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Apple's return-to-office delay could slice into opening of \$1 billion Austin campus

By John Egan - Dec 29, 2021



Ongoing pandemic concerns may delay the opening of Apple's vast new Austin campus. Courtesy of Apple

Apple's decision to indefinitely postpone its employees' return to the office calls into question when in 2022 the tech giant's new Austin campus will open.

The New York Times and other media outlets reported in December that Apple is delaying its hybrid arrangement of working at the office and working remotely "to a date yet to be

determined.” Earlier, Apple had pushed the office return to January or February 2022 from September or October 2021.

“When it is safe for employees to return to the office, Apple is planning for a hybrid work schedule. Employees will be expected to be in the office three days a week, but will have the option of working from home for two days a week,” the MacRumors website says. “Apple also plans to allow employees to work remotely for up to one month per year, giving them more time to travel and be closer to loved ones.”

In April, Apple indicated it planned to welcome employees to its new \$1 billion campus in Northwest Austin sometime in 2022 (without specifying a month). But with the company’s return-to-the-office plans now in flux, it’s possible the move in will be delayed.

Corporate site consultant John Boyd says he thinks Apple still will be able to mark its 30th anniversary in Austin with the opening of the new campus in 2022. However, Boyd adds, the emergence of the omicron variant and the continuing threat of the delta variant likely will push the opening further into 2022 than Apple may have planned.

“Big Tech is taking the latest turn of events with COVID very seriously, with Facebook and Google also putting the brakes on previously announced returns. ... All of these decisions are being made a bit easier, not just due to the new spread, but also due to the great appeal of remote working by the vast majority of Big Tech and Big Finance workers,” Boyd says. “The flexibility to work remotely, at least on a hybrid basis, has emerged as a very powerful recruiting tool in highly competitive labor markets like Austin.”

Apple declines to comment on the back-to-the-office transition aside from confirming the existence of a corporate memo outlining the latest delay.

Apple announced the \$1 billion campus in 2018 and began construction a year later. The office complex, along West Parmer Lane near McNeil Drive, initially will accommodate 5,000 employees and eventually might house as many as 15,000 employees. Apple’s nearby office campus, also along West Parmer Lane in Northwest Austin, employs close to 7,000 people.

The new 133-acre campus will contain about 2 million square feet of office space, as well as a hotel.