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## Lowes, Backstreets construction projects start

**New grocery store and the replacement for restaurant will be adjacent in Hickory's Viewmont community.**

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Construction has begun on a new Lowes Food Store and a replacement for Backstreets Bar & Grill in the Viewmont community of Hickory.

Crews recently demolished a self-service laundry, gas station and small bar and diner near Hickory High School to make way for the grocery, which will be the chain's fifth in Catawba County.

All that's left is a sea of red dirt surrounding Backstreets, which sits on the spot where the new Lowes will stand.

Parking's a little harder to find during construction, but the 15-year-old restaurant is toughing out the disruption, says Bryan Norris, co-owner with his wife, Susanne.

The restaurant's 55 employees are parking off-site to leave room for diners.

Bryan Norris said he would continue serving in the location, at 246 14th Ave. N.E., while workers build a new restaurant next door, where the laundry once stood.

The restaurant won't close. Norris, 39, will move in January, taking with him many of Backstreets' booths and tables and even his street address.

"Our customers are a little frustrated with the parking situation, but when all this is over, we will have more parking and a nice facility," Norris said. "We just have to withstand the construction."

Norris, who opened the restaurant when he was 25, said he was swapping real estate with Lowes to make room for its grocery. Lowes will build Norris a new restaurant and then tear down the old one.

Backstreets and Lowes will not be connected.

The new grocery will open in late summer 2010 on the block between 13th and 14th avenues, across the street from Viewmont Baptist Church and behind Starbucks coffee shop.

A small building on N.C. 127 next to Starbucks will be demolished, a Lowes spokeswoman said.

Lowes will have a sit-down café and other specialty departments, but it is too early to say yet what those will be, said Debbie Williams, a spokeswoman for the Winston-Salem-based chain.

Lowes is not ready to say if the grocery will have a gasoline station.

"The store will have a very unique layout – a lower profile, with warm, open vistas," she said.

It will be the first grocery store in the heart of Viewmont since Fresh Air Gala Improvement store could be built.

When the grocery opens, Lowes and Lowe's will be neighbors.

David E. Looper & Co. of Hickory is building the new grocery and restaurant.



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