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## Burbank Leader

### Start of Walmart construction in jeopardy

**Judge says he might order review of the project's effect on Burbank before work can begin.**

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6:37 PM PDT, August 17, 2012

Walmart's move into Burbank appeared headed for a snag in Los Angeles County Superior Court on Friday after a judge said he was prepared to halt planned construction pending further review of the retail giant's impact on the city.

A main point of contention at the hearing in downtown Los Angeles was whether city officials should have issued permits allowing Walmart to renovate the former Great Indoors site adjacent to the Empire Center without having completed two street projects to improve traffic flow.

Opponents say a Walmart would inundate the area with traffic and wreak havoc on aging infrastructure. City officials argued that the projects — including more turn lanes on key intersections on Buena Vista Street at Victory Boulevard and Empire Avenue — have been “substantially” completed, and that recent traffic studies show that a rush to complete the road work isn't needed.

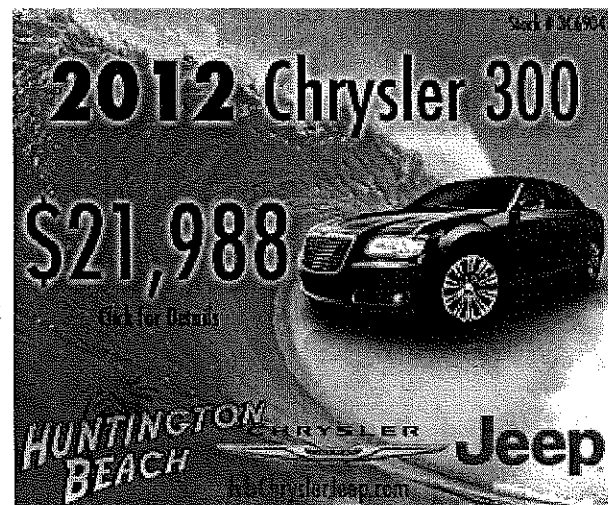
But the judge on Friday said he planned to issue a written ruling in the coming days that would effectively prevent Walmart from starting construction until further review of the impacts could be completed.

After the hearing, Burbank spokesman Drew Sugars said the city would wait for the judge's final order before deciding how to proceed. But in a statement, Walmart spokeswoman Rachel Wall said the legal filing was a delay tactic meant to stall an otherwise popular project.

“It is unfortunate that a small, vocal minority continues to pursue these delay tactics,” she said. “The community clearly supports a Walmart store in the Empire Center, as we saw from the hundreds who turned out at our open house last year and the continued support we've seen since then.”

Gideon Kracov — legal counsel for United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 770, who is representing Burbank residents Shanna Ingalsbee, Katherine Olson and Yvette Ziraldo in their opposition to a Burbank Walmart — said he was “cautiously optimistic” about the outcome Friday.

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"Today's hearing proves that Walmart is not above the law, no matter how powerful it is," he said. "If the judge orders an injunction, Walmart must obey. This case shows why the rule of law and access to the courts are the jewels of our American system."

He added that stopping any construction at the Walmart site is vital because once work begins, it will be difficult to stop.

Burbank officials have said there is little the city can do to stop Walmart from taking over the former Great Indoors site because the use complies with current zoning standards.

Wall said the retailer is confident that the court will find the building permits were properly reviewed and properly issued.