

Wal-Mart delays any return to Vallejo

By Rachel Raskin-Zrihen/Times-Herald, Vallejo

Article Launched: 06/01/2008 07:32:29 AM PDT

After four years of wrangling with the city and vocal opponents, Wal-Mart on Friday withdrew its application to build a supercenter in Vallejo's White Slough area, a company spokesman said.

"Wal-Mart had hoped to open a new store in Vallejo, but current growth plans, coupled with the increased costs since the project was first proposed in 2004, have made the project infeasible at this time," said spokesman Kevin Loscotoff.

The announcement elicited a wide range of reaction.

"Can you blame them?" asked Dorothy Georgian, a lifelong Vallejo resident and Wal-Mart proponent. "Vallejo put every obstacle in its way, so why should they come here? They have a beautiful American Canyon store Vallejo residents can go to."

Georgian said she wasn't surprised by the news, but she was disappointed.

"It's a sad day," she said. "I pray for this city, I really do. Look at all that tax revenue down the drain and city government has no one to blame but themselves."

For longtime Wal-Mart opponent Joe Feller, the announcement was wonderful news. "We're thrilled. Extremely happy," he said. "It wasn't an appropriate project for the site, anyway."

Feller said he was pleased Wal-Mart chose to "see

the validity of our zoning laws," and hopes it will "continue to act responsibly and sell the site to a developer who wants to do an appropriate project."

Wal-Mart had received permission to conduct an environmental impact study on a proposed two-story 393,000-square-foot Supercenter at the 12.45-acre parcel at Sonoma Boulevard and Redwood Street.

Vallejo City Councilman Tom Bartee said the site's vacancy was not doing anyone good, and would benefit from a mixed retail, commercial and possibly housing development. He said the site, once occupied by a K-mart store, is a valuable one.

"It would be good to see something there," Bartee said. "The Highway 29 corridor through town needs a facelift."

He added that he had heard of Wal-Mart's backing out of projects across the country, and was not surprised by the decision.

"Wal-Mart looks at (its) bottom line ... (it) probably realized that the current economy wouldn't support a few stores within a couple of miles of each other," Bartee said.

Vallejo Chamber of Commerce President Rick Wells said he sees Friday's news as an opportunity.

"We've already seen the loss of sales tax revenue from Wal-Mart's closure," Wells said. "So, this opens the door for other development opportunities that hopefully will be beneficial for the community, and generate some much-needed tax revenue."

Vallejo's Meadows Plaza Wal-Mart store closed last September, just as a new American Canyon Wal-Mart Supercenter opened. The firm's plans had called for another supercenter at White Slough, but that

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

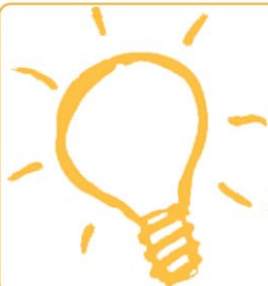
TheReporter.Com

sparked controversy.

"We are appreciative of the support we received from so many of Vallejo's small businesses, residents, families, shoppers and city leaders and thank them for the years of loyalty and encouragement," Wal-Mart's Loscutoff said. "Vallejo was a great home for Wal-Mart for many, many years. We hope to one day open a new store in Vallejo to serve our local customers and keep tax dollars in Vallejo."

Wal-Mart owns the former K-mart site and has not yet determined what will be done with it, Loscutoff said.

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™