

# Intelligencer Journal

## The high cost of a shopping center

TO THE EDITOR:

The proposed "Drumore Crossings" shopping center, which will most likely include a Wal-Mart or similar big box store, has many Solanco residents concerned. While it may appear that the shopping center would generate increased property tax revenue for Drumore Township, the reality is that the township is unprepared for the hidden costs, such as crime.

Although Wal-Mart offers easy "one-stop" shopping and low prices, it increases crime. According to District Justice Ronald Savage, of the 840 non-traffic criminal violations he handled in 2002, 225 (29 percent) came from Wal-Mart on Lincoln Highway East. In the same year, he also handled 400 criminal misdemeanor and felony complaints and 118 (29 percent) of those involved Wal-Mart. Because of these "astronomical" numbers, Savage added one or two special court days per month to hear only cases having to do with Wal-Mart.

Increased crime is also occurring in Chester County's West Sadsbury Township. A Wal-Mart and shopping center opened there in May 2002, and the township police has received 27 percent more calls over the course of one year. John Slauch, chief of West Sadsbury Township Police, reported that in 2002, there were a total of 109 criminal arrests in the township, but by May 31, 2003, 86 arrests had already been made. Slauch also mentioned instances of other crimes, including at least two assaults inside Wal-Mart and reports of indecent exposure in the shopping center, which had never taken place in the township before the shopping center opened.

More crime ultimately means that taxpayers must provide for more police officers. In East Lampeter Township, it costs \$45,000 to pay a single officer's salary and benefits. East Lampeter Township has 35 police officers. Drumore Township does not even have a police force, which means that it is not ready for the inevitable rise in crime that will result from a shopping center. Neither is it prepared to shoulder the high costs of preventing the crime. Wal-Mart or any big box store may be convenient for shoppers, but it comes with a huge price to the surrounding community.

Eileen Kinch, Quarryville