

Wal-Mart sets sights on opening stores in Thurston County MOVING IN? Company representatives already talking to Lacey officials

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Wal-Mart wants to build as many as three stores in the Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater area, according to a company representative, and has contacted property owners in Lacey.

Brokers representing Wal-Mart have talked to city planners about zoning and to land owners about two potential sites, said Lacey Mayor Graeme Sackrison.

The sites include one in the Hawks Prairie area near Interstate 5 and one in south Lacey on Yelm Highway Southeast.

"People are going to be more comfortable with the I-5 site," Sackrison said. "The Yelm Highway site will change the character of the area."

Wal-Mart community relations representative Amy Hill said the company was interested in the Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater area but had no definite plans yet.

"There's no doubt about it," Hill said. "We certainly are looking. It's an area we'd like to be."

Wal-Mart attempted to build in Olympia in 1996 where a mobile home park stood, but residents bought the land and refused to sell to the company.

Later in 1996, Wal-Mart's proposal to build in Gig Harbor ended when the community rose up against it.

Wal-Mart has one store in Centralia and one in Shelton. It has one store in Pierce County, on South Hill in Puyallup.

Lacey city manager Greg Cuoio said he knew of Wal-Mart's interest and that property owners had been negotiating.

He said as far as he knew, no land has changed hands, and no one has applied for a permit.

Jerry Litt, Lacey's director of community development, said representatives of at least three large retail outlets contacted the city in the past year, but he would not disclose details of the discussions until permit requests were filed.

Olympia and Tumwater city staff members and elected officials said they knew of no pending deals in their cities.

Tri Vo, a Lacey developer, owns the Yelm Highway site. It is between Ruddell Road Southeast and College Street Southeast and is zoned for small commercial and residential development.

The property sits across from Capitol City Golf Course and is bordered on three sides by residential neighborhoods. The Lacey City Council would have to rezone the site.

Lacey City Councilman Jim Weber said he doubted a rezone would make it through the council because the site is close to so many homes.

Neighbors of the site expressed mixed feelings Wednesday about a Wal-Mart locating there.

"I would like that," Thomas Baird said. "We have to go all the way to the west side of Olympia to go to the big stores."

Resident Larry Malo said the location wouldn't work for such a large store.

"I don't think I'd like it very much," he said. "The traffic is getting almost unbearable now."

The Hawks Prairie site, on Galaxy Way, is next to where a new movie theater will open next year and would not require rezoning.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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