A new space mission: Astrobotic eyes an expansion of its North Side headquarters

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Astrobotic Technology's latest space-related venture won't take it far from home.

The lunar tech company is pitching a plan to build a new four-story facility next to its North Side headquarters on North Lincoln Avenue as part of a bid to "establish a new space campus for Pennsylvania."

Astrobotic outlined the basics of the proposed development in a request for $6 million in state redevelopment assistance capital grant funding.

According to its application, the North Side startup intends to demolish an existing building next to its headquarters to clear the way for the construction of the $18 million building.

Astrobotic plans to dedicate one 29,000-square-foot floor of the new facility to tenants that are engaged in space medical research, space test equipment and defense space programs. It will take 39,000 square feet in the structure, which will be connected to its current headquarters.

"Altogether, the completion of this $18 million facility project will establish a new space campus for Pennsylvania," the application stated.

Astrobotic added that it wants to build the new complex to help capitalize on the momentum generated by four missions to the moon currently under contract and to "expand into new commercial and [U.S.] Department of Defense space programs."

"At the same time, we also seek to grow the local economy by subleasing to new space organizations at this facility (companies, nonprofits, and government agency offices) as well as new office space tenants to the region," the application explained.

Astrobotic declined comment on the proposed new facility. Audra Mitchell, a company spokeswoman, said that the plans "are in progress and not fully confirmed, so we do not want to provide information that proves to be inaccurate."

In its application, the company stated that it's poised to add 200 new highly skilled "spacecraft" jobs through the opening of the new facility.

The building also would host the Keystone Space Collaborative, a nonprofit that represents space-related industries in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, and its partners.

Astrobotic described the requested $6 million in state redevelopment assistance funding as a "critical component of the overall financial viability of the project." Its application is one of 132 countywide for state redevelopment assistance capital grants. The combined requests total $538.7 million.

The $6 million requested by Astrobotic would be used for construction costs as well as soft costs such as design, engineering, permits, and insurance.

"In addition to creating new jobs itself, the project will help to attract new businesses to [the] area, thus generating even more employment opportunities and revitalization for the region," the application stated.

The new facility is being advanced at a time when Astrobotic also has been considering plans to convert a five-story warehouse at 1106 Reedsdale St., just blocks from its headquarters, into office and lab space.

It purchased that property for nearly $2.6 million in March 2023 because it was running out of space at its headquarters.

Ms. Mitchell couldn't say Tuesday how—or if—the plans for the new facility on North Lincoln would affect the warehouse renovations.

"One of the things that has yet to be confirmed is if there will be any impact on the Reedsdale project," she said.

The warehouse is located within the Keystone Space and Defense

Innovation District planned for the North Side. The district would house a space and defense industry cluster, including the Astrobotic headquarters.

When the district was first announced last June, John Thornton, Astrobotic CEO, vowed that his firm would be "at the crosshairs" of efforts to redevelop the Manchester-Chateau neighborhood.

Astrobotic, a Carnegie Mellon University spinoff, moved into its North Lincoln headquarters in October 2020. It paid $3.85 million for the 47,000-square-foot building, which once served as a post office and a bakery.

The structure includes areas to build and test landers and rovers and a mission control center to operate the technology as well as space for employee offices and equipment.

Astrobotic launched its first lunar lander, Peregrine, into space in early January. But the mission didn't go as planned, with a propulsion failure preventing Peregrine from reaching the moon.

Nonetheless the company was able to salvage part of the trip by getting the lander pointed toward the sun, allowing some of its payload customers to start gathering the data they wanted.

astrobotic-eyes-expansion.html