ALBUQUERQUE IS OPEN FOR [AVIATION] BUSINESS

News / Business aviation

Aside from providing the setting for certain popular television shows, the state of New Mexico frequently struggles for recognition on the national stage. A popular feature in a regional tourism magazine never lacks for examples demonstrating that “One of Our Fifty [States] is Missing,” and many Americans would struggle to identify the fifth-largest U.S. state by land area on a map.

That poses a challenge for **Albuquerque** Economic Development (AED, Booth C13033) in attracting new businesses to the state’s largest city. For the past several years, AED has exhibited at NBAA’s annual convention to bring greater awareness of what Albuquerque offers to the business aviation community.

“Our biggest challenges are that we’re a poor state, and a largely-unknown state,” acknowledged AED business development vice-president Debra Inman. “We're still here, though, and we see a definite niche in general aviation.” Albuquerque is already home to One Aviation’s Eclipse aircraft factory as well as Aspen Avionics, makers of the Evolution series of flight displays.

In addition to offering wide-open spaces and great flying weather more than 330 days a year, a pair of recent developments have made Albuquerque–and New Mexico in general–a more attractive environment for businesses seeking to relocate.

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New and expanding aviation-related companies may now qualify for the state's Job Training Incentive Program that pays for employee and classroom and on-the-job training for up to six months. Lawmakers also recently passed an exemption from the state's gross receipts tax on aviation maintenance parts and labor, bringing New Mexico into parity with its neighbors.

Albuquerque is home to two well-established airports, each offering new development opportunities. Work continues on building out an 84-acre, mixed-use business park on the north side of the Albuquerque International Sunport (ABQ) on land formerly occupied by the now-closed runway 17/35. A bit more than half that space is designated specifically for aviation manufacturing companies and MROs needing direct runway access.

"We're in discussions with three to four different groups to build there, and may be ready to announce a tenant by this time next year," added Jack Scherer, associate director for planning and development with the city's aviation department. "Not all of that space will be used for aviation, but with its close proximity to Sandia Labs, Kirtland [Air Force Base] and the Air Force Research Laboratory, it offers a great opportunity for collaboration between lots of smart people."

A separate, 45-acre "midfield development area" at Double Eagle II Airport (AEG), a GA reliever field on the city's west side, offers an existing on-airport venue with complete utilities, roadways and taxiway access already in place. "Everything there is new, nice and shiny," Scherer added. The city also recently launched an effort to develop an updated master plan for AEG.

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