

# Job recruitment continues in city

**BY MICHAEL WILLARD**

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Without any big job announcements during recent months, it may seem that all is quiet on the economic development front in Newton.

Catawba County's top economic recruiter said that's hardly the case.

"We have submitted Newton sites for 31 different potential projects for requests from the North Carolina Economic Development Commission, requests from the Charlotte

## **JOB CREATION**

Newton city officials and Catawba County Economic Development Corporation evaluate what the city has to offer for new business and job creation.

Regional Partnership, and also through requests we have developed through our own resources," Catawba County

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Economic Development Corp. President Scott Millar said Tuesday during a year-to-date report at Newton City Council. "There are also three current, active projects that we are working on now. There are several other different projects we are working on."

While the nature of the economic development game kept specific details out of Millar's "dashboard" report, he revealed that there were 12 different site visits by officials from new potential industries in Newton during the past calendar year.

"Two of those sites are (existing) buildings. One site is in front of the Target project," he said, adding that infrastructure delivered to the Target site — with help from the city of Newton — makes surrounding property more appealing to other industries.

Millar said Newton's Danner Industrial Park, where new developable land is being cleared and prepared for new construction, could also be among sites visited by future industries.

A 455,000-square-foot building currently owned by CommScope also has plenty of potential, he said. That site, on St. James Church Road and formerly owned by RR Donnelley, is a "fantastic facility," Millar said.

"CommScope is looking for a broker to list that, and we are trying to guide that toward a strong national broker that will generate some looks at that facility," he said, adding the building has great infrastructure including connectivity to the new N.C. 16 bypass. "That building has a strong potential

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**Scott Millar,**  
CC Economic Development Corp.  
president

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to be a heavy-user type of operation. ... I think we will get some strong activity as a result of that being a very good building."

Currently, CCEDC has 18 Newton sites on its website, including 11 buildings and two virtual buildings available for development, Millar said.

As job recruiters try to match those sites with new industry, CCEDC is also working with city officials to create a brochure highlighting prime Newton locations and amenities existing in the city.

"The last two to three years, most people agree that we have been somewhat successful throughout the county. However, unemployment is still at 12-13 percent. While we have been successful, we still need more," Millar said, adding that CCEDC is still focusing on recruiting jobs in several different sectors, rather than relying on just one field. "We need to figure out how to ... take advan-

tage of a lot of different sectors."

Recently, he said, the county has seen success with data centers — such as Apple — and that has sparked a lot of interest in similar projects for the county. However, Newton Mayor Robert Mullinax wondered whether the county's unemployed are qualified to fill data center jobs.

"We have a mass of folks that don't have jobs," Mullinax said. "What opportunity do they have to train to become capable to be considered for some of those jobs?"

Millar said CCEDC worked with a couple of different companies in the county in an effort to develop the county's "talent pool specifically for the data center industry."

Even if citizens aren't trained to hold "keyboard" jobs inside facilities like Apple, he said they might be capable of being trained in other fields necessary to the construction and operation of those data centers. While fields such as heating, cooling, water and sewer, and network building might not require high-tech expertise, jobs in those areas are still created when a company like Apple comes to the community.

"Data centers don't tend to hire a lot of jobs — those are keyboard people," Millar said. "But there are a lot of support people. A lot of people not working for Apple keeping the place cool, providing infrastructure, completing construction. ... The concept is to be trying to train them to have expertise (in those areas)."

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