

## Maiden aids Maiden before data center opens



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Apple's Maiden data center site isn't complete, but officials from the town and surrounding areas have already seen positive results from the center's presence.

"If you drive by the site, you will see anywhere between 900 to 1,300 people working around the clock," said Maiden Town Manager Todd Herms. "These people may not be from Maiden, or even Catawba, although many of them are, but they still buy gas, food and lodging from the stores in the area."

Apple chose Maiden for its \$1 billion data center a year ago, and although the center hasn't opened its doors, it has been a needed boost for the county's struggling economy.

Catawba County Economic Development Corporation President Scott Millar said the center is expected to hire 50 direct employees and 250 indirect employees.

The indirect employees might not be permanent jobs, but they include contractors and other construction employees who work on the site, and it's those employees who contribute greatly to Catawba County's economy.

"Just ask those people at the County Market convenience store if (the site) has influenced their business," Millar said. "I think you'll find it has."

Construction on the data center is nearing completion, and the center is expected to be open and fully operational at the year's end, Millar said.

For Maiden, the center's completion will represent years of hard work, negotiations and recruitment plans.

"The mayor, Council and staff, along with other agencies have been working to develop that site for (facilities) for years, and the hard work has paid off in the form of Apple calling Maiden home for its east coast data center park," Herms said.

Apple had good reasons to choose Maiden and Catawba County for its data center site, Herms and Millar said.

"(Apple) bought that property for a reason," Millar said. "A lot of people have been curious as to why. Now, a lot of people in the world are looking at us, even if it's just out of curiosity."

Herms said recognition will help Maiden recruit additional businesses in the future.

"The town of Maiden, as well as Catawba County, is now viewed by people in the data center site selection world as a legitimate place to choose for their multimillion- and billion-dollar investments," Herms said. "We have also benefited from being the home of one of the largest data centers ever built and home to the world's largest technology company."

Millar said the area along U.S. 321 has the potential to be well known as a leader in data and information technology.

"We've been marketing the county as a North Carolina data center corridor," he said.

During a time of double-digit unemployment rates in Catawba County, jobs are what the area needs, Herms said.

"We want to have employment opportunities for all our citizens," he said. "Although a new mom and pop business who is going to have five employees may not make national and international news like that of the Apple announcement, it still put five hardworking people to work and helps to feed and pay bills for five different families. I really don't care if they bring one to 10 jobs to Maiden. If they are going to bring jobs, we're going to do everything in our power to make sure they end up here in Maiden."

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