

NASA Langley: An Opportunity to Build the Next Aerospace Cluster

One of the reasons the Virginia Peninsula is taking a delegation to Huntsville later this month is to understand how that community turned NASA Marshall Space Flight Center and Redstone Arsenal into the foundation of a nationally recognized aerospace and technology ecosystem.

We hope to apply some of those lessons right here.

NASA Langley Research Center has issued a Request for Information seeking private-sector, academic and other partners interested in developing portions of its Hampton campus as the **NASA Langley Aerospace Innovation District**. The opportunity encompasses approximately **325 acres across seven parcels** and could support research, advanced manufacturing, testing, autonomous systems, simulation and other aerospace-related activities.

The timing is particularly interesting because NASA Langley has just opened a major new asset: the **Flight Dynamics Research Facility (FDRF)**, NASA's first major new wind tunnel in more than 40 years. The 25,000-square-foot facility replaces two aging wind tunnels and combines their capabilities in a modern vertical test facility. Its 20-foot-diameter test section can reach speeds of **117 mph (twice the speed of the facilities it replaces)** allowing researchers to conduct free-flight and captive testing of aircraft, spacecraft, drones, parachutes and other vehicles. That's not simply a new building. It is new **research and commercialization capacity** for the region.

The RFI opportunity is not just to develop property. It is to create an ecosystem around one of the nation's premier aerospace research centers, bringing companies, manufacturers, universities, entrepreneurs and investors closer to NASA's scientists and engineers.

The Peninsula already has many of the ingredients necessary to be a powerful innovation ecosystem: NASA Langley, Jefferson Lab, Newport News Shipbuilding, major defense contractors, advanced manufacturers, universities and a highly skilled workforce.

The NASA Langley Aerospace Innovation District gives the Peninsula an opportunity to think bigger about what could happen here.

NASA will hold an **Industry Day on September 22nd** to discuss the initiative and engage potential partners. For the Peninsula's economic-development community, it is an opportunity worth watching closely, and participating in.

We are going to Huntsville to learn how a region built an innovation ecosystem around its federal assets.

The more important question is what we can build around ours.