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## 200 furniture jobs coming

By John Dayberry

California-based Fairmont Designs has chosen Hickory for a project that will create 200 new jobs during the next four years with a minimum investment of \$1.5 million.

Fairmont Designs acquired a 215,000-square-foot former Thomasville Furniture plant off Tate Boulevard, where the company will make upholstered furniture. Production is to begin in April.

Company officials said the facility will initially employ about 45 people. Employment could grow to 70 by the end of the year, and to 200 within four years, they said.

Fairmont Designs also has a 200,000-square-foot upholstery plant in Rancho Dominguez, Calif., where it is headquartered. The Hickory plant will serve customers east of the Mississippi.

"It is another show of investment for Fairmont Designs," said Brian Edwards, company president.

"Where other companies are shedding workers and looking for ways to divest, we are taking steps that will make us a stronger company and have stronger offerings in the industry."

Edwards said the company is enthusiastic about coming to Hickory.

"This is just one component of what we're planning to do there," he said.

"We have much bigger plans down the road. We're looking for a long-term partnership."

Area officials welcomed the news.

"Fairmont Designs is giving new life to an empty building and new opportunities to many workers who are eager to show them the great qualities of our workforce," said Hickory Mayor Rudy Wright.

"There are many people in our area that need and deserve these jobs, and we are extremely excited to welcome Fairmont Designs to Hickory."

Catawba County's unemployment rate was 12.3 percent in December 2010, the last month for which figures are available.

The Catawba County Economic Development Corp. has worked with Fairmont Designs since October 2010 as the company considered different areas to locate its East Coast manufacturing operation.

"Our skilled furniture workforce and furniture manufacturing heritage made Hickory and Catawba County an obvious choice," said Julie Pruett, director of business recruitment for the Catawba County EDC.

Pruett said any state and local assistance to the company will be based on job creation and investment performance standards.

Fairmont Designs, which has more than 25 years of experience in manufacturing home furnishings and furnishings for the hospitality industry, named Paul Savicki vice president of manufacturing. Savicki will oversee the Hickory operation, which includes about 160,000 square feet of manufacturing space and about 50,000 square feet for warehousing and distribution. He comes to the company from Bernhardt Furniture, where he was plant manager of the company's contract seating division.

To apply for jobs at Fairmont Designs in Hickory, call Catawba County JobLink Center at 466-5596 or apply in person at the N.C. Employment Security Commission at 3301 U.S. 70, SE, Newton.

On the Web:

[www.fairmontdesigns.com](http://www.fairmontdesigns.com)