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Wal-Mart coming to Smokey Point

The way is cleared for a 204,000-square-foot superstore after opponents drop their lawsuit.

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ARLINGTON - The legal tussle over a planned Wal-Mart Supercenter along 172nd Street NE has ended quietly, as opponents decided to drop their lawsuit.

That leaves no obstacles in the way for the retailer to begin construction on the 204,000-square-foot store. The city of Arlington received the first plans and application for the store in late 2004.

In July, opponents making up the Arlington-Smokey Point Community Matters group appealed the city's decision to allow the new store to a Snohomish County Superior Court judge.

Attorney Claudia Newman said opponents, including neighbors and union members, thought they had good arguments. But the long battle that was likely to follow made them think hard about pursuing it.

"I think there was just no interest in continuing it," Newman said.

The city of Arlington's attorney and a Wal-Mart spokeswoman were not reached for comment Thursday.

Late last year, a county judge rejected opponents' arguments against a Wal-Mart store planned at the corner of Highway 9 and 64th Street NE in southeast Marysville, ending that fight.

Neighbors have had more success, however, in Mill Creek. In September, a hearing examiner ordered Wal-Mart to study the potential environmental effects of building a store along 132nd Street SE. County planning officials didn't require such a study when they initially gave the project environmental approval.

Newman said the state Department of Transportation also has traffic concerns about that site.

Lillian Kaufer of Citizens for a Better Mill Creek said the group remains well organized against the potential Wal-Mart store.

"There's not really much we can do until they file their environmental impact statement, so we're just watching that," she said.

Wal-Mart had just two stores in Snohomish County - a Supercenter on the Tulalip Indian Reservation and a smaller location in Lynnwood - when it announced plans to build up to four more stores a couple of years ago. Of those, only one in south Everett has opened. Aside from the planned stores in Arlington, Marysville and Mill Creek, the retailer abandoned plans to open in Stanwood in the face of vehement community reaction.

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