



‘WE ALL NEED TO SIT DOWN AND TALK’



BILLY CHAPMAN, RECORD

Microsoft representatives met with Catawba County residents to discuss the benefits of the company's presence in the community. Microsoft is constructing data centers at sites in the county.

Microsoft meets with residents to pitch company’s presence at Conover meeting

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Microsoft is building four data centers in Catawba County and trying to fight off negative perceptions that surround data center construction.

Microsoft hosted a drop-in information session at the Conover branch of the Catawba County library on Wednesday. The company said representatives would be on hand from 9 a.m. until at least 6 p.m. to answer questions about power usage, water consumption and how the company can use its resources to make a positive impact.

The company said Wednesday’s event was its third information session about data center projects in the county.

“Microsoft is committed to responsible development in Catawba County and to being a thoughtful, long-term partner,” a Microsoft spokesperson said in a message shared with media at the event. “We appreciate opportunities like today’s open house to engage directly with residents. We are focused on ensuring our presence adds value and respects local priorities, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration with local officials and the community as we continue to develop our project.”

Some for, some against

About 50 people had attended the drop-in session by 3 p.m. Microsoft representatives sat with people who attended and talked about environmental and noise concerns.

Microsoft first announced it planned to build data centers in 2022. A public hearing was held to announce incentives the county and municipalities would give in exchange for at least a \$1 billion investment.

Since that announcement, some local

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Volunteers assess Lake James streams post-Helene

FROM STAFF REPORTS

A new report from the Lake James Environmental Association looks at how local streams are recovering from the impact of Hurricane Helene in late September 2024.

The Lake James Environmental Association, a nonprofit organization established in 1973 to protect Lake James and its

watershed, has studied streams and waterside habitats and how they are recovering from Helene’s impact.

Volunteers have been performing stream and riparian habitat assessments since 2017. Those assessments have given the organization’s volunteers and experts a “baseline” of habitat data, according to information

from the association.

Since Friday, June 19, volunteers have completed stream habitat assessments at 14 sites across the Lake James watershed. The assessments use a scoring system developed by the N.C. Division of Water Resources with scores ranging from 0 to 100.

Helene severely damaged

the habitat along many of the local streams, decreasing the habitat score across 18 sampled sites by an average of more than 13 points, according to the association.

“The good news is that when we compare this year’s scores to the assessments performed soon

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Tips for throwing a
summerween party

LIVELY, D1

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Weather

Humid;
p.m. t-storm
High: 91
Low: 73
Forecast: A10

