

Sweden welcomes Wal-Mart Superstore

The following is the speech delivered by Supervisor Nat O. Lester, III at the March 13 pre-opening celebration of the new Wal-Mart Superstore in the Town of Sweden. The store officially opened the next morning.

“Thank you, Drew. I'd like to introduce my fellow Sweden Town Board members here this evening – Deputy Supervisor Rob Carges, Councilperson Patricia Connors, Councilperson Danielle Windus-Cook and Councilperson Tom Ferris.

I'd also like to introduce the Sweden Planning Board members here this evening:
Chairman Craig McAllister
Arnie Monno
Rick Dollard

And I'd like to acknowledge the Sweden Planning Board members that weren't able to be present tonight:

David Hale
Ellen Bahr
Bill Hertweck
Matt Minor

As many of you know, this Wal-Mart Superstore went through a nearly four-year review process by the Town of Sweden Planning Board. Just to put that into perspective – the plans for the Wal-Mart Superstore in Albion were filed two years after this store's plans were filed in Sweden.... and the Albion store has been up and running for more than a year.

The difference was a methodical, painstaking and intense conversation between the Sweden Planning Board, and the engineers, architects and attorneys who represent Wal-Mart, to design a superstore that is sensitive to the needs of our community.

And I must say the result is magnificent.

I have never seen a Wal-Mart Superstore look like this one – a street of shops that in some small way replicates our historic downtown. Drew told me that in all the Wal-Marts he has visited, he has never seen a Wal-Mart Superstore look like this one.

The design of this building is a testament to the fact that we do not have to live in a world of big boxes. We can work together – planners, residents and developers – to create structures that are aesthetically appealing and functionally efficient.

I understand that there is a fair amount of smart technology in this building. There is a heat recovery system integrated with the refrigeration units in the grocery department. There are occupancy sensors that detect the level of carbon dioxide in the store so that the ventilation system is constantly adjusted to accommodate the number of people in the building.

I congratulate Wal-Mart for incorporating energy conserving technology into this building's design.

I'd like to recognize Allied Builders, the general contractors on this project, for their work. The Sweden Building Inspectors have told me that Allied has been responsive, cooperative and professional throughout the whole process. I'd like to thank Allied for its efforts to keep the disruption to traffic and the inconvenience to neighboring properties to a minimum.

I'd like to thank the residents of Talamora Trail for their patience during this project. I know that it's not easy when there is a change in your neighborhood, especially a change of this size and scope.

That's why it is important to remember that some of the design features of this building and of the site are a direct result of input by residents. For those residents who called, wrote letters, and attended meetings during the four-year process, you should be proud that you helped influence the outcome we see here today.

I met with Drew recently and he expressed to me that Wal-Mart will be a good neighbor. I do not doubt his word. Problems and issues will arise from time to time, we have to expect that, but I am confident that Drew and the Town will be able to address those issues quickly and satisfactorily.

Wal-Mart has already proven itself as a good neighbor – Wal-mart generously sponsors programs at the Sweden/Clarkson Community Center, the Sweden Senior Center and has made donations to the Village of Brockport for special projects.

The opening of this store means 192 new jobs – bringing the total jobs provided by Wal-Mart in this community to 360 - 60% of which are full-time jobs. The construction of this superstore has sparked interest from other retailers and that's good news. Brockport's downtown merchants should see increased traffic coming into the community. More people will become aware of the vitality of our historic village. Many stores will reap the benefit of more shoppers coming to our town. Sweden's business districts are strong and vibrant and will remain so.

In closing, I'd like to congratulate Drew and all the associates of our new Wal-Mart Superstore. You have a wonderful new facility in which to work; the

residents of our community and surrounding communities have a wonderful new place to shop; and our business district is poised for growth. On behalf of the entire Sweden Town Board, I wish Wal-Mart, Drew Coleman and all of the associates here tonight, prosperity and success in the future.