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\$1 billion Apple project moves forward

By [John Dayberry](#) | Hickory Daily Record

Apple's \$1 billion data center project cleared the last few procedural hurdles Monday as the Maiden Town Council approved the voluntary annexation of 183 acres where the 500,000-square-foot facility will be built.

After public hearings, the Town Council also approved a development agreement between Maiden and Apple, approved a specific development plan for the project, agreed to provide sewer service to the center and amended zoning text to allow data centers, call centers and related uses.

With final site acquisition ahead, Apple should begin construction of the data center in mid-August, a company spokesman said. The first phase of the project is expected to be up and running by late 2010, he said.

Monday's town council actions were the final steps in a process that will help move Maiden into the future, said Mayor Bob Smyre.

"We deserve this," Smyre said. "It's time for us to have something that we can really be proud of."

On July 6, area and state economic development officials outlined California-based Apple's plans to build a data center off Startown Road near its intersection with U.S. 321.

During a joint meeting of the Catawba County Board of Commissioners and the Town Council, both boards approved economic incentive packages that could grant Apple \$20.7 million in tax breaks in the next 10 years.

In June, the state changed its tax calculations to lure the Apple data center, giving the company a tax break estimated at \$46 million in the next 10 years.

Apple said its data center will employ at least 50 people in full-time information technology positions, and the vast majority of those positions will be filled by area people.

Gov. Beverly Perdue's office estimated the data center could generate another 250 jobs for people providing services to the plant and more than 3,000 related jobs for the region. Of those 3,000 related jobs, more than half would be limited to the construction phase.

Together, Catawba County and Maiden could reap \$9.3 million from the Apple deal in the next decade.

Catawba County and Maiden have committed to reimbursing Apple 50 percent of tax revenue on real estate property â buildings and land â and 85 percent of tax revenue on business property â computers and other equipment â for the next 10 years.

During the 10-year period, it is estimated that Catawba County would reap \$4.18 million in tax revenue from the project while Maiden garnered \$3.13 million. Maiden would also collect about \$2 million in gross receipts taxes on electricity sales.

Councilman Howard Ervin said the Apple data center will help to make Maiden's slogan â a town with a future â reality.

"Thanks to Apple, Maiden has a future," Ervin said.