

Atlantic County Receives \$3M Federal Grant To Advance Second Aviation Research Park Building

Atlantic County was awarded a \$3 million USEDA grant toward construction of a second building at the National Aviation Research and Technology Park (NARTP) in Egg Harbor Township. The planned two-story, 40,000 square foot research office building will house at least three aviation technology companies and is located within a designated federal Opportunity Zone.

“This project will help strengthen Atlantic County’s growing aviation cluster, attract additional investment, and help bring much needed diversification to the regional economy,” stated County Executive Dennis Levinson.

The estimated cost of the new building is \$11 million. The project is expected to generate an additional 165 technology-based jobs. The first NARTP building was completed in 2019 and is fully occupied. It resulted in 300 new jobs.

“I am incredibly pleased to see the NARTP move to the next level of development so quickly,” noted Levinson. “Atlantic County has played a key role in the advancement of the NARTP because we recognized the potential of aviation as an economic catalyst and the need to broaden our economy and become less dependent on tourism and gaming alone. As home to the world’s finest aviation testing and certification labs at the FAA Tech Center and the adjoining Atlantic City International Airport, this area has much to offer and companies are clearly beginning to recognize this.”

Levinson also expressed his gratitude to Senators Robert Menendez and Cory Booker, as well as Congressman Jeff Van Drew, for their active support in helping Atlantic County receive this award.

“Considering the present partisanship in Washington, D.C., it’s refreshing to see our representatives working toward a common goal,” he said.

The Atlantic County Improvement Authority (ACIA) applied for the grant on behalf of the county with the assistance of Triad Associates of Vineland, NJ. The ACIA will be assigned a parcel of land from the NARTP and will construct the new building and lease it to an opportunity zone investment group, Atlantic County O3, LLC (ACO3) that will provide the remainder of the financing. ACO3 will then operate and manage the building in accordance with FAA land lease requirements.

“We believe that the development of the National Aviation Research and Technology Park has significant potential to broaden and diversify the economy of Atlantic County,” said ACO3 Partner Len Schwartz.

“The opportunity zone designation will not only attract additional investors to our investment team but the benefits could inure to potential tenants in the NARTP,” added ACO3 Partner Chuck Lesnick. “We look forward to working with our team in Atlantic County to make this project a success.”

The ACIA managed the construction of the first NARTP building. According to its Executive Director John Lamey, preliminary construction work for building two has been initiated with the clearing of the site and the start of the surveying and permitting processes. An official groundbreaking is expected before the end of the year.

The NARTP is receiving strong interest from companies that work in the emerging areas of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM). Recently the FAA announced that under a multiyear

agreement, NASA will use workspace at the NARTP for AAM-related projects. The FAA also announced in early March that it will begin testing technologies aimed at preventing manned aircraft from colliding with drones. Woolpert Aviation, a tenant at the NARTP, is working on that project at the Atlantic City International Airport.

The NARTP is located within an Aviation Innovation Hub that links the FAA Tech Center, the Atlantic City International Airport and the surrounding one-mile area. State government recognized the Aviation Innovation Hub in the *Economic Recovery Act of 2020* as New Jersey's only designated "Aviation District," offering companies that create jobs their maximum tax credit incentives.

In August 2019, the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, which works closely with the NARTP, was awarded a \$1.6 USEDA Challenge grant to accelerate UAS and Smart Airport technologies at the NARTP. The ACEA will help solicit and screen aviation companies as tenants for the second and subsequent buildings. Potential tenants range from major aerospace companies to start-ups.

"The expansion in the aviation park will not only bring more tenants, it will drive additional private sector development with a need for scientists and researchers as well as increased demand for housing, hotels, restaurants, entertainment and other auxiliary businesses," said ACEA President Lauren H. Moore, Jr.

"Despite the challenges of the past year, we continue to make progress. This award accentuates our economic strategy and our vision for Atlantic County," Levinson concluded.