

Brevard County named finalist in Space Force HQ search



ULA's Atlas V rocket frequently lifts off from Cape Canaveral and has carried Space Force cargo on multiple missions.



By Alex Soderstrom – Staff Writer, Orlando Business Journal - Nov 19, 2020

Central Florida is one step closer to landing the hub of the nation's next military branch.

Brevard County's Patrick Air Force Base was one of six sites to make the shortlist of potential locations for the U.S. Space Command, the U.S. Air Force announced Nov. 19.

Patrick Air Force Base was selected as a finalist along with Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico, Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, Port San Antonio in Texas, Redstone Army Airfield in Alabama

and Colorado Springs' Peterson Air Force Base, the current U.S. Space Command site. The Air Force will make its final selection in early 2021.

"Florida's defense and aerospace ecosystem provide unique opportunities that would benefit the [Space Force command center], and I am pleased that the U.S. Air Force has identified that capability with Brevard County's selection in the down-select process for its headquarters," said Frank DiBello, president and CEO of Space Florida, in a prepared statement. Space Florida is the statewide aerospace economic development agency.



Frank DiBello

Tech and real estate opportunities

The Department of Defense in 2019 created the U.S. Space Command, and later launched a search for its permanent home. The establishment of the space command is an important step toward the U.S. Space Force, which is currently part of the Air Force, becoming an independent military branch, then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said.

The Space Force headquarters is expected to serve as an economic catalyst wherever it ends up. That's because it'll bring 1,400 military and civilian personnel to the area.

Plus, the facility would spur new aerospace, defense, telecommunications and information technology business supporting the facility, John Boyd previously told *Orlando Business Journal*. Boyd is the principal at site selection firm The Boyd Co. Inc., which is not involved with the Space Force process. It's also likely to generate demand for branch manufacturing plants, regional sales offices and more homes, he added.

And that's important because advanced manufacturing and high-tech jobs mean high wages. Plus, new workers in the region means the likelihood of new home sales. Every home sale in the state has an estimated local economic impact of \$77,858, according to a 2018 study by the National Association of Realtors.

"The prestige of this project brings incalculable location branding value," said Boyd. "There's no industry that has more prestige than the space industry."



A tight race

Brevard County's historic role in government and private aerospace programs would seem to make it a natural home for the command center.

Still, the county needs to offer more to land the Space Force hub, Lynda Weatherman, CEO of the Economic Development Commission of the Space Coast, previously told *OBJ*. "People need to understand this is highly competitive."



Lynda Weatherman

One reason to consider Brevard County is the region's abundance of land, which will allow the Space Force Command to grow and develop its own identity, Weatherman said. That's better than one of the leading alternatives: putting the command center at the U.S. Department of Defense's existing facility in Colorado Springs, she added.

Brevard County was one of eight municipalities across Florida jockeying for the center. Two other Central Florida counties, Orange and Seminole, also submitted bids, but were not among the finalists.