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Lowe's 'Officially' Breaks Ground

New 100,000-square-foot Roanoke Rapids store expected to hire more than 100

Beth Rodriguez

Herald Staff Writer

ROANOKE RAPIDS – The long-awaited Lowe's Home Improvement store moved a step closer to reality Thursday morning with a groundbreaking ceremony at the Plaza Shopping Center parking lot.

Robin Nickles, vice president of Lowe's Retail Facilities Management said the new store is part of chain's return to smaller markets. He said the store should provide between 100 and 120 new jobs. The store will be more than 100,000 square feet, which Nickles said represented a \$16 million investment.

At the ceremony, Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce President Brenda Blackburn welcomed area lawmakers and community leaders to the event. Several expressed their enthusiasm for the jobs and potential for growth the store will bring to the region.

State Sen. Robert Holloman said the occasion was "a wonderful day in Halifax County." Holloman said he has observed a "sense of unity" in the county that he has not seen elsewhere in his district, and reiterated his commitment to help his constituents in whatever way possible. State Rep. Lucy Allen said the project "is going to benefit all citizens."

Roanoke Rapids Mayor Drewery Beale thanked Lowe's for its faith in the project, despite the ups and downs faced since the initial meetings a year and a half ago.

City Councilman and mayor pro tem David King said one of the top priorities for the city is economic development. He said the new store would add much needed revenue to the tax base as well as provide new jobs.

Ed Garris, the chairman of the chamber, said the new store will not only bring in jobs but will bring shopping dollars back into the county. He added that the store provides momentum for future development.

Bryan McClure, president and CEO of BlairGroup, said "economic development is the process of building profitable partnerships." He added that Lowe's presence in the area "validated his as the place to be."

Lowe's District Manager Lee McConnell said the store is expected to open in the summer of 2004, depending how the weather affects construction.

Lowe's Home Improvement operates more than 875 stores in 45 states, according to the company's Web site.