

## Wal-Mart considering site now zoned for a cemetery

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Wal-Mart is proposing to build a store at state Routes 54 and 94 on land that had been planned for a cemetery.

The proposal for the 135,000-square-foot store will be discussed Tuesday at a meeting of the **Valle de Oro** planning group, an advisory body that makes recommendations on land-use issues.

A spokesman for Wal-Mart said the plan is still in the "very, very preliminary stages." No formal proposals or applications have been submitted to the county's planning department, and Wal-Mart does not own the land.

"Our goal is to talk to various community leaders and community members to get as much input before we move forward," Wal-Mart spokesman Peter Kanelos said.

Planning group chairman Jack Phillips said part of the land proposed for the Wal-Mart store is zoned for a cemetery at **Skyline Wesleyan Church**. Approval of the Wal-Mart store would require a zoning change and an amendment to the general plan for the area, he said.

Dan Grant, administration pastor for **Skyline**, said Wal-Mart and others have expressed interest in buying the property, but he declined to disclose whether the **church** was in negotiations with the retailer.

"We checked around with a number of people and there seems to be a very positive attitude about having a Wal-Mart in our neighborhood," Grant said.

**Skyline** owns a 4.5-acre parcel, Grant said. The county and at least one individual also own property in the area. Aaron Barling, a county planner, said yesterday that he had not spoken with Wal-Mart officials.

Wal-Mart currently has four stores in the East County. Last year, Wal-Mart opened outlets in La Mesa's Grossmont Center and El Cajon's Parkway Plaza. Other stores are in Santee on Town Center Parkway, and east of El Cajon on Camino Canada.

Additionally, Wal-Mart has a store on College Avenue in San Diego, near the Lemon Grove city limit.

Kanelos said a store in Rancho San Diego would serve customers who find it inconvenient to shop at the other Wal-Marts.

"If you go to those stores, the parking lots are full and there typically is a line at our registers, longer than we would like," Kanelos said of the need for an additional store.

Phillips said a concern in reviewing the project will be the effect on traffic.

Kanelos, who will make a presentation at the meeting, said it's too early to estimate how the proposal would affect local traffic.

"I think it would be premature for anybody to make any sort of determination on traffic issues until a traffic engineer looks at the overall project and does a study of the traffic impacts," Kanelos said.

The meeting will be at 7 p.m. in the training room of the Otay Water District headquarters, at 2554 Sweetwater Springs Road.

The group also will hear from residents in the Cottonwood area who are upset about plans by San Diego Gas & Electric to install a steel power pole. Residents say the pole will ruin their views and devalue their property.

Phillips said discussions about the power-line project between Steele Canyon Road and Hillsdale Road will center on whether residents were properly notified about the proposal so they understood the effect the power lines would have on their views.

Late last month, about a dozen residents blocked SDG&E work crews from installing a steel power pole in a residential neighborhood near Cottonwood Golf Course.

SDG&E is building a 35-mile transmission line, mainly through East County, to connect a substation near Chula Vista to one in Mission Valley.

Resident Jerry Granger said he and several others hired an engineer who found that SDG&E could adjust the pole's height and position. Granger said SDG&E has not worked at the site since the protest, and he has not yet presented the engineer's study to the utility.

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**Caption: Proposed East County Wal-Mart -- The Valle de Oro planning group is looking at Wal-Mart's proposal to put a store in Rancho San Diego. It would be the fifth in East County.**

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