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## Chick-fil-A to enlarge and renovate this fall

By Janet S. Lee

Clintonians who have been snapping up the signature chicken sandwich, salads, biscuits and lemonade for fifteen years from the always-busy local Chick-fil-A will have even more reason to be crazy for chicken by early November.



Corporate leadership is investing more than \$1 million to change the building's footprint, adding a double drive-through order lane with a canopy; an all-new dining area, featuring new flooring and tables; an expanded kitchen area; an updated color scheme; completely new restrooms; and re-configured parking spaces. A total of 340 square feet of space is being added.

The busy entrance/exit flowing directly from Highway 80 to the current front entrance will be closed off and traffic re-routed to one entry/exit point south of the building. Company officials are confident the different traffic pattern will be safer for guests and for vehicles coming off Highway 80.

Children will also have a completely new playground area to explore. Although five parking spaces will be lost with the addition of the second drive-through order lane, those places had become mostly unusable due to the particularly heavy drive-through lunch traffic. There will be fifty-one total parking places for those customers who wish to park and go in to order. Company officials say that fully sixty percent of the eatery's sales now are drive-through customers.

Keeping pace of current technology, Chick-fil-A is also offering a mobile app to speed up ordering.

Depending on weather, the project is slated to kick off September 16. The entire business will be shut down starting September 29 for approximately four-and-a-half weeks. The re-opening of the completely renovated facility is tentatively set for November 2.

According to local owner/operator Neil Osborne, the Clinton Chick-fil-A opened September 5, 2002, to immediate raves and tremendous sales.

"The business has grown so much through the years, and the volume is now double what was ever envisioned."

Though Osborne could not release sales figures, the number of employees has grown over the course of those fifteen years from forty to ninety, including both part-time and fulltime.

Stressing polite, efficient customer service and an array of products that appeal to the Southern palate, the Clinton Chick-fil-A was named Large Business of the Year by the Clinton Chamber of Commerce in 2016.

Though the business will be closed for more than a

month, Osborne is committed to keeping his employees and making sure they'll be back at work in November.

"I have saved money from my allotted budget to pay all the fulltime staff during the time we're closed down. I don't want any of them to have to find another job, because I know they have bills to pay. We're like family on our team, and we take care of family."

Osborne continued, "They'll be getting some downtime, but we'll continue to have regular staff meetings, fun outings, and even some road trips. We'll be visiting other stores in Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee to see how they're set up and how they function."

Regular customers who will be feeling the loss of a favorite eatery can monitor the renovation process and keep up with the ongoing process. Osborne says periodic updates will be available on social media through both Facebook and Twitter.

Alderman Mike Cashion, who represents Ward 6, in which Chick-fil-A is located, believes the changes planned for the flow of traffic will be a "positive move," getting cars in line for the single drive-through now off Highway 80.

Osborne, as Chick-fil-A's representative, presented the site plan for approval by the Board of Aldermen at its August 1 meeting. The site plan change had previously gained approval from the City's Architectural Review Board and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Chick-fil-A, which honors founder S. Truett Cathy's decision to be closed on Sundays, is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner from 6:30 a.m. until 10 p.m., Monday-Saturday. The restaurant is located at 952 Highway 80 East.

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