

# Durant Daily Democrat

Gateway to Lake Texoma

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## Sonic is booming in Durant

By Heather Summerville

Staff writer

DURANT- Last Monday was the first official day of business for the new Sonic Drive-in on Main Street, said co-owner Angela Owen.

"We also own the Sonic in Calera, and dad and I also own a Sonic in Ardmore," she said.

Carl Atwood went through training in Weatherford in the early 1970s, when Owens was just a baby, and then bought the Ardmore store in 1979. "So I grew up around the business," said Owen, "I hold a degree in restaurant management, and went off and did my own thing for a while before returning to the business."

Marvin Jirous, the third owner, also owns partnerships in 60 other stores. Jirous has owned the First Avenue Sonic since it opened in the 1960s, and Atwood and Owen purchased their shares of the partnership in 2000.

For the past two years the owners have been trying to find a piece of property for expansion.

"Even then we knew that we wanted to be on this side of town," said Owen even though "the only thing that was developed on this side was Wal-Mart."

According to Owen, Tommy Kramer, of the Durant Industrial Authority, was very helpful in Sonic's expansion "He was very helpful to us when we were looking at the other site, and then when that deal fell through he was great about coming up with ideas. He would ask 'would this work?' Both he and the city have been just wonderful," said Owen.

"We have developed in other states, like Virginia. It was so tedious to dredge through all of their requirements and regulations," said Owen, adding that Durant is a great place to build and own a business due to their pro-business attitude.

The Sonic on First Avenue will be closed for a week or ten days due to renovations. According to Owen, that restaurant will be reopened by Dec. 11 at the latest. "People will be able to tell because it will be pretty obvious. We will have balloons and a big banner," said Owen, adding that they are not relocating, just expanding. "We have been around, and we are going to continue to be around. We enjoy being a part of the city."

Reconstruction on the First Avenue store will include new siding and updating the canopies to make them more similar to the new Main Street location, and exterior painting, though the majority of the work will be on the interior, including new plumbing and new equipment.

Each location employs between 30-40 employees, for a total of 60-80 employees, and Sonic is now currently hiring. "Every time we hire someone, we are looking for our superstar, or next manager and partner," said Owen.

"When we had our first meeting (for the new store) we asked all the senior management to write down what position they started at, and how long they have been with the company. Lisa Craddock, the manager of the First Avenue store has been with the company for about 18 years. She started out as a car hop and is now a part owner. Keeshan Lewis, the manager of the Main Street location, has been with the company since 2000."

"Sonic really is great about offering the opportunity to become more, to develop and grow as a person as well as in your career," said Owen.

Kramer was excited about the new expansion, "Working with Marvin Jirous, Carl Atwood, and Angela Owen of the Sonic Team was a real pleasure. As soon as we found them a nice location in Calera we started looking for a location in west Durant. They are a real tribute to the outstanding quality of people that are investing in Durant."