

# THE Mecklenburg TIMES

## Some assembly required

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CHARLOTTE — In about a year, the citizens of Charlotte will be pretty handy with an Allen wrench.

That's the crucial tool for the some assembly that's required on many of furniture retailer IKEA's products, and IKEA is about to become a big part of Charlotte residents' lives.

The Swedish-owned company broke ground Wednesday for its new store, to be built in the University City area of Charlotte.

While an Allen wrench and instructions — available on IKEA's Web site — are adequate for putting together its products, making a large-scale show room rise along the Interstate 85 corridor is going to take some time and somewhat heavier equipment. Construction is expected to run over the next year, and the store is projected to open in spring 2009.

"Since last January, when we announced plans for a Charlotte area store, much as been accomplished," said Michael Maier, real estate manager for IKEA.

"We received all of our approval from the county, state and city and there were many, many, many approvals. We closed on the purchase of the land after many negotiating sessions and you'll also see that site work has already begun on our 356,000-square-foot store that will feature the same unique architectural design that IKEA stores are known for worldwide."

The new store will create 400 jobs in the Charlotte area. IKEA offers full-time benefits to its part-time workers.

City Councilman Michael Barnes pointed out that this option will be appealing to college students in the area who "will probably want to work here."

"Charlotte is a thriving, dynamic city, representing the New South, it's where people are welcome from all over the world," Mayor Pat McCrory said.

"In fact, one of the great strengths of Charlotte is that we welcome everyone, but when we welcome you we have one requirement and that is that you get involved in the city and you make it an even better place in which to live, work and raise a family."

This will be the 36th IKEA in the country and the fifth in the Southeast. Joseph Roth, public affairs director for IKEA, explained that they chose Charlotte because, "It's a large, populous area that is fast-growing with nice opportunity in terms of available land along the interstate and it's very central when you consider both Carolinas as being a primary trade area."

IKEA was founded in Sweden in 1943 by Ingvar Kamprad.

The name is an acronym, the first two initials are his name and the last two stand for Elmtaryd and Agunnaryd, the farm and village where Kamprad grew up.

In 1985, IKEA opened its first store in the United States in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, which is a suburb of Philadelphia. ☛