

Officials unveil plans for new Travis museum

DAILY REPUBLIC - September 16, 2010

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE - The design of the proposed new home for the Travis Air Museum was unveiled Thursday to both community and base leaders.

"This is a big moment for us," said Phil Lancaster, president of the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation. The design earned a lot of plaudits from museum supporters.

"While some specifics of the museum design may change, it will be the basic footprint of what he called a state-of-the-art facility that will honor those (Air Force service members) who have gone before," Lancaster said.

"This is going to be awesome," Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee member Phil Velez said.

"Now we are going to be getting going on fundraising and that is going to be pivotal," Lancaster said.

"Two local business leaders, Copart President Jay Adair and Jelly Belly Chairman and CEO Herman Rowland, were announced as co-chairmen of the fundraising effort," Lancaster said.

The unveiling Thursday was part of a new leader tour for community members the base put on as part of its Travis Week events.

The foundation wants to move the museum to an 11.5-acre site next to the base's hospital gate. That would give visitors much better access to the museum without compromising base security.

Plans call for constructing a 24,000-square-foot main building. According to the design, a second floor to be added could be used for classes, as well as community and base social functions.

"That would allow us to better cater to the community," museum Director Terry Juran said. "Schools could use the classrooms when they make field trips to the museum."

The museum would be built as green as possible with solar panels on the west-facing side of the roof.

There will be a smaller building next to it that would house a small 1950s-style restaurant.

A host of large, concrete pads would be built in front of the museum, on which the museum's three dozen outside display aircraft would rest.

"The museum would more than double in size," Juran said of the new site.

The Travis Air Museum had been housed in the former base exchange for 25 years and has long outgrown that facility.

Before the September 11th terrorist attacks, easier community access to the museum brought in more than 60,000 visitors a year, according to museum volunteers.

"After the attacks, the base tightened up its security and the number of museum visitors dropped to a trickle," Lancaster said.

Ever since, the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation has been working to move the museum to a location near Air Base Parkway.

Reach Ian Thompson at 427-6976 or ithompson@dailyrepublic.net.