

Wal-mart to open new super center in tarpon springs, florida



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Wal-Mart to open new Super center in Tarpon Springs, Florida According to the retail giant, Wal-Mart's 2005 Annual Report, the company plans to spend at least \$14 billion to open between 490 to 535 new stores around the globe. One such location, planned to operate on the shores of the Anclote River, in the Florida tourist town of Tarpon Springs, has been met with delays, local backlash, and environmental concerns. According to the corporate public affairs office, actual building costs are confidential information, but it is estimated it will cost between \$20 and \$30 million dollars to open a new locationⁱⁱ. Even with the large price tag, the proposed Super center opening is less than a guaranteed development. Wal-Mart has been one of the most profitable companies in the world, yet a growing movement among local citizens and leaders could cost the company valuable time, extensive legal fees, and a potential boycott among the locals in this traditional small city.

Despite working with local and state officials in acquiring the proper zoning and building permits, Wal-Mart has faced an unexpected obstacle. Known as the U. S. base for the Greek-Orthodox religion, and a quaint area known for its exquisite sponges, traditional sponge-divers, and small Greek shops and restaurant, Tarpon Springs has amassed a unique culture. So, when Wal-Mart announced in 2004, that it was opening a Super center, opponents lined up to try to stop it. Armed with a piece of restrictive growth legislation titled " Statute 163," the non-profit citizens' group, Concerned Citizens, has raised tens of thousands of dollars to block the expansion. By February 1, 2006 this group has spent over \$100, 000 in legal expensesⁱⁱⁱ. Headed by the umbrella organization, Friends of the Anclote River, and founders, Helen and William Gladwin, citizens' groups continue to fight and have placed the <https://assignbuster.com/wal-mart-to-open-new-super-center-in-tarpon-springs-florida/>

Tarpon Springs City Council in an uncomfortable positioniv. On January 18th, 2005, after a twelve-hour marathon session that attracted over 400 citizens, the five-member City Council panel voted 3-2 to allow construction of the new facilityv.

Even though it has been over a year since the ruling, Wal-Mart has not been able to lay one brick, and it may be years until the construction begins. Since the final rulings, Concerned Citizens, with help from anti-Walmart activist group, WARN, has managed to halt the company's progress by filing two separate lawsuits in a staggered succession to delay the building despite completing all necessary requirements for opening this store. One lawsuit, an appeal of the Council's ruling, as of February 2006, is pending the decision of a three judge panel in Pinellas County's Sixth Judicial Circuit. If the activists win this lawsuit, the City Council will be mandated to re-vote on the matter. The second lawsuit the group filed, may be the more precarious one for Wal-Mart. Using Statute 163, the group asserts that building the Wal-Mart on the banks of the Anclote River will cause an increase of traffic flow that will cause extensive problems in the small community. This lawsuit also asserts that the physical act of building will damage the unspoiled environment and would not be beneficial to the habitat that invites so many touristsvi.

In order to proceed with the construction and not waste valuable time and money, Wal-Mart will need to continue with legal proceedings until these citizens' groups run out of money. The groups are already working from a financial deficit, and continued legal appeals should prove successful for the company. There is a possibility, however, that a legal ruling could thwart the

project. As anti-Wal-Mart sentiment grows throughout the nation, Wal-Mart will have to budget for extensive legal battles when planning its growth.