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Wal-Mart plans still in the works

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Those wanting to weigh in on two proposed Wal-Mart supercenters will need to wait a few more months.

Senior city planner Zach Thomas said the planning processes for both proposed Wal-Marts are not quite at the same point. The supercenter proposed for north Chico is further behind in the process than the Wal-Mart expansion proposed in south Chico, he said.

The current estimate sees the south Wal-Mart going before the Chico Planning Commission at the earliest in November. The north Wal-Mart is estimated to go before the commission at the earliest in December.

Thomas stressed both time estimates are not firm.

Wal-Mart proposes to expand its Forest Avenue store from 125,889 square feet to 223,445 square feet. It also hopes to build a new supercenter at Highway 99 and Garner Lane with retail, grocery and a garden center.

Thomas said city staff are reviewing the administrative draft of the environmental impact report — which details the potential impacts of a project and explains how those impacts can be offset — for the south Wal-Mart. He said they expect to have the administrative draft for the north Wal-Mart within a week, at which time it will be reviewed by various city departments. The process can take up to a month.

City staff will then work with the environmental impact report consultant to prepare the final EIR.

For the north store, the city would first need to annex a 148-acre area of unincorporated land between Highway 99 and The Esplanade about a half-mile northwest of city limits. The site would also have 20.2 acres of additional retail.

The EIR for the north Wal-Mart addresses both the construction of the supercenter and the annexation of the entire property.

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