



'HAPPILY CLOSED'



BILLY CHAPMAN, RECORD

The marquee below Dirty South Bar & Grill's sign reads "Happily Closed" on March 2. Heather Cavan said part of the reason the bar closed was because of negative opinions of the bar that were expressed online and in person.

Dirty South in Hickory abruptly closes after 4 months; owner blames negativity

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Dirty South Bar and Grill closed Feb. 21, about four months after the restaurant opened in the space formerly occupied by Gateway Pub & Grill.

Heather Cavan, general manager of the restaurant, said she wanted to change the reputation of the property located at 534 U.S. Highway 70 SW when she was making renovations to the building in April 2025.

"We expect a laid-back but lively, friendly community atmosphere where everybody can feel welcome here," Cavan said about Dirty South in April 2025 as she was preparing to open the bar and restaurant. "It is the South, so Southern hospitality has to go hand-in-hand with that."

Dirty South opened in October 2025. Customers praised the restaurant's appetizers as well as game room and pool tables in online Yelp reviews. Dirty South received a score of 99.5 on its health inspection conducted in January of 2026.



SARAH C. JOHNSON, RECORD

Graffiti was spray painted on the front wall of the Dirty South Bar & Grill along U.S. Highway 70 in Hickory. The bar has closed the location.

Please see **DIRTY SOUTH**, Page A2

Hickory school board candidate plans write-in campaign

State's decision to make school board races partisan has affect on unaffiliated candidate

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When Ittiedi Carson was first elected to the Hickory City Schools Board of Education in 2017, her political affiliation did not matter.

Party affiliation became more important in 2023 when the General Assembly made school board races in Catawba County partisan. The first partisan school board race was in 2024.

Now, Carson, who is politically unaffiliated and running in her first partisan race, will have a more difficult road to reelection.

Candidates who are unaffiliated and running in partisan races in North Carolina have to receive signatures to appear on general election ballots. In Carson's case, she needs 4% of

voters who reside in Hickory City Schools Ward 3 to sign. The deadline for unaffiliated candidates like Carson to submit signatures and get on the November ballot was March 3, the day of the 2026 primaries.

Carson said she chose not to go that route for her campaign.

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St. Patrick's Day comfort food, lightened up.

LIVELY, D1

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Weather

Very warm
High 81
Low 61
Forecast • A8

