

TOWN OF ELIZABETHTOWN

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Project Samuel Local Announcement

Announcement

Curtis L. Brown, Jr. Airport and the Elizabethtown Airport and Economic Development Commission are excited to announce that Sovereign Aerospace LLC. will be expanding operations to Elizabethtown to offer flight instruction, general aviation maintenance and will assume duties as the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) for Curtis L. Brown, Jr. Airport. This has been a joint venture involving the Town of Elizabethtown, Bladen County, Bladen's Bloomin' Agri-Industrial, Inc, and Bladen Community College.

As part of this initiative there will be a joint press briefing to announce this new venture and business coming to the Curtis L. Brown Jr. Airport. It will be held on Tuesday, April 11th at 11am at the Mac Campbell, Sr. Terminal Building, 466 Airport Road, Elizabethtown, NC.

Elizabethtown Mayor Sylvia Campbell expresses, "This is a very exciting venture for Elizabethtown and will have a tremendous impact on our economic development here in Elizabethtown and Bladen County. This is the result of a 6-month joint venture economic initiative led by our incredible staff. It is our hope that it will provide a catalyst for growth in the aviation industry."

Hometown Hero Astronaut Col (Ret) Curtis L. Brown, Jr. states, "I was thrilled to learn about this development during my most recent visit in March and honored to spend some time with Sovereign Aerospace CEO LtCol (Ret) Slim Thompson and his team. Inspired by flight lessons at Fisher Airfield leading to a lifelong journey in the U.S. Air Force and NASA, I am ecstatic that flight training will once again be offered at the airport growing our next generation of pilots."

Bladen County Commissioner and Airport Board member Charles Ray Peterson conveys, "The Airport was identified in the Bladen County Strategic Plan 2022-2032 as an asset to help leverage future growth in the county and we believe Sovereign Aerospace and their leadership are the exact company to help us move in that direction."

"We are thrilled to welcome Sovereign Aerospace to our tremendous community here in Elizabethtown," said Town Manager Dane Rideout. "We believe this is the perfect home for this aerospace industry and will add life back into our airport. The fact that this successful company has chosen to expand operations in Elizabethtown is a great credit to our community. Bladen's Bloomin' Executive Director, Chuck Heustess, and the team have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to bring this deal to fruition."

"We are excited to have been a part of this project to recruit aerospace industry jobs to our region," BCC President Dr. Amanda Lee said. "This announcement, to me, is about so many things. It's about the possibilities that exist when we work together, whenever we have a common strategic plan, and we each do our part to make our region better. The college is

working closely with Sovereign Aerospace to provide more educational opportunities to students in the industry. We are grateful for all our partners and their support for this project,” Lee said.

Background on Sovereign Aerospace

Sovereign Aerospace is a Christian, veteran-owned and operated organization, based in Moore County, North Carolina. Sovereign Aerospace oversees a host of entities designed to serve prospective pilots and plane owners. Bringing decades of flight and aircraft experience, Sovereign Aerospace is poised to deliver high-quality flight instruction and general aviation repair on-site, at Curtis L. Brown, Jr. Field. In addition to these current enterprises, Sovereign Aerospace plans to bring operational expansion projects to the field as a key component to this partnership. Sovereign Aerospace CEO, Slim Thompson states, “We hope that our love for aviation becomes contagious!” Currently operating under the Sovereign Aerospace umbrella are Sandhills Fliers, a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) part 61 flight school, and Preferred Aviation Services, a general-aviation maintenance facility. Sandhills Fliers provides flight instruction, serving novice through experienced pilot needs, and offers introductory flights for potential pilots who are curious to enjoy the thrill of commanding an aircraft on their own. Hoping to attract pilots from Bladen County, as well as surrounding areas, Sandhills Fliers’ operation in Elizabethtown is ideally located between Fayetteville and Wilmington yet benefits from the lack of congestion that these two larger areas are known to contain. Preferred Aviation Services (PAS) offers routine maintenance, on-site repairs, and annual aircraft inspections. Employing both Airframe & Powerplant (A&P) and Inspection Authorization (IA) mechanics, PAS is prepared to attend to all general aviation needs with expert quality. Additionally, Sovereign Aerospace, is also in the process of developing several other aviation-related enterprises under its business canopy. Efforts to stand up FAA part 141 flight training, FAA part 135 flight transport, and FAA part 107 drone training are being pursued to extend flight services to government and private entities, and the repair and maintenance division has plans for expansion to avionics installation and aircraft painting services. As an approved NC apprenticeship program and with the help of its own non-profit organization, Veterans Transition Corps, Sovereign Aerospace not only desires to offer instruction and aircraft service, but also is committed to providing employment opportunities to individuals interested in pursuing careers in aviation. Sovereign Aerospace currently employs twenty-five people in Moore County and manages a fleet of sixteen planes. Sandhills Fliers currently boasts 270 members in various stages of flight training, while PAS provides service to over 150 aircraft annually. Sovereign Aerospace is confident that an expansion to Elizabethtown will exceed the successes of its Moore County operations, and it is looking forward to the partnerships formed with the community through its new residence on the Curtis L. Brown, Jr. Field. “We see nothing but great potential in Bladen County, and we are excited to work closely with the local community to satisfy the shortage of pilots and A&P mechanics nationwide,” says Sovereign Aerospace DO/CFO, Ken Hadaway.

About the Airport

Curtis L. Brown, Jr. Field is a town owned, public use airport located two nautical miles southeast of the central business district of Elizabethtown, a town in Bladen County, North Carolina. It has one runway designated 15/33 with an asphalt surface measuring 5,006 by 75 feet. Home to 23 general aviation-based aircraft and three corporate aircraft. Curtis L. Brown, Jr has an economic annual impact of over \$21 Million, generates over \$759,000 in tax revenue and supports over 90 jobs according to the NC Division of Aviation.

“The mission of the Town of Elizabethtown is to deliver cost effective services that promote public health and safety and enhance the quality of life of all citizens.”