

Battle-Mart 101

Tips for Fighting Wal-Mart



The Short Version

(In 7 Steps)

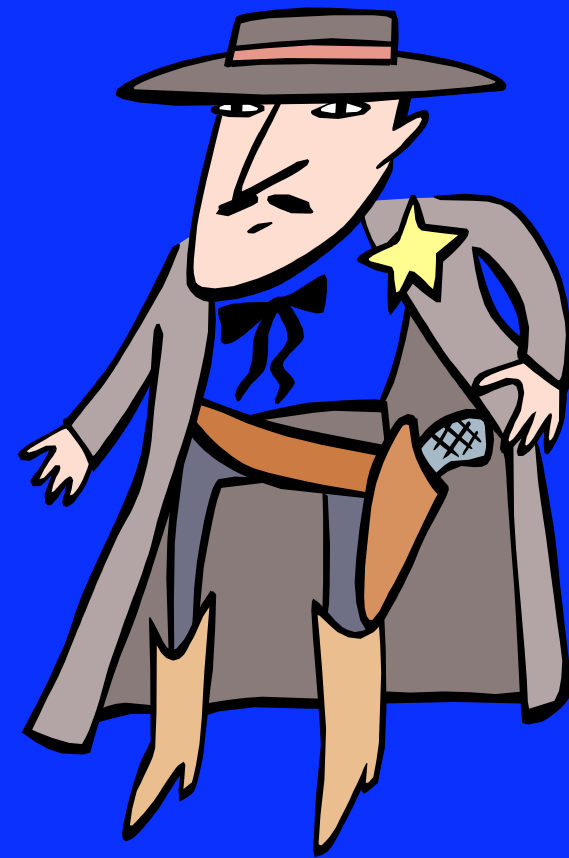
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1. Form A Citizens Group

- **If there is no existing neighborhood association or other civic group, form your own. You don't need to incorporate.**
- **Try to create an "all walks of life" group that draws from civic, religious, education, neighbors, age-range, etc.**
- **Give it a short, upbeat name like "Freeport First."**

2. Hire the Experts You Need



- Wal-Mart has their hired guns, you need them too.
- A land use (zoning) lawyer
- A traffic engineer
- A hydrologist or geologist

A Zoning Lawyer Is Key

- **A Wal-Mart application is a zoning case.**
- **Zoning cases are quasi-judicial hearings.**
- **You need a lawyer to help you find the best legal angles in your town's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.**
- **A lawyer also shows you are ready to go to court if necessary to stop this project.**

Why Experts?

- **During a zoning hearing, you need to introduce into the record important expert testimony:**
- **Impact on property values**
- **Impact on traffic**
- **Impact on taxes & the local economy.**
You need experts to rebut Wal-Mart's experts.

3. Raise Money

- **Set up a Funding Committee that focuses ONLY on raising money.**
- **Have it be a trust fund your attorney handles for privacy purposes**
- **Approach local merchants**



Where to Find Money

- **Start off with a goal of trying to raise \$15,000.**
- **Approach homeowners, businesses, unions and others, asking them to become a partner for \$500—and find 30 partners.**
- **Avoid very labor intensive events, like car washes and bake sales.**

Make Out A Clear Budget



- Prepare a one page budget to show funders.
- Have your lawyer estimate the cost of local hearings—before having to go to court.
- Cost out any other experts you want to testify.
- Guarantee your donors privacy.

4. Create Fact Sheet/Website

- **Write a one-page fact sheet about the project you are fighting, and why you are against it.**
- **Create a website that includes an on-line petition to sign against the project.**
- **Create an email alert system by asking for people's emails.**

5. Be constantly visible in the media.

- **Respond to anything Wal-Mart says.**
- **Invite Wal-Mart's CEO to visit your town to see why their project is wrong.**
- **Get in the news as often as you can**



6. Present An Alternative

- What else could this land be used for?
- Are there other potential buyers or users?
- Draw your idea to show what the area could look like.



7. Lobby Local Officials

- **The whole fight comes down to winning a majority vote on your Planning Board of City Council.**
- **Do you know your decision-makers?**
- **Sit down with them individually, talk about who else might vote your way?**
- **Lobby all Board members with letters and phone calls.**

Issues You Can Raise in A Zoning Case:

- **The adverse economic impact of Wal-Mart on local taxes, jobs, and area businesses.**
- **The public safety cost of crime.**
- **Negative impacts on residential property values.**
- **Air, noise and light pollution**
- **Filling of wetlands, siltation of streams**

More Zoning Issues

- **The project is too “intense” for the area, the scale is too large.**
- **The traffic congestion will worsen.**
- **Incompatible with the town’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan.**
- **No market need for the store—area already saturated with retail.**

But remember...

- **You have to prove these points during the hearing with expert testimony.**
- **If you say property values will suffer, for example, you have to hire a real estate appraiser who will testify to that effect, and do a little analysis to show it.**

Closing Principles

- 1. Wal-Mart is never a “done deal.”**
- 2. Wal-Mart has been stopped hundreds of times.**
- 3. All zoning is local, every case is unique.**
- 4. It takes a village to beat a Wal-Mart, you need a committee to motivate the village.**
- 5. A Wal-Mart fight is like a political campaign: talk to political organizers.**

More Principles...

- 6. Time is on your side. The longer the delay, the better chance Wal-Mart will leave.**
- 7. The battle will get hot. Wal-Mart will create a "citizens" group and hire PR firms to turn people against you.**
- 8. Wal-Mart will greatly outspend you. Let people know this in advance.**

More Principles...

9. Wal-Mart imitates grassroots groups. Any strategy you employ—like lawnsigns—they will imitate.

10. You are not alone, but you will need expert assistance.

**If you don't fight, you
have a 0% chance
of winning.**



- No one can guarantee you will beat Wal-Mart.
- But the odds of losing rise to 100% if you do nothing.

Wal-Mart is NOT a government mandate.

- You don't have to have one in your neighborhood.
- It ain't over 'till the fat company sings.

