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## Wal-Mart still serious about Patterson

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by James Leonard | Patterson Irrigator

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Wal-Mart's push to bring a store to Patterson was so hot and heavy earlier this year, city officials became concerned when things went silent.

But it turns out the five months or so without significant correspondence from Wal-Mart was not a sign that the retail giant was considering abandoning its proposed 158,000-square-foot supercenter on the southwest corner of Ward and Sperry avenues.

Patterson City Manager Cleve Morris said last week that Wal-Mart's temporary lack of communication came as the company was reworking its design prototype — a revision that led to subtle changes in the design for the Patterson store.

A Wal-Mart spokeswoman confirmed that earlier this week.

"We've always been moving forward with this project," spokeswoman Angie Stoner said. "We're working internally on some modifications to some architectural elements of the store to be consistent with our new corporate branding."

Rod Simpson, Patterson's planning director, said Wal-Mart's original application to the city, submitted in February, was found to be missing some minor information. It was sent back to the company for completion, but because Wal-Mart was changing its design, it decided to wait before submitting a new application.

Simpson said he spoke with Wal-Mart representatives earlier this month. At that time, they said they'd be turning in their final application by the end of last week. Late last week, Simpson said, Wal-Mart told him the application would be in sometime this week. Stoner said the company hopes to have the application submitted by the end of the month.

Once the final application is received and approved, it will set in motion a lengthy environmental review that will study the effects the proposed store would have on traffic and the local economy, among other issues.

Though Wal-Mart has already begun some of the preliminary work on the environmental impact report, Morris said, the full review would likely take eight to 10 months to complete. It's not the only hurdle the company is expecting.

"They anticipate they'll be sued," Morris said, likely by a citizen group trying to block the store from coming into town.

A local Wal-Mart opposition Web site, [pattersonopposeswalmart.wordpress.com](http://pattersonopposeswalmart.wordpress.com), was created in February, when news first broke about the company's desire to

come to Patterson.

The group's organizer, Sergio Cuellar, said at the time the goal was simply to get local businesses and residents together in opposition of Wal-Mart and to convince the City Council not to support it. Any decision on filing a lawsuit, he said, would depend on the amount of support the group receives and the money it's able to raise.

If a lawsuit is ultimately filed by Cuellar's group or anybody else, it would cause a delay in a process that's expected to take up to two years anyway.

"They'd like to be open by 2011," Simpson said.

Morris said the changes to the design prototype were barely noticeable when compared to the original renderings the city received in February — the grocery section being moved from one side of the store to the other, for instance. The overall look and feel of the design was not changed, he said.

Stoner said the new design also incorporates more landscaping surrounding the store.

"We're still moving forward with a design specific for this project, using architectural elements that are environmentally friendly and designed to blend the building with surrounding area," Stoner said.

• *Contact James Leonard at 892-6187 or [james@pattersonirrigator.com](mailto:james@pattersonirrigator.com).*

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