

# iCloud's center in Maiden putting Charlotte region in spotlight

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There's an iCloud looming over Maiden. And it's not a bad thing.

This week, **Steve Jobs**, chairman and chief executive of **Apple Inc.**, stood before a screen showing the company's \$1 billion data center in Maiden to announce a new service that will move a lot of digital storage to the computer "cloud."

The iCloud will be grounded on the massive racks of computer servers that fill the 500,000-square-foot server Catawba County building.

To Catawba County, the 15 seconds of fame that Jobs offered in front of the tech world at Monday's announcement — documented in Internet videos and bloggers' posts — could boost the region's already-blossoming data-center fortunes.

"If you're a chief information officer for a company and you don't look at North Carolina in your data-center search, you're probably not doing your due diligence," says **Scott Millar**, executive director of the **Catawba County Economic Development Corp.**

The counties west of Charlotte have attracted some of the country's largest data centers in the last four years. Those include Apple in Maiden, **Google Inc.** in Caldwell County, **Facebook** in Rutherford County and Wipro Ltd. in Cleveland County.

This week, the *Charlotte Business Journal* also learned that **Walt Disney Co.** has paid \$6.5 million for land in Kings Mountain for what is thought to be a \$200 million data center.

Apple confirmed in the summer of 2009 it would build the Maiden server farm. Like most data-center projects, employment there would be small — 50 jobs. North Carolina won the high-profile project with \$53.3 million in incentives from state and local governments.

In April 2010, Apple began advertising for employees there. One source says the Cupertino, Calif., computer giant actually opened the center in September.

As technology companies move more toward cloud computing, the Charlotte region has a lot to attract more projects, says **Doug Hollidge**, chief executive of Five 9s Digital in Charlotte, a developer and manager of data centers. "I envision substantial expansion potential within North Carolina and the region due to the accessibility to highly reliable,

low-cost and robust power infrastructure, high bandwidth and availability of suitable data-center sites," he says.

Catawba County is seeing an uptick in the number of data-center inquiries, Millar says. In that county, there are reports that Apple plans to double the size of its 500,000-square-foot facility.

Cloud computing moves many computer applications and information storage to data centers. For Apple, iCloud will mean downloaded music would be available to consumers on many platforms, from desktop computers to personal digital assistants.

When Jobs stood before the screen showing the huge Maiden data center, he pointed to two dots on that image. Those dots are people, he says.

He was speaking Monday from the Moscone Center in San Francisco during the Worldwide Developers Conference.

"We are ready, we think, for customers to start using iCloud, and we can't wait to get it in their hands," he says.

Millar couldn't resist joking this week about Catawba County's knowledge of data centers and cloud computing.

"I don't know what an iCloud is," he says. "I think it's an old Rolls-Royce. You know I don't know anything about that. And as far as I know, **Steve Jobs** hasn't been in town."

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