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Microsoft picks Morrisville over Houston for 500 jobs



Microsoft is bringing hundreds of jobs to Morrisville.



By Lauren Ohnesorge – Senior Staff Writer, Triangle Business Journal - Dec 17, 2019

Morrisville just beat Houston for a 500-job Microsoft operation – a huge win for North Carolina.

A project briefing released by the North Carolina Department of Commerce called the project “highly competitive” between Morrisville and Houston.

Specifically, the project is to support headcount growth for new operations in the company’s engineering departments. The capital – estimated to be an investment of \$47.5 million – would improve an existing facility and create “a state-of-the-art work environment to allow for easier recruitment of a mix of new talent from the finalist community.”

The company told the state the talent would be “varied,” but would mostly be software engineering and development skill-sets.

The jobs – which come with minimum average wages of \$125,354 (compared to the Wake County average of \$58,138) – are the second recent announcement for Microsoft in North Carolina, which also agreed to expand in Charlotte. Right now, Microsoft has 1,403 employees in Mecklenburg County – but in October, the company committed to creating 430 new jobs in that region. Right now, Microsoft has 547 jobs in Wake County, where it acquired BlueStripe Software in 2015.

The state of Texas, documents show, had offered about \$1.3 million in incentives. North Carolina offered nearly \$13 million, including a Job Development Investment Grant of more than \$12.1 million and community college training. Wake County and Morrisville offered up a combined \$1.9 million, state records show. And records show the incentives are likely what tipped the scales in the state’s favor.

“Microsoft has evaluated these markets for demographics, labor depth, labor cost, quality of life, cost of living, air accessibility, real estate costs, business environment, taxes, climate and natural disaster risk, and the availability of economic incentives,” the briefing reads, noting Microsoft found both locations could satisfy the project’s requirements.

“The principle differences at this point are related to upfront and ongoing operational costs (equipment investment, labor, utilities, taxes, etc.) and the availability of potential state and local incentives to assist with offsetting some of those costs,” the briefing notes.

“This is major win,” says John Boyd, a site selection expert from New Jersey. “This is Microsoft’s second big expansion in recent years... it’s a great endorsement of North Carolina’s business climate.”

Boyd says it’s also a nod toward its relationship with Duke University and that it’s “another example of North Carolina being a leader in high-tech industry.”

“Few projects have the cachet that a Microsoft brings,” he adds. “This is really a trophy project. It’s especially attractive considering they beat out Houston.”