

Developer to buy, tear down Country Hearth Inn near I-94 and build strip mall

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By

A hotel near U.S. 127 and I-94 will soon be torn down and replaced with a strip mall that should open this fall.

Southfield-based **Versa Development** plans to buy **Country Hearth Inn**, 1111 Boardman Road, and start construction next month on a retail center that will be roughly 14,000 square feet.

The Blackman Township Planning Commission unanimously approved the company's site plan March 1.

Versa will spend about \$4 million on construction, said Todd Wyett, the company's co-founder and CEO.

"It was a big demand by a lot of tenants that we work with to move into that (Jackson) area," he said.

About a half-dozen tenants will be at the new center, and the company is finishing plans on the businesses that will be located there, Wyett said.

The company's retail projects include shopping centers throughout Michigan and Ohio and stores like CVS Pharmacy, Walgreens and Hollywood Video. Jackson already has both of those pharmacies, and its Hollywood Video closed last year.

One center that Versa developed — The Market at Liberty Crossing in Powell, Ohio — includes a grocery store and pharmacy, a Mexican restaurant, a musical instrument store and retail outlets, according to the company's website.

Wyett declined to say the price of buying Country Hearth Inn because the company has not yet closed on the sale. Management at Country Hearth Inn declined to comment Friday.

Blackman Township Supervisor Dan Hawkins said he can't yet predict what economic impact the retail center will have on the area but is optimistic about the development.

"It's definitely a high sign to us that investors see us a positive business climate," he said.

Country Hearth Inn, located near Jackson Crossing and the Ground Round Restaurant, opened in June 1988.

The hotel chain is a part of Georgia-based America's Best Franchising, which also owns Vagabond Inn, America's Best Inns & Suites, Budgetel Inns & Suites, and 3 Palms Hotels & Resorts.

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