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[Home](#) / [business](#) / [technology](#) /

Apple data center brings 300 jobs to Maiden

By Emily Young

Maiden will get about 300 new jobs this fall with the opening of Apple Inc.'s \$1 billion data center. It should open any day now, said Scott Millar, president of Catawba County Economic Development Corp. Apple officials could not be reached to verify the exact opening date for the center.

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Apple started construction in August 2009 after the town agreed to give the company a \$46 million tax break over the next 10 years. The center will be used to house computers and store data.

"There's plenty of folks in the area with these tech skills," Millar said. "There's plenty of people to fill these jobs."

About 50 of the new employees will be working directly for Apple in technical and managerial positions. The other 250 will be contract workers, such as security officers and electricians, who will keep the facility running.

More than 1,000 temporary employees, both from Maiden and from out of town, were hired for the construction of the plant, Millar said.

Some Maiden residents wish Apple had given local people more of the temporary jobs.

"I haven't worked since March," said Al Karlowitsch, who owns a grading business and has lived in Maiden for 21 years. "I know they gave the grading job to a company out of Charlotte. There's nobody from Maiden working over there, might be some out of Hickory."

Karlowitsch added that large businesses from out of town were able to quote a cheaper cost than locally owned businesses.

However, other local businesses reaped the benefits of having workers from other cities come to Maiden.

"It really drummed up business," said Cindy Reynolds, who works reception at Park Inn Gateway Extended Stay and has lived in Hickory for 50 years. "We had close to 60 (workers) staying here at the high point of the project. They ate out a lot, helped business in general."

Millar said the impact of the center will extend past the construction phase. Millar thinks the Apple center, along with a \$600 million Google data center that opened in Lenoir in 2008, could attract other technology businesses to the area.

The new industries could inspire Catawba County children to be interested in career paths they wouldn't

have thought of otherwise, he said.

“Maybe there’s a kid in grammar school right now thinking about a career in technology because he saw this Apple data center out on Startown Road,” Millar said.

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