

# Hickory joins in growth of energy hub with new plant

Premium content from Charlotte Business Journal by Ken Elkins, Senior Staff Writer

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[Scott Millar](#) wants Charlotte to know that the energy hub has spokes that reach as far as Hickory.

Millar, president of **Catawba County Economic Development Corp.**, says Turbocoating Corp. USA and other Hickory-area companies "are all a part of the Charlotte energy hub."

Last week, Turbocoating attracted about 200 people to a preview party for the \$30 million factory that is expected to start production in January. The company supplies gas turbine parts to **Siemens Energy Inc.**'s huge plant in southwest Charlotte.

In Hickory, laser-cutting machines and metal-coating lines dot the spotlessly clean 60,000-square-foot space in Catawba Industrial Commons. Soon the building will be well populated with other machines that shape, drill and coat turbine engine blades and other parts, says [Rudy Baker](#), chief executive of Turbocoating's U.S. unit.

The Charlotte Regional Partnership says the numbers of energy-related companies and jobs are growing quickly in the region. Currently 27,800 employees work at 250 companies that are related to energy fields, partnership numbers show.

Twenty employees work at the Turbocoating plant on Main Avenue Southeast, near **Lenoir-Rhyne University**. Baker expects to have 50 employees in the plant by 2014 and 110 by 2016.

Turbocoating has some of its own spokes that reach to Greenville, S.C., where it will supply turbine parts to a \$30 million GE Aviation plant that makes blades for commercial aircraft engines.

Baker says that's why Turbocoating chose to open a plant in Hickory. "It's right in the middle of two very important customers," he says.

Also last week, Siemens showed off its new, 450,000-square-foot manufacturing plant to Charlotte and N.C. officials. The plant makes huge gas turbines that are used in electric power generation.

Turbocoating is opening in a 277,000-square-foot former Corning Cable Systems building that has been divided into a multitenant facility. Now called Catawba Industrial Commons, the building was purchased and converted by RealtyAnalytix Advisors of High Point.

Value Core Imaging, a Catawba County company, also is taking 25,000 square feet in the building.

The Turbocoating operation is a unit of Turbocoating S.p.A., a 38-year-old business located near Parma, Italy. [Nelso Antolotti](#), who serves as president of both the Italian parent company and the U.S. unit, owns it.

Ken Elkins covers the counties surrounding Charlotte for the Charlotte Business Journal.