

Look here for what jobs could be in Gaston's future

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Executives from a startup manufacturer of specialty police cruisers canceled plans to look at a building in Cramerton last week because of snow, but the company will visit Charlotte again, according to Donny Hicks, executive director of the Gaston County Economic Development Commission.

Last week, Carbon Motors Corp. officials visited multiple sites in the Charlotte area, which is on a short list of locations in five states that could be chosen for a proposed \$350 million headquarters. Other potential sites include Greenville-Spartanburg, S.C., and locations in Georgia, Indiana and Michigan.

Hicks said the company is looking for an existing building. So he submitted a proposal for a building on a 100-acre site in Cramerton. The 374,000-square foot building built in 1966 formerly housed Burlington Industries and J.P Stevens & Co., Hicks said.

Atlanta-based Carbon Motors Corp. is expected to visit Charlotte again to show off its prototype police cruiser, the Carbon E7. Hicks said a make-up visit to see the Cramerton site is still a possibility.

"I don't think that's out of the question," Hicks said. "On that first go-around, they didn't come look at the site we submitted. I think the snow messed everything up. I'm hopeful we may get another shot."

The Carbon E7 is being marketed as the first purpose-built law enforcement patrol vehicle - a safer, more durable and fuel-efficient alternative to retail passenger cars often modified for police use like Ford's Crown Victoria and Chrysler's Dodge Charger.

In a blog entry on the company's Web site, Carbon Motors CEO and Chairman William Santana Li praised Charlotte for being a major U.S. financial center and home to NASCAR.

"It has a rich manufacturing base and a work force to go with it," Li wrote in his blog.

On Tuesday, the EDC board received an update on other projects involving companies

that are considering sites in Gaston. The county won't be selected for all of these projects, but is a finalist for some, Hicks has said. Combined those projects have the potential to create hundreds of jobs.

Hicks did not name specific companies, but said his staff has plans to meet with a pharmaceutical company this week. A textile company is also looking at an existing plant and could put 132 laid off textile workers back to work immediately doing familiar jobs, he said.

However, because of the economy, none of these projects is likely to select a site quickly, Hicks said. Companies also are considering sites at the Gastonia Technology Park or South Ridge Business Park in Bessemer City.

"Nobody's really pushing," Hicks said. "They'll all do something eventually. The question is when."

Here's Hicks' breakdown of eight potential projects as presented to the EDC board Tuesday:

Aerospace, \$50 million to \$100 million, 125 jobs

Resin, \$15 million, 80 jobs

Office, \$15 million, 25-50 jobs

Aerospace, \$65 million, 160 jobs

Data center, \$50 million, 25-300 jobs

Textiles, \$1 million, 132 jobs

Distribution, \$20 million, 200 jobs

Pharmaceutical, \$5 million, 50 jobs

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