

Atlantic County gets \$3M federal grant for 2nd aviation building

Michelle Brunetti Post

The U.S. Economic Development Authority has awarded a \$3 million grant to Atlantic County toward construction of a second building at the National Aviation Research and Technology Park (NARTP) in Egg Harbor Township.

A county spokesperson said the planned \$11 million, two-story, 40,000-square-foot building will house at least three aviation technology companies and is located within a designated federal Opportunity Zone.

The Atlantic County Improvement Authority (ACIA) applied for the grant with the assistance of Triad Associates of Vineland, according to the county.

The NARTP will assign land to the ACIA, which will construct the new building and lease it to an opportunity zone investment group, Atlantic County O3, LLC (ACO3). The investment group will provide the remainder of the financing, the county said, and will operate and manage the building.

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

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, according to the county.

The county is building on what Levinson called “the world’s finest aviation testing and certification labs at the FAA Tech Center” and proximity to the adjoining Atlantic City International Airport, he said.

Levinson thanked New Jersey’s two Democratic senators, Robert Menendez and Cory Booker, as well as U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd, 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 ACIA managed the construction of the first NARTP building, which opened in June 2019.

ACIA Executive Director John Lamey said preliminary construction work for building two has been started 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.

Companies that work on Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Advanced Air Mobility are expected to be particularly interested in the new building.

Recently the FAA announced that under a multiyear agreement, NASA will use workspace at the first NARTP building for Advanced Air Mobility 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.