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# ACI Jet's New Headquarters is 16 Years in Development

**WHEN ACI Jet leaders began to plan a new headquarters at San Luis Obispo Airport (SBP) in 2005, the company's business looked a lot different than it does today.**

The company wasn't running a full repair station and was using a facility designed to be functional for a much smaller business. But ACI Jet was looking to the future and the growth of its business, so it wanted a fun, functional and elegant facility that would allow for growth and provide a unique destination for travelers.

"We all sat down at one point and tried to come up with what would the dream building be," said Bill Borgsmiller, CEO of ACI Jet. "If you had no obstacles and could build what you wanted, not because it made complete business sense, but because it was incredible, what would that look like."

The new headquarters is designed to celebrate and honor ACI Jet's spot on the California Central Coast. The structure was built to reflect the surrounding landscape and fit in with the style of local architecture, while standing out for its impressive design.

The rock and wood building materials and natural earth tone color scheme were chosen to add the Central Coast style and feel.

"I've always felt the architecture of an FBO should be representative of the area," Borgsmiller said. "You want a person's first impression to be something that ties into what they're about to experience there."

The lobby was designed to be the heart of the entire structure. Two stories tall, with a wall of glass looking into the showroom hangar, visitors are treated to a full view of the ramp, attached hangar and surrounding landscape at all times. A second-story mezzanine with a view of the runway, pilot lounge and snooze rooms, conference rooms and a training room are all available to visitors.

"The big thing we wanted is to have the building inspire people," Borgsmiller said. "We want someone from the moment they get to the front door, they feel like they're part of what's going on."

The company planned to build a brand-new FBO flanked on either side by a maintenance and a showroom hangar, measuring more than 91,000 square feet. ACI Jet decided to start with the maintenance hangar due to



- **LOCATION:** San Luis Obispo Regional Airport
- **PROJECT:** ACI Jet Headquarters
- **COST:** \$26 million
- **COMPLETION:** April 2021
- **KEY PARTICIPANTS:** ACI Jet, San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport, Nelson Worldwide



The new headquarters is designed to celebrate ACI Jet's spot on the California Central Coast.

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the Great Recession and brought that facility online in 2011. Construction on the remaining portions of the building resumed in 2018 and the completed ACI Jet Headquarters opened its doors in April 2021.

The facility was built on a greenfield site at SBP. It was the only space large enough to accommodate the facility at the airport and it allowed for a clean sheet design.

There were challenges with the clay soil on the site and an old swale located under the property, which were addressed in construction.

Borgsmiller wanted the facility to be as public facing as possible. He wanted

the public to see an airplane from the window when they approached the building. He was inspired for the idea after seeing Nike CEO Phil Knight's hangar at the Hillsboro Airport (HIO).

"That makes you feel like you're next to the plane and you haven't even walked into the building," he said. "We took it a step further with the curtain wall inside of the lobby, where once you enter, now it feels like you're inside the hangar."

The central facility protrudes onto the ramp in front of both hangars in a purposeful tilting out of windows so people can go onto the mezzanine and feel like they're in a control tower position on the ramp.

Someone without ever going through security or showing a badge can feel like they're part of everything going on.

"I'd argue that we have the nicest and the newest FBO anywhere in the country," said Andrew Robillard, vice president, FBOs and facilities for ACI Jet. "It's one that's deliberately designed to be inclusive to our entire community as well as the aviation community."

Tenant offices throughout the building provide space for aviation companies to operate at SBP. ACI Jet put the company breakroom in a central location attached to the different business units. It allows for more cross interaction between employees compared to their old facility.

The pilot lounge is divided into private rooms to allow crews to stick together in a private place or spread out.

"We have areas of our lobby that feel like a private lobby," Robillard said. "While it's open space, the furniture is arranged in a way that you can sit with your group or friends while awaiting your flight and feel like you're in a private space."

The structure uses energy, water and materials efficiently, and limits its



environmental impact, and the entire building meets CalGreen building code. This include the porous cement around the building and parking lot, returning all rainwater and runoff back into the ground water instead of getting drained off site, and a motion-activated LED system throughout the facility and grounds that turns off when not in use.

The lobby and mezzanine are not just for pilots and passengers, but for the public to come and watch how an FBO functions, aircraft mechanics in action and pilots take off and land in aircraft of all kinds. ACI Jet hopes to spark that interest and inspire the next generation of aviation professionals.

Borgsmiller said the company has worked for 10 years to develop talent locally and started a program with Cuesta College to train A&P technicians. He wants the new facility to inspire more local residents to pursue a career in aviation.

"When we started the business here, from a business perspective, there was

no reason this made the most sense to start it, but we really liked the area and thought it had a lot of potential. We've always built the business to work here," he said. "We're not following the MBA path here; we're going to figure out what we need to make it work here, and an incredible facility and a way to develop the talent to fill that facility were two of the things we needed."

Building a facility where you invite the community into the hangar and positioning the business as part of the community, you have a better path to move forward when you want to grow, improve and do things, Borgsmiller added.

"We've had people fly in just to see the building," he said. "For business jet customers who come in, it's a memorable first impression of the community and I think if they go out and have a good impression, I think it goes a long way in them thinking 'that's an amazing place, I want to go back.'" ▀

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