widens roads adjacent to the site. But what about Wabash Avenue east and west of the site, and Archer Elevator and Meadowbrook Roads north of the site? Won't they need to be upgraded to deliver all those Wal-Mart shoppers to the site? Who is going to upgrade these roads? **Who, but the taxpayer, is going to get stuck with the tab?**

- Wal-Mart suggests it is giving the City a gift of \$2.5 million for roadway improvements. **Wal-Mart doesn't make gifts—it only accepts them.** In our opinion, the \$2.5 million is a gift *to* Wal-Mart *from* the City, a mere fraction of the real costs that Wal-Mart is foisting on the taxpayers.

## ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Wal-Mart claims additional sales taxes of \$800,000 per year. Who's kidding whom? Retail is practically a zero-sum game in Springfield. **If Wal-Mart makes sales to generate an additional \$800,000 in sales taxes, then other grocery stores and department stores will lose those same sales.**

- Ditto for the alleged 150 new jobs—**how many grocery and retail workers are losing their jobs because of this Supercenter?**

- Wal-Mart claims additional property taxes for the City and School District of \$275,000. This number, even if true, is a drop in the bucket compared to their budgets. In any event, we'd like to see their numbers—or should we simply take Wal-Mart at its word?

- Wal-Mart fails to mention the destruction of property values in adjoining subdivisions due to its destruction of our quality of life—how much is that going to cost the City and School District in property tax revenues? **What if families in our neighborhoods flee Wal-Mart and District 186, to Chatham, Rochester or New Berlin?** What's that going to cost the District 186 in State aid?

## THE FINAL BATTLE TO PRESERVE OUR NEIGHBORHOODS IS JUST BEGINNING, AND YOUR SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL

Join the fight by contacting your elected officials and insisting on a City Council vote on these matters. Try to attend meetings of the Land Subdivision Committee and the Regional Plan Commission (see our separate flier for dates, times and places).

To receive detailed and current information regarding Wal-Mart's next move, check our website, [www.swsna.org](http://www.swsna.org), regularly. If you want to be put on our e-mail list to be notified of Wal-Mart's next move, e-mail us at [swsna@insightbb.com](mailto:swsna@insightbb.com).