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Editorial: Want to build? Bring the loot

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Our view: State officials want to build a new courthouse in Chico. They'd better hope they don't get the Wal-Mart treatment.

The state of California has announced it would like to spend \$83 million building a new courthouse in southeast Chico.

Better throw in another million for the City Council's wood stove fund, another million or so for solar panels and several million for fixing roads.

The new courthouse would be a bit less than a mile from Wal-Mart, which underwent a ridiculous level of scrutiny from the Planning Commission and City Council when it sought to expand.

Traffic to the new courthouse would impact many of the same intersections and contribute to the same air quality problems that were of such concern to the council as to warrant at least the initial rejection of the proposed superstore.

But Councilor Scott Gruendl's ham-handed extortion attempt following the rejection at least shows a way to proceed. Maybe if the court gets ahead of the curve and just ponies up the million bucks to swap out old, smoky wood stoves up front, the court project will slide on through.

Same for the idea of a community stadium that was floated before the Chico school board Wednesday night. The facility, something like Oroville's Harrison Stadium, would also be about a mile from Wal-Mart, and has the same problems. But maybe an

extra million would grease the skids there.

Or maybe there will be a different set of rules for these projects because they aren't Wal-Mart.

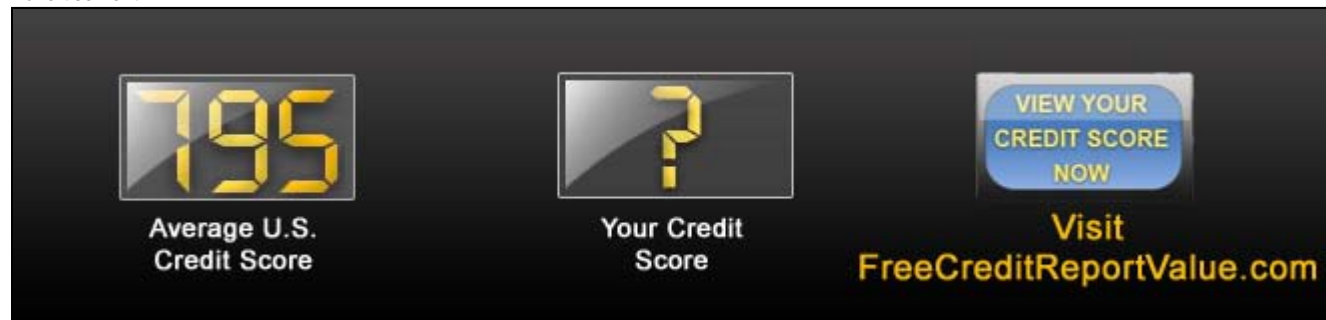
Maybe. There's just no way of knowing. The council's Wal-Mart vote took any sense of predictability out of the development process. Do everything you're supposed to do, at a place you should be allowed to do it, and you still might get turned down. Who knows?

The court may be looking at building in the core of the Meriam Park subdivision plan, but we'd wager any businesses that might consider building there — or anywhere else in the community for that matter — are just sitting back and waiting for someone else to go first, and see how it goes.

Maybe that someone else is the court. We hope not, because construction's five years off, and that's a long time for the economy to stagnate.

As much as we'd love to see a new court in Chico that could meet all the legal needs of the north county's populace, we have to wonder whether the state has lost its mind in choosing to build here. Because here in the asylum the council has created, you have to be crazy to try.

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