

# Apple represents economic shift

Hickory Daily Record Editorial

Maiden and Catawba County leaders' efforts to lure Apple here paid off Monday with the announcement that the California-based computer giant will build a \$1 billion data center just off U.S. 321.

The news was much anticipated and welcome by many folks. Three years ago, Catawba County economic development leaders targeted the data center market by developing a 183-acre business park outside Maiden.

The data center represents the target for the next generation of North Carolina's economic development. As the state's economy shifts away from manufacturing, it is the latest in a string of technology-related recruitments, including Google, which received an incentives deal in 2007 totaling about \$260 million over 30 years for its data center in Lenoir.

N.C. Secretary of Commerce Keith Crisco called the Apple project the largest investment in state history. "It's a big deal," he said. "The ripple effect will be enormous."

We hope the secretary is correct in his assessment of the effects the Apple project will have on our region and state. The unemployment rate here has crept upward to more than 15 percent. As more people find themselves out of work, many communities have become desperate for job openings.

We understand that doing business carries an element of risk. It is a key part of the formula that produces success or failure. Smart planning, good research, wise choices and hard work minimize that risk. The same is true for a community's economic development programs and strategies.

To enhance the economic climate here, our leaders have offered businesses a place where they can flourish and create good jobs. This is a risk, but a community takes risks by investing in itself and providing incentives to encourage entrepreneurs, lure business prospects and keep existing businesses in place.

Apple could save \$46 million by choosing to build in Maiden. Catawba County and Maiden could also pay Apple \$21 million over the next 10 years once the 500,000-square-foot data center is up and running.

Being known as a business-friendly community is important to economic development. There should be no doubt for business prospects that enter our community that we value economic progress and the benefits it brings.

Considering the data center will probably only employ about 50 full-time workers, this seems like a lot of money to spend. However, proponents of the move cite the extra \$9.3 million the community would take in as income tax. The data center should also create up to 3,000 jobs during construction and 300 once operational.

We urge our elected officials to hold Apple to its end of the bargain and make sure our tax dollars are not wasted and jobs are created.

Apple coming here is a good thing. It is a great day for Catawba County.