

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Wal-Mart plan raises concerns

Of all the objections raised against the proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter, the potential negative environmental impact on the land should be a major concern to Hartford's citizens and area residents.

This issue is far from being resolved: It is neither cut nor dried. In fact, the issue is very wet. The farmland that would be used for the Super Center and other commercial buildings sits low. Part of the land that would be built on is wetlands. More wetlands sit adjacent to the site. So does the Libby Lagoon. And at the edge of the wetlands/lagoon is the Rubicon River.

DNR and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decisions are needed whenever developments are placed on top of wetlands. To protect these wetlands, these agencies require that this type of development is only done as the "last resort" with no alternatives.

Here in Hartford, this is not the case and if we don't ask some questions we may have a lot to lose.

The argument that the wetlands area that would be filled is small doesn't cut the mustard with the DNR which must treat all wetlands the same — big or small. Those who remember the Libby Lagoon and its stench can appreciate the positive changes that have taken place there.

And our Rubicon River may not be mighty, but thanks to civic groups it is cleaned annually and right now its banks are getting a face lift in the downtown area.

I urge concerned citizens to have a look at this land. Use your imagination to sketch in a 184,000 square-foot store and parking area. Add a heavy rain to the picture. Studies estimate that run-off from parking lots is 16 times greater than run-off from agricultural land. Even with retention ponds, storm water run-off from

the Wal-Mart development could pose an environmental danger to the surrounding area.

On March 28, when the Hartford Common Council voted to annex the Gary Doll property, Alderman (Tony) Garza was the only person to address these problems.

Garza voted NO to annexation, not because he is against Wal-Mart, but because he is concerned about the environmental impact on that land. Among other comments, Alderman Garza pointed out that snow plowed off the parking lot would contain salt as well as other chemicals from the roads and cars.

We know that as these snow piles melt, the polluted water would easily find its way into the wetlands, the lagoon and the river. Wal-Mart argues that there are no practical alternatives to the proposed site. Wal-Mart is relying on their assertion that "an 183,918 square foot facility requires approximately 25 to 30 acres of land."

This is not true. McClure Engineering Associates Inc. the firm employed by Wal-Mart to design the Supercenter in Hartford, is currently building a 203,000-square-foot Supercenter on 13.41 acres of land in Monona.

The Monona plan uses underground parking thereby increasing the area for on-site storm water infiltration.

This plan limits run-off and uses roughly half the amount of land that would be used for the Wal-Mart design that is proposed in Hartford.

Were this model used, Wal-Mart would be able to build on a much smaller piece of land that had no sensitive wetlands, no recovered lagoon and no mighty good-looking river.

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