

NEWS

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Editors: Print-quality photos of the Wright Company factory buildings and artist renderings showing how the buildings might look as a national park unit are available upon request.

Ohio capital budget includes funds for historic Wright brothers factory

DAYTON, Ohio—Efforts to secure and restore the historic Wright brothers' airplane factory have taken an important step forward with the inclusion of funding in Ohio's capital budget bill.

The budget bill for fiscal years 2015 and 2016 includes \$250,000 to acquire and secure the two Wright Company buildings for eventual use by the National Park Service. Ohio Gov. John Kasich introduced the bill Tuesday to the state legislature.

“This is one small step toward opening the Wright Company factory to the public as a unit of Dayton's national park, but it's a giant leap in terms of gaining recognition for the importance of this project,” said Tony Sculimbrene, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Alliance (NAHA).

The Dayton Development Coalition included the Wright Company factory in a list of projects it recommended to the state for capital funding after evaluating and ranking their importance to the Dayton region. Sculimbrene said the project's rank—16th out of 32—showed the coalition considers the project important, and its inclusion in the budget showed the state agrees.

The recognition comes as NAHA prepares to launch a feasibility study for a major fundraising campaign to acquire, preserve and restore the buildings. NAHA estimates it will need to raise between \$3 million and \$5 million to carry out this work.

The Wright Company buildings stand on a 20-acre historic parcel that's part of the 54-acre, former Delphi auto parts manufacturing plant. Home Avenue Redevelopment LLC (HAR) owns the site and is completing the demolition of all but the two Wright Company buildings and four attached buildings that were added later.

NAHA is working with HAR, the National Park Service, the city of Dayton and the coalition to preserve the factory buildings and redevelop the site for historical and commercial uses.

Wilbur and Orville Wright invented, developed and commercialized the airplane in Dayton. They formed the Wright Company in 1909 and built its first factory building in 1910 about two miles west of their bicycle shop on West Third Street. They added the second building in 1911.

Wilbur died in 1912 and Orville sold the company in 1915. General Motors Corp. later transformed it into the Inland division, adding buildings and eventually employing thousands of auto workers. The buildings remained in active use as an Inland, Delco and finally Delphi plant. Delphi, in bankruptcy, closed the plant in 2008 and transferred the property to a holding company. Delphi Holdings sold it to HAR in 2012.

In 2009, Congress added the factory site to the boundary of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, which authorized the National Park Service to acquire and manage the site. The authorization didn't include funding, however.

About NAHA

The National Aviation Heritage Alliance (NAHA) is a private, not-for-profit corporation designated by Congress as the management entity of the National Aviation Heritage Area. NAHA's vision is for the Heritage Area to be the recognized center of aviation heritage tourism and aerospace innovation, sustaining the legacy of the Wright Brothers. The National Aviation Heritage Area is one of 49 National Heritage Areas in a program administered by the National Park Service. It encompasses eight Ohio counties—Montgomery, Greene, Miami, Clark, Warren, Champaign, Shelby and Auglaize. Visit www.aviationheritagearea.org to learn more about NAHA.