

Apple to build \$1 billion data center in Maiden

By [John Dayberry](#) | Hickory Daily Record

Weeks of speculation ended Monday as Apple Inc. announced plans to build its new \$1 billion East Coast data center here.

The California-based technology giant will build the 500,000-square-foot facility at the 183-acre WestStar Mission Critical Business Park off Startown Road near its intersection with U.S. 321.

The data center will employ at least 50 people in full-time information technology positions.

Mike Foulkes, Apple's director of state and local government affairs, said the company will fill those positions with local people if possible.

Gov. Beverly Perdue's office has estimated the data center could generate another 250 jobs for people providing services to the plant and more than 3,000 related jobs for the region surrounding the site.

Grading on the project could begin in August, with construction completed and the first employees hired in late 2010, said Scott Millar, president of the Catawba County Economic Development Corp.

Millar outlined plans for the project during a joint meeting of the Catawba County Board of Commissioners and the Maiden Town Council at the Maiden Recreation Center.

During the meeting, attended by a broad spectrum of state and local officials, both boards approved economic incentive packages that could grant Apple \$20.7 million in tax breaks during the next 10 years.

Together, Catawba County and Maiden could reap \$9.3 million from the deal in the next decade, Millar said.

Last month, the state changed its tax calculations to land Apple's data center, giving the company a tax break estimated at \$46 million in the next 10 years.

"How sweet it is," N.C. Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco told more than 200 people gathered at the Recreation Center Monday afternoon.

"This is an important day, not just for this county, but for North Carolina. The rock is thrown into the stream here today. This will ripple into many communities in the state."

Perdue announced June 3 that Apple had selected North Carolina as the location for its new data center.

Catawba County has two sites near Maiden that are suitable for data centers, and the Economic Development Corp. has marketed them for that purpose.

Both sites offer access to large amounts of power and water, which data centers typically require. Such centers house large numbers of servers and/or large amounts of computer-based information.

Perdue's announcement came two days after the state Legislature agreed to special tax breaks targeting Apple and the same day the governor signed the incentives bill into law.

Catawba County was thought to be the front-runner for the data center, but until Monday, neither Apple nor the N.C. Department of Commerce would say where the facility would be built.

The state incentives law requires that the data center be built in one of North Carolina's most economically

distressed counties.

Catawba County's unemployment rate was 15.5 percent in May.

Mayor Bob Smyre called Apple's announcement great news for Maiden and for the county.

"We wanted Maiden to prosper and the county to prosper," Smyre said. "Well, they just did."