

Wal-mart's Community Impact Report Can be found at

http://walmartwatch.com/battlemart/go/cat/community_impact

According to the company, Wal-Mart is the "largest owner and manager of retail space in the country." But not all that land is for working, thriving supercenters. Wal-Mart has shed hundreds of stores to move onto bigger facilities. Most of these relocations have been in towns where Wal-Mart shuts down a discount store to open up a larger supercenter a few miles, or even blocks, away. "As (Wal-Mart) rolls out new supercenter prototypes," the company explains, "it must also find uses for existing relocated stores after they are closed."

Although the company claims that in 1998 it sold or leased 10 million square feet of what it calls "once-occupied" stores, the February, 1999 list of "available buildings" from Wal-Mart Realty reveals that the amount of buildings on the market at that time was closer to 20 million square feet of empty stores. As these stores sit dormant, they continue to generate polluted runoff, poisoning rivers and lakes. Based on Wal-Mart's own list, here are some statistics on these empty stores that might surprise you:

- Wal-Mart listed 333 empty buildings as of February, 1999.
- These buildings are spread across 31 states.
- A total of 20.66 million s.f. of empty stores were on the market
- Only 17% (58) of these stores are owned by Wal-Mart, 83% (275) are leased
- Estimating that Wal-Mart has roughly 2,850 U.S. stores open, these additional 333 empty stores meant that 10.5% of the units Wal-Mart owns or leases were "available".
- 15 states had 10 or more empty Wal-Mart stores
- The average size of empty Wal-Marts was 62,057s.f.--larger than most other retail buildings in a small community.
- 52 of the empty stores (16%) were larger than 100,000 s.f, with some as large as 134,000 s.f.
- 54 stores (16%) on the February list were marked "new"

Wal-Mart stores and parking lots already occupy roughly 75,000 acres in the U.S. and the company plans to nearly double its footprint over the next 10 years. Many of these new stores will be built on undeveloped land, even though the U.S. is overrun with thousands of vacant malls, shopping centers, and big-box stores. [Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 7/21/05]

The symptoms of retail saturation are everywhere:

- We have more than 4,000 abandoned shopping malls in America.
- We have more shopping centers than high schools.
- We have 20 square feet of retail space for every man, woman and child in America, up from 14.7 s.f. per person in 1986, compared with 2 s.f. per person in Britain.