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July 4, 2010

City Hall
130 Avram Avenue
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

Re: Proposed Rohnert Park Wal-Mart Supercenter

Dear Rohnert Park City Council members:

We are writing you in regard to the proposed Wal-Mart supercenter. The Rohnert Park Planning Commission unanimously denied Wal-Mart's application to expand its store on April 22nd. Wal-Mart has appealed this decision to the city council. Sonoma County Conservation Action strongly urges the council to uphold the decision of the planning commission and to deny the appeal.

We oppose the project for the following reasons:

1) The project will result in the loss of Pacific Market, a local and neighborhood grocery store. The closure of Pacific Market will impact other businesses in the Mountain Shadows Shopping Center and will trigger urban decay. Other local grocers such as Raley's, Safeway, and Oliver's will face stiff competition from the supercenter.

2) The project is not consistent with General Plan Goal LU-7 that "encourages new neighborhood commercial facilities to be located to maximize accessibility to all residential areas." The supercenter is not a neighborhood market. It will primarily attract customers from a regional market that includes Mendocino, Sonoma, and Marin counties.

3) The closure of Pacific Market will force 8,000 customers to drive an extra 28,400 miles each week to shop for groceries. Moreover, vehicle miles driven per customer will increase because a supercenter draws shoppers from a greater distance than a discount store. In order to comply with AB 32, all nine cities, including Rohnert Park and the County of Sonoma, have pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions twenty-five percent by 2015. Approval of the supercenter will undermine the efforts by local government to address the climate crisis and to comply with AB 32.

4) Pacific Market carries products from over 50 local Sonoma County producers, whereas Wal-Mart suppliers are all large national manufacturers and factory farms. Also, not only does Pacific Market carry the local products that are typically more environmentally friendly, but also the trucking mileage is greatly reduced when grocers purchase from local suppliers of agricultural produce.

5) The supercenter will employ nearly 400 low-wage workers and is

located within one-half mile of the new Rohnert Park SMART train station. The majority of employees will not be able to live in Rohnert Park or Cotati and most will likely commute from more affordable housing markets in other cities and counties. The project is not consistent with recommendations by the Association for Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transit Authority for transit-oriented development that encourages the creation of good jobs and densely-built affordable housing--along the 101 corridor and near the fourteen SMART train stations in Marin and Sonoma.

The city council should uphold the planning commission decision and deny the appeal by Wal-Mart.

Sincerely,

Dennis Rosatti

Dennis Rosatti
Executive Director
Sonoma County Conservation Action

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