

# THE NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL ALLIANCE

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FIGHTING FOR THE INTERESTS OF NEW  
YORK CITY'S NEIGHBORHOOD RETAILERS  
AND THEIR WHOLESALERS

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# The Neighborhood Retail Alliance

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## MISSION STATEMENT

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The Neighborhood Retail Alliance has been fighting for the rights of small businesses in New York City for the past twenty years. We have successfully taken on some of the city's largest real estate developers as well as some of the country's largest retailers in the effort to prevent the erosion of New York's neighborhood economy.

This fight was initially waged against the building of suburban-style shopping centers in manufacturing areas around the city. In the past twenty years we have intervened to prevent the building of a retail center on Zarega Avenue and Bronxdale Avenue in the Bronx. We were also successful at preventing the development of the huge Brooklyn Junction Mall in Bay Ridge as well as the construction of shopping centers in Astoria and Canarsie. All of these successes, as well as many others, were made possible through the development of coalitions that brought neighborhood businesses and community organizations together in common cause.

Over the past few years the efforts of our Alliance have risen to a new level because of the danger presented by big box stores. These stores, selling almost every product under the sun, pose a dire threat to all of the city's neighborhood businesses and the communities they serve.

The threat of big box stores has not gone unchallenged. Beginning in 1999, the Neighborhood Retail Alliance has gone on the offensive and, working with civic associations around the city, has not only blocked the entry of three Costco stores in Manhattan and Brooklyn but has also just recently knocked out a BJ's Warehouse Club in the Bronx and, in the most dramatic victory, the Wal-Mart store slated for Rego Park in Queens.

The Neighborhood Retail Alliance is, however, more than just a thorn in the side of big box stores. The Alliance has also led the fight against city regulatory and enforcement policies. In the past ten years we have successfully thwarted at least four efforts to increase the ability of city regulators to fine retailers without due process. Most recently, we led the fight against Mayor Bloomberg's Charter Revision, Question Five that would have enabled the Department of Consumer Affairs to be both judge and jury over city retailers.

The mission of the Neighborhood Retail Alliance is to mobilize neighborhood businesses and counteract any public policy that threatens the livelihood of New York City's 186,000 Mom and Pop retailers. We believe that the economic wellbeing of this city rests on a vibrant small business sector. We believe that entrepreneurship is the essence of the American Dream for thousands of new immigrants and that elected officials have lost sight of the importance of neighborhood retailers to the vitality of NYC.

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## WAL-MART INVASION: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

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The entry of Wal-Mart into New York City is the biggest challenge to neighborhood businesses and local communities in our city's history. We have seen Wal-Mart's impact all over the country. Where Wal-Mart builds, downtown business districts erode and often die. The loss of small business is the first step in the decline of neighborhoods and the loss of local identity.

It must be pointed out that the past four years have not been kind to neighborhood retailers. On the heels of the devastation of 9/11, real estate taxes have been raised with impunity leading to intolerable rent increases. Sales taxes have also been raised along with garbage rates and cigarette levies. On top of all of this the city has increased its exploitive enforcement policies in order to balance its out-of-whack budget.

Now, in the face of the worst climate for small business in over two decades, some city policymakers want to encourage the proliferation of box stores like Wal-Mart in New York. We cannot simply sit by and let them do this. We must mobilize our resources, join with our allies in the labor and religious communities and activate the largest, most diverse coalition this city has ever seen.

The immediate threat is on Staten Island where two sites have been identified by Wal-Mart. All of us need to understand that, even if we have no interest in Staten Island, these developments are a threat to each of us. If Wal-Mart gets a foothold anywhere in this city it will make it that much easier for the company to build in areas that might be a lot closer to your own stores or businesses. We need to be united: a threat to one community is a threat to all of us.

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## IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES

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### 1) **Expand Our Retail Coalition**

We need each and every one of you to join with us in our campaign. Sign up as a stakeholder and we will apprise you, either directly or through your business association, about what the Alliance is doing to defend your interests and what you can do personally to help in the effort;

### 2) **Moratorium and Impact Study**

We are, along with our labor allies, calling for a moratorium on the building of big box stores until a full economic impact study is done about the collateral damages that can be caused if these mega-retailers are allowed to proliferate in New York City. We are lobbying to make sure that such a study carefully evaluates the contribution of neighborhood business to our city's economic well-being

### 3) **Stop Intro 390**

A bill introduced at the City Council by the Department of Consumer Affairs that could increase the agency's enforcement powers over the city's neighborhood retailers;

### 4) **Legislative Forums**

The Neighborhood Retail Alliance is planning on holding two legislative forums, one for City Council Candidates, and the other for mayoral candidates. In these forums we plan to outline our legislative objectives and listen to the positions of the candidates;

### 5) **Website: <http://www.momandpopnyc.com>**

We are constructing a website that will become the major clearinghouse for all small business policy issues. It will also be the place to go to get information on the activities of the Neighborhood Retail Alliance.