

WALMART AND URBAN BLIGHT

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I have lived in Yelm at the above address for over 15 years. I am a proponent of shopping locally because it is my experience that a healthy local economy is necessary for a high quality of life.

I grew up in Kansas City, Kansas; Wyandotte County. For residents of Yelm this area recently came to prominence over the NASCAR Track built there to assist the depressed local economy. It was during my early years in Kansas City I witnessed a once prosperous community become a permanently depressed area. As business after business moved out of Kansas City, Kansas the downtown area became unsafe after sundown. The visionaries had gone and the town, without good leadership, became a shadow of what it once was.

My family was extremely active in local business affairs. One of the major premises I grew up with was the importance of living and working in the same community. I have always honored that premise, and since living in Yelm I have supported the local community by shopping in town. This issue of the majority of the money spent in a community going out of state bothers me greatly. I was raised on the concept that a healthy local community creates a reasonable living style for its members. This is only possible if the money spent in that community is circulated back into the local economy.

The health of Yelm as a community is threatened by the coming of Walmart. The local people who have their businesses here also provide a source of leadership in this community. They care about Yelm and they have a great investment in the continued growth of the city. It is important to have individuals in a local community with progressive vision and creative ideas. A community that lacks leadership is an impoverished community.

I appreciate shopping locally as I have someone who assumes responsible for what they sell and the services they render. I can talk to a person in charge if I need assistance. I know the person will do the best they can as they have an investment in my satisfaction. Price is important to me, but it is not my only consideration. I also look the overall cost of an item, not just what I will pay as I check out at the check stand. For me the overall cost of a Walmart in the loss of a quality of life is too high a price to pay.

Yelm has been growing tremendously. We have a fabulous blend of people with different skills and backgrounds. We also have a growing number of our youth attending college. This increase in the educational level of the citizens can have far-reaching effects on this community. If Walmart becomes the major employer in town the bright, educated young people will not come back to Yelm. There will only be jobs for people living at the lower levels of the economic spectrum. This is the greatest loss a community can have. The leaders will leave and the future will not be one of innovation, but one of plodding along in a treadmill-like life. Human beings are naturally creative, and the best of us must give more back to our communities than simply a mundane day-after-day grind.

I live on the edge of town by the High School. It takes me 15 minutes to drive up to Lacey. As a resident of Yelm I know the shortcuts to get around the traffic. At the present time the worst gridlock is that of north to south. If Walmart is allowed to open the gridlock will be from east to west also. I won't even be able to get to downtown Yelm in a reasonable time to support the local businesses. We already have a Walmart within 15 minutes of where I live, I don't see the need for one right here in town.