

# Target's Impact Roars To Life



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Tuesday, 11 August 2009

With a little help from Juan Pablo Montoya's No. 42 Target Chevrolet, Newton's newest industrial resident officially roared to life Tuesday.

Target Corp. officials started the NASCAR Nextel Sprint Cup racecar to officially begin grand opening ceremonies at the company's N.C. 10 operation. Now, area leaders hope Target's new distribution facility will be one more engine to help drive the region toward a stronger economic position.

"Completion of this project is a major step forward for our continuing quest to diversify our tax and economic base, and to provide jobs for the residents of Catawba County and the surrounding region," Newton Mayor Robert Mullinax said during the grand opening for Target's T-3811 distribution facility. "This beautiful facility has already created 500 jobs. These jobs could not have come at a better time for our citizens, many of whom are desperately searching for gainful employment."

Mullinax said that since the distribution facility became operational in June, the company's 500 new employees "get to eat, buy clothes and and they get to spend money in our area."

And as the Newton mayor hoped the arrival of Target and 500 jobs will be a "catalyst" for growth in his city, the 1.6 million square-foot facility is expected to have a larger role in the region.

Whether it is creating new jobs and stimulating the economy by attracting other industries, or playing an active role in supporting the region's education and non-profit organizations, Target Corp. is expected to be an integral part of the area's economic recovery.

"This bodes well for a region sorely in need of assistance. We need real stimulus, and this is a real stimulus that is going to help our people," said U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry. "In Catawba County, where unemployment is 15 percent, and in a region that is hard-pressed with over 14 percent unemployment, we need the help."

Target Distribution Center General Manager Rick Scholtes said there are plenty of Catawba County people already earning paychecks from the new facility. "Well above 90 percent" of the facility's "team members" were hired from Catawba County, as well as other nearby counties, he said. "A small handful" of workers transferred to Newton from other Target locations, he said.

"We're talking about 500 jobs, and that is 500 families that are going to have income to buy groceries and other services that Newton provides," said Newton City Manager Todd Clark. "We always say that small business is the backbone of the economy, so the jobs that are furnished here through Target are going to support the backbone of our economy which are those small businesses. That makes this a win-win for small business and big business."

Clark also said Target's arrival demonstrates that Catawba County is an attractive place for industries looking to expand or relocate.

"It demonstrates this is a great place to locate a company," he said, adding that Target officials praised the quality workforce present in the Newton area. "I certainly hope with the media attention that this is garnering today, that people are going to sit up and take notice of Catawba County."

Catawba County Chamber of Commerce's President Danny Hearn agreed that Target's arrival is good news for the region, both now and in the future.

"Now this can be part of our recovery, along with Apple and all the other companies that have announced they are coming," Hearn said, adding that the 500 positions currently at the facility could expand. "I would be willing to bet that those jobs are kind of the first wave. I hope that as they have growth opportunity and as the economy picks up and consumer spending picks up, that distribution center is going to be humming."

That is good news not just for Newton, but for the entire county, said Hickory Mayor Rudy Wright.

"We are all in this same economic battle together. If something good happens in Newton, it is good for Hickory, and if something good happens for Hickory, it helps Newton," he said, adding that he is already hearing talking of an improved economy during recent months. "I am hearing people saying they are seeing better signs and I am seeing better signs in my business. I can't attribute all of that to Target, but oh yeah, it is having an effect."

While Catawba County Commission Chair Kitty Barnes agreed that new jobs are a "real positive" during a period of high unemployment, the opening of Target's distribution center on N.C. 10 has a broader impact.

"This adds to our tax base, and that means we'll be able to maintain low property tax rates when we have facilities such as this that are also contributing," she said.

Target is also a "good corporate citizen," she said, and that was illustrated by a half-dozen grants provided Tuesday to schools such as Jacobs Fork and H.M. Arndt middle schools, Catawba Science Center and Newton Police Department.

"As a commissioner, when the EDC comes to us with a project, I always ask, 'What is their ability to be a partner within the community?' and 'What is their track record in the past?'" she said. "That is one thing about Target - we were really impressed with what they do locally ... These people get out and give back to the community, not only by serving on non-profit boards, but also volunteering for other projects like Habitat for Humanity."

In fact, Scholtes and Target Senior Vice President Mitch Stover said the company annually gives 5 percent of its earnings back to the communities it calls home. That amounts to about \$3 million per day, Stover said, adding that already Target has given \$24,000 to Catawba County's school systems.

"This supports many agencies, services and volunteers through a grant program for non-profit organizations that positively affect our community with initiatives such as childhood reading and family violence prevention in the communities we serve," he said.

With that in mind, Target's arrival in Newton is important from an economic standpoint, but leaders say the company's role will be much larger.

"Target has already confirmed that is is more than a name," Mullinax said. "It is a group of caring professional individuals who have and will continue to integrate themselves into our community for the betterment of all our lives."

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