

Growth in Mesa's aviation sector reaches new heights



Mesa's reputation as a preferred location to operate aeronautical businesses has continued to soar in 2008 as evidenced by the economic activity occurring at both of the city's aviation centers, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway and Falcon Field.

At Gateway, relocation logistics are currently underway for coveted tenants Embraer and Cessna. In addition, Crownair Aviation, a San Diego-based general aviation aircraft maintenance provider, has signed a lease to join the Gateway family. The company, in business since 1953, is projecting \$12 million in capital investment for their 13-acre location at the northeast corner of Sossaman Road and Velocity Way.

Gateway is on the short list of possible new sites for MD Helicopters as sole Arizona contender among the final four airports under consideration by the company. Mesa has worked closely with the Airport Authority, Governor's Office, Arizona Department of Commerce, Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) and Mesa Chamber of Commerce to submit a package to the company's site consultant which identifies several options that meet the requirements of MD Helicopters' expansion plans.

Developers DMB and Levine requested a Major General Plan Amendment for separate projects on the 5,000-acre GM Proving Grounds. Both companies are planning high quality master planned mixed-use developments that include office, retail, hospitality, commercial, residential and industrial uses with an urban core design.

Development has continued to flourish at Falcon Field Airport as well. Falcon Field began the year with the signing of three new long-term leases for hangar development on a combined 23.82 acres.

Falcon Office Center, Exec Jet Holdings and Desert Pacific Aviation envision the creation of multifaceted office and hangar facilities designed to cater to the needs of today's corporate aviators, while construction of Falcon 7 is already underway.

Economic Development Director Bill Jabjiniak notes these projects are targeting a new segment of prospective customers needing airport services and states that Falcon Field is now the 4th busiest general aviation airport in the country in terms of takeoffs and landings.

Exec Jet Holding Sales Director Barron Thomas said Falcon Field is an ideal location for the company's combined hangar and office space development. Hangars will accommodate larger, corporate airplanes and office amenities will include such items as high-speed Internet, full-service kitchens and other top-notch options clients would normally expect to find in a first-class downtown office building.

"There are few places left where an executive can own a hangar and have quick access to a major metropolitan area," said Thomas. "The need is immediate. We've already

received inquiries from all over the country and expect to bring large, corporate tenants to the city as these companies utilize the airport."

The April 1 lease signing of Arizona Aircraft painting will add to the continued development activity occurring at Falcon Field Airport.