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What Apple deal means for the Charlotte region

Charlotte Business Journal - by [Ken Elkins](#) Senior Staff Writer

Apple Inc. indicated this week that Maiden is the winning site for a \$1 billion data center that should be operational by late 2010.

That's only part of the story for Scott Millar, president of the **Catawba County Economic Development Corp.** Having an Apple facility in town puts the county in the server farm business. Surely others will follow, Millar reasons.

Plus, the agreement worked out with Maiden and the county hints that Apple could expand to 1 million square feet and a total investment of \$2 billion. Millar responded this week to questions from the Charlotte Business Journal about just what the 500,000-square-foot data center will mean for the Charlotte region.



photo NANCY PIERCE

Scott Millar

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What is the expected impact of the Apple project?

Clearly, the impact will be phenomenal in the short and long term on the region. The development of North Carolina and Charlotte and the area into a "tech corridor" further adds to our diversification and will help the world realize the "who's who" we have been and are assembling. This is beyond the direct impact of the jobs and the investment and the hotels and the commercial activity — the so-called multiplier effect we economic developers are always touting.

The project offers low employment initially, but what could the spinoff business involve?

Here's where there's been some misperception. There will likely be 250 to 300 people facilitating the operation on a regular basis, 50 of which are wearing Apple name badges. Many others will be wearing other company nametags and working regularly at the facility, keeping the cooling systems cool and the facility secure and doing day-to-day activities. And during the initial period there will be hundreds of contractors, vendors, suppliers and subcontractors getting this facility built.

Significant spinoffs from a service side will also be felt.

They've promised to use local vendors? How can companies get in front of them?

They are making a diligent effort to utilize local vendors where possible and when qualified. We're working with them to develop a Web site to ease the listing process, and we're pushing for it to give some preference to locals.

Will the Apple project allow you to become a magnet for data centers?

The attributes that brought Apple and others to this region remain, and we intend to continue marketing to this sector. The T5 Charlotte Regional Data Shell and its surrounding 100-plus acres await the next user. And we're going to try and take advantage of this publicity to encourage others to consider us — sort of like Northern Virginia and the Quincy, Wash., area have developed around their data-center activity.

Will this change your recruiting strategy in the future?

We're here to create jobs and investment and economic stability. One example is that we're working with the **Charlotte Chamber**, the **Charlotte Regional Partnership**, **Duke Energy** and others to pursue the strong energy-related investment possibility for this region.

We'll continue in the data-center market, and we'll continue other opportunities across the manufacturing and non-manufacturing spectrum.

Other than the incentives, what attracted Apple to the Maiden site?

This site was marketed because of its strong utility infrastructure as a data-center location. Strong and redundant power, water and fiber-optics were the primary characteristics that made this a special site.

What's the process for development now? Have some vendors and the general contractor been picked?

Next steps are annexation by the town of Maiden, rezoning, plan approvals, final site acquisition and a million other things to be

accomplished in the next few weeks. Permitting then ensues, and the hope is to begin moving dirt in August in order to get facility completion in late 2010.

How big can this project become in terms of dollars and employment?

I have an agreement with them that they will spend \$1 billion within 10 years on the facility and employ 50 Apple-badged workers. This will be an important facility and location for them as their only East Coast operations facility, and our hope is they will see the need to develop more and more as time goes on.

How many jobs will the construction generate?

The estimate is that in excess of 750 workers will be required to construct the facility.

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