

## **Expect even more Disney employees to relocate from California to Lake Nona, expert says. Here's why.**



*Disney may relocate more jobs from California to Orlando in the future, as it hammers out its plans for a future regional headquarters here, experts say.      Jim Carchidi*



By Jack Witthaus – Senior Staff Writer, Orlando Business Journal  
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The Walt Disney Co., which in July confirmed plans to relocate 2,000 jobs from its California headquarters to Lake Nona over the next 16 months, may bring even more jobs to Orlando, say experts.

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Moving 2,000 employees in a single phase is perhaps the top end of how many people a company can move at once due to the complexities around the endeavor, according to site selection expert John Boyd, a principal at Boca Raton-based The Boyd Co. Inc., who is not involved in Disney's relocation.

In addition, it's common that relocating companies move employees in waves to new cities, Boyd said. For example, Toyota Motor Corp. (NYSE: TM)'s relocation of its North American head office from California to Plano, Texas occurred in phases. Now, Toyota's 100-acre campus features 2.1 million square feet of office space. Sister publication *Dallas Business Journal* reported Toyota has 5,000 employees in North Texas with the vast majority working at its Plano campus.

"The business cost advantages of Orlando versus Southern California and the overall business climate advantages of Florida versus California are very compelling for Disney," Boyd said.



*John Boyd*

Meanwhile, the job relocation, perhaps the largest in Orlando's history, is an economic boon for the region and has set off a rush to build new homes and commercial space around Lake Nona to support these future residents.

Most of the relocating professional roles will be related to Disney's Parks, Experiences and Products division — which include theme parks — who are not fully dedicated to the Disneyland Resort. Walt Disney Co.'s headquarters will remain in California and the relocating jobs will represent less than 5% of the total number of Disney jobs in California.

Disney — Central Florida's biggest employer with about 60,000 local workers — reportedly is hammering out details with Orlando-based Lake Nona developer Tavistock Development Co. on its future campus in Lake Nona, which is billed as a new regional campus.

Neither Tavistock nor Disney has revealed the size and scope of the future headquarters, but *OBJ* previously reported that one option is for Tavistock to sell land to Disney for the new regional headquarters. *OBJ* also has learned that one proposed size of the future regional headquarters would support more than 2,000 jobs.

Representatives with Disney and Tavistock weren't available for comment.

Before the construction of the new regional headquarters, Tavistock is building an eight-story, 280,000-square-foot office building at 13410 Veterans Way. Real estate sources previously told *OBJ* Disney has been in talks to be a tenant in the building. New York-based Turner Construction Co. is the project's contractor, and construction was expected to start this month.

*OBJ* first reported in January that Disney was in talks to relocate some of its office divisions from its headquarters to Lake Nona. The discussions came as many big-name California firms like Hewlett Packard Enterprise (NYSE: HPE) revealed relocations to Southeastern cities, which are seen as more business- and tax-friendly.

Walt Disney World owns four local theme parks: Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Animal Kingdom and Hollywood Studios. Walt Disney World alone is the top generator for visitation to Orlando, with more than 50 million people going through its turnstiles in previous years — many of those repeat visitors.

Disney also owns two area water parks, Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon, as well as several themed hotels, golf courses, a camping resort, timeshare properties, a residential community called Golden Oak at Walt Disney World Resort, ESPN Wide World of Sports and the Disney Springs retail, dining and entertainment complex.