

Northrop Grumman is 'mystery' Project Magellan company

Dave Berman and Wayne T. Price, FLORIDA TODAY

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NORTHROP GRUMMAN



(Photo: Northrop Grumman)

State and local officials are expected to announce Wednesday that [Northrop Grumman Corp.](http://www.northropgrumman.com/Pages/default.aspx) (<http://www.northropgrumman.com/Pages/default.aspx>) is the company behind "Project Magellan," which has been billed as one of the Space Coast's biggest economic development projects ever.

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The identity of the company has been kept confidential. But multiple sources with direct knowledge of the project have told [FLORIDA TODAY \(/projectmagellan\)](#) that Northrop Grumman is the company behind the project that could bring 1,800 jobs to Melbourne International Airport paying an average of \$100,000 a year. The project also involves a \$500 million capital investment.

Based on a combination of jobs and the payroll figures, this represents the nation's largest economic development project in the last five years, local economic development officials have said.

Wednesday's announcement likely will come in the form of a written statement from Gov. Rick Scott's office. In addition, Lynda Weatherman, president and chief executive officer of the [Economic Development Commission](http://www.spacecoastedc.org/default.aspx) (<http://www.spacecoastedc.org/default.aspx>) of Florida's Space Coast, is scheduled to speak at the monthly membership meeting of the [Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce](http://greaterpalmabaychamber.com/) (<http://greaterpalmabaychamber.com/>) on Wednesday and it's expected she'll address the details of Project Magellan.

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The announcement is the culmination of a more than yearlong effort to bring Project Magellan to Melbourne, and involved a series of incentives from the state, Brevard County and the city of Melbourne, among others.

Because of the sensitive nature of the aerospace project, officials could not speak publicly about the company's identity in advance of an official announcement.

The work Northrop Grumman will do is believed to have government connections, but details have not been disclosed.

Northrop Grumman officials would not comment.

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In an affidavit, signed by Space Florida and filed with the Brevard County Property Appraiser Dana Blickley, Howard Haugh, Space Florida's executive vice president and chief investment officer, said Project Magellan's plans for the airport are "for aerospace and defense purposes, including research, development and testing laboratories, prototype and model production, air-vehicle engineering, systems engineering, mission-systems engineering, product support and systems testing and evaluation."

The affidavit, obtained by FLORIDA TODAY today, further stated, "All the foregoing will be undertaken for defense purposes or otherwise for uses in support of defense purposes."

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Work on attracting the project to Melbourne was spearheaded by the Economic Development Commission, and various incentives had to be approved by state legislative leaders, the Space Florida board of directors, the Brevard County Commission, the Melbourne City Council and the Melbourne Airport Authority.

RELATED: [Northrop Grumman's history in Brevard County \(/story/money/companies/2014/05/06/northrop-grummans-history-in-brevard-county/8773235/\)](http://www.floridatoday.com/story/money/companies/2014/05/06/northrop-grummans-history-in-brevard-county/8773235/)

Two key elements of the package that attracted Northrop Grumman to Melbourne involved state entities.

The project would be exempt from county, city and school taxes, as part of an agreement with Space Florida. This could be valued at more than \$9 million a year, based on tax payments and savings related to another large project at Melbourne International Airport. The tax exemption could extend for 50 years.

The Florida Joint Legislative Budget Commission approved \$20.8 million in state money through the state's "Quick Action Closing Fund."

The first phase of Project Magellan calls for the construction of a 216,000-square-foot building and creation of 300 jobs by the end of 2015. The second phase involves construction of a 500,000-square-foot building and 1,500 additional jobs by 2019, "if the company is successful in obtaining the desired business objectives."

Melbourne was in the running against San Antonio and other communities in Florida, officials have said.

This is the latest major investment by Northrop Grumman in Brevard.

Last year, the aerospace giant said that it would build a Manned Aircraft Design Center of Excellence at the airport, bringing 1,000 jobs to the county. Work began last summer.

Contact Berman at 321-242-3649 or dberman@floridatoday.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@ByDaveBerman](https://twitter.com/ByDaveBerman).

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