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## Northcross Walmart finally under construction

*Scaled-back version of controversial project is expected to open this fall.*

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Work has finally started on a Walmart at the former Northcross Mall, more than three years after the company announced plans to build a store there.

The 99,000-square-foot store at West Anderson Lane and Burnet Road is expected to open in the fall, said Wal-Mart Stores Inc. spokeswoman Kellie Duhr.

It will have one story and be less than half the size of the two-story superstore that Walmart proposed in 2006, setting off a citywide controversy over big-box retailing.

Part of the reason the new Walmart will be smaller is because the company now builds more efficient stores, Duhr said.

"They're just trending to be smaller now," she said.

The new Walmart also won't be open 24 hours a day, an early concern of neighbors, who said that an always-open store would lead to increased crime. Instead, it will close between 1 and 5 a.m., excluding some holiday shopping days and tax-free events. As for delivery trucks, Duhr said they will be given a route that will not include neighborhood streets.

The Walmart is scheduled to be completed after H-E-B completes work in September on an expansion of its store about two miles away on Burnet Road. H-E-B is the dominant grocer in Central Texas, with Walmart No. 2.

Last week, company representatives attended an Allandale Neighborhood Association meeting to answer questions and show the latest renderings of the store.

Given all the controversy surrounding the store, turnout was light — only about 15 people, said Donna Beth McCormick, president of the association.

"I was kind of expecting a little bit more fireworks, and there weren't any," she said.

McCormick and other area residents launched protests and lawsuits when Wal-Mart and Lincoln Property Co., the Dallas-based owner of Northcross, announced plans to build a store at the struggling North Austin mall.

The mall had been losing tenants for years. But some neighbors objected to a giant Walmart there, saying it would create traffic problems and threaten small retailers.

Lawsuits by the neighborhood association and a group called Responsible Growth for Northcross against the city and Lincoln failed to stop the project.

"There are still people in the neighborhood who are very, very upset about Walmart coming in," McCormick said.

But "they're here," she said. "They've downsized from what they were going to be. We'll just have to see how it works out."

**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**