

Mexico Current Event:**Wal-Mart Building Store at Teotihuacan Archeological Site**

Amid protest from local residents, Wal-Mart has completed 80% of construction on a store about a mile from the temples of Teotihuacan. The ruins, located an hour outside of Mexico City, are a UNESCO World Heritage site estimated to be 1,400 years old.

Wal-Mart secured permits from state and local governments to build on ground, which was once part of the city of Teotihuacan. The ancient city was home to a population of 200,000 at its height, and construction workers report having found various archeological artifacts under the soil. More than 500,000 residents now live in several communities surrounding the site.

Residents with the Civic Front for the Valley of Teotihuacan began a hunger strike on October 1 at the site with the aim of stopping the construction. The Civic Front has brought charges in federal court against Wal-Mart, the federal, state, and local governments, and the Institute of Anthropology and History. The state governor declared October 1 that the store would have to be relocated, but construction has not halted. Residents have hope of stopping the project as two other partially constructed shopping centers in the area were demolished in 1993 and 1997 after complaints were investigated.

Wal-Mart currently has 652 stores in Mexico, serving 600 million shoppers a year, and is the number one direct-to-consumer seller in Mexico. While many Teotihuacan Valley residents have come out to support the store's opening, the Civic Front maintains that zoning regulations have prevented residents from developing income-generating industry, leaving agriculture and small businesses, like small grocery shops, as the only local employment source. Activists maintain that the presence of Wal-Mart will not only put these shops out of business and create unemployment but also alter traditional patterns of food purchasing and consumption.