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Walmart: 20% rise in NYers' spending at local stores

Big Apple residents forked over nearly \$200 million at Walmart stores outside the five boroughs, according to retailer's latest tally, released just in time for City Council debate on company's prospects here.

By **Daniel Massey**

http://www.craainsnewyork.com/article/20110131/REAL_ESTATE/110139981/0/REAL_ESTATE#

New York City residents spent nearly \$200 million at about a dozen Walmart stores in the New York metropolitan area in 2010, a jump of about 20% from the amount reported in a previous 12-month period, the company said Monday.

Queens residents led the way, spending more than \$84 million. Walmart has a store just outside the borough, in Valley Stream, L.I. Manhattan residents spent almost \$52 million, while Staten Island residents paid more than \$26 million, Bronx residents dropped more than \$20 million and Brooklyn residents spent more than \$13 million.

Walmart does not have any stores in the five boroughs but is intent on breaking into the New York City market. The company has tried to overcome opposition from labor, community and small business groups by selling New Yorkers on the notion that it will bring jobs and low-priced food.

An ad campaign being launched Tuesday in three dozen community newspapers blames “special interests” for keeping Walmart's low prices out of the city. It trudges up a 1986 quote from Red Apple Chief Executive John Catsimitidis, an outspoken and longtime opponent of Walmart. “I keep my prices high and my overhead low,” he said at the time, in response to a question about why his supermarkets succeeded while others failed.

The company also unleashed a new round of radio ads Monday, focused on fresh food, and announced it would send a second round of flyers to residents of 10 City Council districts.

Opponents, meanwhile, continued to argue that Walmart will harm low-income New Yorkers. Walmart Free NYC, a coalition of labor, small businesses and community groups, blasted the retailer Monday for its recently-announced partnership with Jackson-Hewitt, a tax preparation firm that dishes out refund anticipation loans to low-income people. The loans, which carry sky-high interest rates, drain \$54 million a year from the city economy, according to a report by the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project.

“While the company may claim to care about low-income families, deals like this show their real goal is to make as much money off the backs of poor people as possible,” said Jon Kest, executive director of New York Communities for Change.

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