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Audubon

## Audubon's \$18 million buzz Waspy's building truck stop, restaurant and 33-room hotel

By DOUGLAS BURNS, Staff Writer

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Audubon

The Lawrence and Doris Handlos family, joined by dozens of Audubon leaders and economic-development advocates from Carroll and other surrounding counties, broke ground Wednesday on an \$18 million truck stop/hotel/restaurant complex on the south side of Audubon.

Waspy's, located on the west side of U.S. Highway 71 across from the Audubon Municipal Airport, will feature a 200-person restaurant, known as The Feed Mill. The menu will include steak and pastas and other items. Plans call for breakfast 24 hours a day.

Then there's the two-story 33-room hotel, tentatively named Blue Grass Inn & Suites (Blue Grass Creek is in close proximity).

A truck stop on the premises will include a wash-out for trucks, 16 pumps for cars, four islands for diesel trucks, a convenience store and other amenities.

The family expects the project to be complete in 18 months in Audubon. Dirt work is underway. Waspy's will employ 70 people.

"Just looking at all the traffic studies there's a need for it," said Brian Handlos, CEO of Waspy's, and Lawrence and Doris's son. "You see all the trucks parked along the side of the road, they need someplace to go."

Local businesses and a growing Audubon economy are setting the stage for the hotel development, Brian Handlos said.

His sister, Beth Handlos, chief operating officer of Waspy's, says the Templeton Waspy's truck stop will open sometime in May.

The focus Wednesday was on Audubon, though.

"We're really looking forward to your success as you go down the road," said Audubon Mayor Barb Jacobsen. "Thank you very much for supporting our community and believing enough to have this vision."

Sarah Gomez, executive director of the Midwest Partnership, an economic-development organization representing Audubon, Adair, Greene and Guthrie counties, recalled the dreams and ideas that emerged two years ago for Waspy's.

What stood out the most, Gomez said, is the dedication of the Handlos family to the community.

"This project, they wanted to do for the community and for the people of Audubon," Gomez said. "That, to me, will always stick out in my mind."

Waspy's will create more jobs in Audubon through an economic spinoff, Gomez said, citing teachers and store clerks as examples.

Lawrence "Waspy" Handlos and his wife, Doris, longtime Audubon-area grain and hog farmers, are the sole owners of the new Waspy's Truck Stop on the southern edge of Templeton and the developing Waspy's in Audubon.

"It was a big turnout," Lawrence Handlos said the Audubon groundbreaking. "I was surprised to see all the people."

Handlos said he hatched the idea based on his own need for a truck wash and access to fuel.

"I think maybe it is a chance to bring some people back to Audubon," Handlos, 80, said.



Waspy's CEO Brian Handlos describes development of the complex on the south side of Audubon. The project represents an \$18 million investment.

### What's behind the Waspy's name?

So how did the Lawrence Handlos, 80, "going on 81," get the nickname "Waspy."

His father, John, a German immigrant who settled in the Carroll area, gave it to Lawrence as a child and it's stuck as the younger Handlos developed a significant grain and hog operation in Audubon.

"It means something in German," Lawrence Handlos said. "He thought it was a joke."

What does it mean?

It's tied to another German name that stood out with his father.

"It's Sebastian is what I think it really is," Waspy said.

"He thought Sebastian was a funny name."

It also happens to make for a memorable and folksy brand name for two rural truck stops.

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