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## Mesa lands aerospace institute for Gateway hub

by **Gary Nelson** - Feb. 20, 2009 01:00 PM  
The Arizona Republic

Mesa's Gateway area is taking off - literally.

A public-private alliance announced plans Friday to turn the area into the hub of Arizona's aerospace industry as the home of the new Arizona Aerospace Institute.

The institute will be headquartered at Mesa Proving Grounds, the massive development unfolding east of Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport on land owned by Scottsdale-based DMB Associates.

It is the second big coup for DMB's project, which announced plans last September to build two major resorts and a large convention center on the property's north end.

Arizona House Speaker Kirk Adams, R-Mesa, is a key catalyst for the aerospace endeavor.

"During these historic economic times, it's critical we leverage our assets and be proactive about building Arizona's economy," Adams said in a news release.

He added: "We are fortunate to have innovative aerospace corporations, educational and healthcare institutions, and military installations in addition to individuals and organizations committed to our economy's vitality and growth. By bringing these pieces together, we will ensure our state's competitive position for the long term."

Research will be a key part of the institute's mission. It will focus on a stage called pre-competitive research, which bridges the gap between the fundamental research done in labs and universities and product development for specific companies.

A news release said DMB's site was chosen because of its proximity to the airport, the Polytechnic campus of Arizona State University, and numerous aerospace firms at the airport and elsewhere in east Mesa.

Drew Brown, chief executive officer of DMB and a member of the aerospace institute's advisory board, said Arizona is strongly positioned to boost aerospace.

"While Arizona is ranked fourth in the nation in per-capita aviation and aerospace employment, this industry has been overlooked as a growth sector and generator of high-paying jobs," a news release quoted Brown as saying.

Mesa Mayor Scott Smith, also a member of the institute's board, has been touting Mesa's aerospace component as a key ingredient in the city's economic future.

More details about the institute will appear elsewhere in today's *Arizona Republic*.