

LOCAL

Dassault Falcon Jet announces plan to create 400 new jobs at Melbourne airport facility

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Dassault Falcon Jet has announced plans to create 400 new jobs and build a \$115 million aviation maintenance facility off Apollo Boulevard at Melbourne Orlando International Airport.

The plan was previously labeled the secretive "Project Vista," a code name assigned by the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' office.

Dassault Falcon is expected to build on 46 previously undeveloped acres just north of Sheltair Aviation's fixed-base operation, stretching northward near Embraer's delivery center.

The 400 jobs will boast average salaries of \$86,120, said Keely Leggett, airport spokesperson.

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"Intended to serve customers across North and South America and beyond, the 175,000-square-foot complex will accommodate all current Falcon models and will be capable of performing major maintenance and modifications on up to 18 Falcon models simultaneously," the EDC of Florida's Space Coast said in a Monday morning press release.

"Construction in Melbourne is expected to begin in the second quarter of 2023 and opening is set for late 2024," the press release said.

Dassault Falcon jets "are the most advanced business jets in the world — designed and built in France and completed in Little Rock, Arkansas," per the company's Twitter page.

"This new factory service center will considerably grow our presence in the U.S., positioning us to keep up with demand for state-of-the-art maintenance services as the Falcon fleet grows and as new models such as the Falcon 10X and the extra widebody Falcon 6X enter service," Dassault Aviation Chairman and CEO Eric Trappier said in the press release.

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On Oct. 11, the Melbourne City Council unanimously approved a resolution adjusting the airport budget to accept a \$6.6 million Florida Department of Transportation grant to build infrastructure for Project Vista at the Apollo Boulevard parcel.

The \$6.6 million FDOT grant will finance an environmental assessment, land-clearing, construction of an apron, utility extensions, stormwater drainage, an Apollo Boulevard median cut, and security equipment, an agenda memo said.

City Council members did not publicly discuss Project Vista during the Oct. 11 meeting.

"The City of Melbourne welcomes Dassault Aviation to our community, and we are pleased with their decision to invest over \$100 million within Melbourne's aerospace industry cluster at Melbourne Orlando International Airport," Mayor Paul Alfrey said in Monday's EDC press release.

Space Florida and CareerSource Brevard also worked behind the scenes to secure the Dassault Falcon expansion in Melbourne.

"We have made it our priority to invest in our workforce to attract the world's top companies to Florida. Today's announcement from Dassault Falcon Jet Corp. shows how these investments are paying dividends," DeSantis said in the EDC press release.

"This new facility will bring high-paying jobs to Melbourne and lead to strong economic growth throughout Central Florida," DeSantis said.

On Sept. 28, the Melbourne Airport Authority unanimously approved a short list of Project Vista votes:

- A 30-year ground lease, plus two 10-year options. Initial base rent is \$635,554 per year, or \$52,963 per month.

Airport officials expect the lease agreement — which incorporates a schedule of early incentives and subsequent rate increases — to generate \$14.9 million during the 30-year lease term, plus consumer-price-index increases.

- A purchase order up to \$129,976 to design a new multi-tenant apron at Taxiway H and Taxiway S.
- A purchase order up to \$162,680 to realign and reconstruct Taxiway H.

The Dassault Falcon complex will include a 54,000-square-foot paint shop, Enterprise Florida said in a press release.

Leggett said the Dassault Falcon announcement was made Monday morning during the National Business Aviation Association's Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition in Orlando.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dassault Falcon Jet to our world-class family of tenants here at the Melbourne Orlando International Airport,” airport executive director Greg Donovan said in a Monday morning statement.

“We believe this is the perfect home for Dassault Aviation,” Donovan said.

“The fact that another titan of the aerospace industry has chosen to move operations to the Space Coast is a great credit to our community and the teams who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to bring this deal to fruition,” he said.

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