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## Maker of Sport Aircraft Moving to Bartow Airport, Hopes to Employ 125 by 2016

**Company acquires ATR StormAircraft, will be relocating to municipal airport.**

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THE LEDGER

Published: Thursday, January 17, 2013 at 4:17 p.m.

**BARTOW** | A new business will be landing in Bartow in March.

Phil McCoy, president and CEO of Light Sport America, announced Thursday that his company has purchased the assets of Italian aircraft manufacturer ATR StormAircraft, and will be relocating its factory to Bartow Municipal Airport.



A model of StormAircraft that Light Sport America intends to manufacture. (Photo provided)

McCoy made the announcement at the U.S.

Sport Aviation Expo in Sebring, where LSA is displaying the Storm Rally, one of the planes that will be manufactured in the Bartow factory, today and Saturday.

"The acquisition of StormAircraft will enable LSA to offer America's only full line of U.S. built sport aircraft," McCoy said in a prepared release.

LSA also purchased the assets of Florida Aircraft Painting Inc. and Florida Aircraft Supply, which are located at Bartow Municipal.

The purchase includes a 36,000-square-foot aviation complex on 6 acres at the airport.

According to McCoy, LSA will continue to operate the painting business in a 60-by-60-foot building, while using the 150-by-151 foot hangar and offices to build aircraft.

McCoy said he hopes to hire about 70 employees during its first year of operation in Bartow, and hopes to have as many as 125 employees by 2016.

Director of Bartow Municipal Airport Cindy Barrow said McCoy came to her a couple years ago with a vision of what he wanted to do, but at that time lacked the funding to move forward.

In the latter part of 2012, McCoy came back with his ducks in a row.

"He has been working really hard to get all of this together," Barrow said.

"I'm hoping that it brings in some jobs and that he can survive through these tough economic times."

The Federal Aviation Administration predicts that 50 percent of all general aviation aircraft sold in the United States between now and 2020 will be light sport aircraft, which translates to about 6,600 sales.

LSA plans to manufacture and sell four StormAircraft models: the all-composite Storm Rally, the Rally Amphibious, the all-metal Century and the Century



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Conventional.

The models will range in price from \$99,000 to \$117,000, and the factory will also produce several Storm kits, including the Fury, Fury RG and 400.

McCoy said StormAircraft has been in business for 30 years and sold more than 3,000 aircrafts.

Giovanni Salsedo, the founder of StormAircraft, will be moving to the United States to assist in the company's transition, and will remain on board as vice president of LSA.

Barrow said the new factory is an exciting opportunity for the Bartow Airport and Bartow as a whole.

"We're just anxious to meet the time line," she said. "The lease hasn't been signed yet, but between now and March a lot can happen."

Brian Hinton, chairman of the Bartow Committee of a Hundred, echoed Barrow's sentiments, and said the committee is looking forward to the city's new addition.

"We think it's a real positive for Bartow all around," Hinton said.

"It's filling vacant space up there. Over the years there has been a lot of different industry at the airport, and this just enhances that group.

"This has the potential to create more jobs and more traffic, so from an economics standpoint, we're excited."

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