

## **Walkertown to get a Food Lion store**

**By Steven J. Gaither  
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Residents will soon have a choice when it comes to shopping for groceries in town. Nearly two years after the Winn-Dixie at the Center Stage shopping center closed, Food Lion will open a store at that location.

Food Lion will hold its grand opening April 11. A day earlier, town officials, including Mayor Doc Davis, will participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Workers have made renovations since Food Lion announced last September that it was leasing the space that was left vacant when the Winn-Dixie chain closed its stores in the South Carolinas in June 2005.

Since then, Lowes Foods in the Walkertown Commons Center on U.S. 158 has been the only supermarket in town, leaving Walkertown residents with one grocery-shopping option.

Ken Williford, who will work as the Food Lion manager, said that his store will compete with Lowes Food for customers, and that people in the community are greeting the chain with a warm welcome.

“From what I’ve gotten so far, everyone is ecstatic,” said Williford, the former store manager of the Piney Grove Food Lion in Kernersville. “I’ve never seen an area so eager for a store to open.”

Karen Peterson, a spokeswoman for Food Lion, said that the closing of the Winn-Dixie chain in the Carolinas in general and specifically in Walkertown was important in bringing the chain to town.

“With Winn-Dixie having gone out of the area, we had the opportunity to look into the market,” Peterson said. “We’re always looking for opportunities to expand and grow in our marketing areas.”

Food Lion, based in Salisbury, has nearly 500 stores in North Carolina.

Town Manager Ron Bell said last week that Food Lion officials have visited the site and were encouraged by what they saw. “They said that they had been gratified by the support of the community,” he said.

The store will be 35,300 square feet, the standard size for a Food Lion store. The renovations are finished, and employees began putting products onto the shelves this week.

Williford said that the store will carry most of the same products as other Food Lion stores, along with a few new ones in its deli department.

The store will have about 70 employees when it opens its doors, with most people coming from the surrounding communities, Williford said.

**Town Clerk Lynn McKinney said that anticipation is building around the community for the store's opening.**

**"Everybody's looking forward to it," she said. "Everyone likes to have choices."**

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