

Where We Are on the Proposed Wal-Mart Store

With Wal-Mart submitting their application to the Town several months ago, there has been renewed interest in our community over this issue. I thought that I'd devote this month's column to share with you where the proposed Wal-Mart project is presently with respect to the Town's development review process.

You may recall that the Town approved the proposed FHK commercial retail center known as Skyway Plaza that was to include an anchor store that was 180,000 sq ft +. The approved project was subsequently challenged by a referendum sponsored by Save Our Gateway, however, the majority of voters voted in support of the shopping center. Save Our Gateway proceeded to challenge the project in court, and prevailed primarily on the grounds that the environmental impact report was flawed due to inadequate disposal capacity tests.

Now, coming full circle, Wal-Mart has purchased the FHK property with the intent to build a full service Wal-Mart store (including groceries) that will be around 160,000 sq ft in size. The entire commercial retail center including the Wal-Mart store and separate retail store pads for other smaller retailers will be on the part of their property located between the two Skyways. They propose donating all of their canyon face property to the Town, the majority of which would be preserved as open space.

The Town's review of the project, which is currently under way is really along three parallel tracks.

The first track is the environmental impact analysis of the proposed project, which is looking at all possible impacts from the proposed project, including air quality, traffic, wastewater capacity, fiscal and economic, etc.

The second track is the establishment of a proposed development agreement with Wal-Mart in which the Town is ensuring that a variety of standards of design and development are met by Wal-Mart if the project is approved.

The third track is to negotiate, as required under the law, with Butte County, a tax hearing agreement that is a necessary requirement for annexing the property to the Town.

We expect that the public review of the draft environmental impact study will take place towards the end of this calendar year, and that a number of public hearings by both the planning commission and town council will be held in early 2011 to determine if the proposed project will be approved.

Chuck Rough
Town Manager