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Officials say Supercenter should dovetail well with commercial overlay zoning

Representatives of Walmart have told Village of Saukville officials that their expansion plans fit in well with the village's proposal to create zoning overlay in its central business district.

Both topics were the subject of deliberation by the Plan Commission last week.

The commission unanimously approved revised preliminary plans for the conversion of the existing Walmart store at 825 E. Green Bay Ave. to a 121,050-square-foot Supercenter.

The project represents a 25,000-square-foot expansion, that would include a full-serve grocery store and expanded retail space.

Walmart attorney Debra Tomczyk described the latest design as "very similar to the plans we brought in for conceptual approval … just a little tweaked."

The most noticeable alteration in the revised plan is the swapping of the proposed locations for the grocery and garden center to opposite ends of the building.

Store representatives said the garden center may need to be supplemented by seasonal outdoor display area, a change from the original plan that would have eliminated future outdoor sales space.

Walmart designer Kerry Hardin said some additional massaging is being done to plans for the parking lot to ensure that the village's requirement of 10% green space is met.

"We are currently at 9.13% green space but we should be able to stretch it to 10%," Hardin said.

The store also got support from the commission to eliminate a sidewalk cutting through the parking area. Instead, a walkway around the perimeter of the property is proposed to encourage pedestrian access.

Village President Barb Dickmann, chairman of the commission, said the proposed improvements are welcome, noting that the property has taken on a shabby appearance.

"The building is certainly nicer looking. The question we have is will Walmart continue to keep it nice looking?" Dickmann asked.
After the store spends a significant amount to upgrade the property, architect Bill Boyden said the site will be given plenty of attention.

"I know Walmart is not willing to let it look run down. The outside is just as important as the inside, and in my opinion the inside is going to look spectacular," Boyden said.

“We are not talking about more control, we are talking about absolute control.”

He said Walmart has adopted a schedule of revamping store properties every three or four years, so a repeat of the current disrepair is not likely to be repeated.

“There may have been problems with maintaining the property in the past, but those days are gone,” Boyden said.

As commission members talked about the proposed Highway 33 corridor zoning overlay, intended to promote business development, Walmart officials talked about the kind of leeway businesses may seek.

Store representatives are concerned about having sufficient room on the south end of their property to allow trucks to turn around without backing onto Market Street.

The store would also like reduced setback requirements for a screened area where shipping pallets and packing bales could be stored.

Community Development Director Brian Biernat said the overlay district is to create a business-friendly environment from I-43 to the village’s eastern limits.

The district would give planning officials leeway in reviewing restrictions on such things as parking, setbacks, green space and stormwater management in what Biernat called “the village’s premium commercial district.”

Similar overlay districts have been created in the downtown area around Veterans Park and along the Foster Commons entertainment corridor.

The overlay would offer zoning code relief after significant alterations are made to lots, like the loss of land to make room for the construction of roundabouts at Market Street and Northwoods Road.

The ordinance creating the Highway 33 overlay will be reviewed by the Village Board following an upcoming public hearing.
Final approval of the Walmart plans will be withheld until the overlay ordinance is adopted.