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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Up to 75 aviation jobs coming Company to retrofit business jets

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A Portage development company is spearheading an effort to move an airplane-retrofitting operation to property north of the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport.

If successful, the move would occur by the end of the month and could create 40 to 60 jobs over the next two to three years, said Jim Clifford, chief executive officer of Clifford Development LLC in Portage.

The jobs would consist primarily of positions for engineers and technicians, Clifford said.

Clifford Development is working with other area companies including Hov-Aire Inc. in Vicksburg, Anderson Engineering in Portage and Williams International in Walled Lake as part of the venture, Clifford said. Another 15 jobs already have been created by Hove-Aire as a result of the project.

Clifford Development is an aeronautical-product-development firm that relocated from Toledo, Ohio, to Southwest Michigan in 2006.

A building once used by Western Michigan University's aviation program will be renovated for use by the retrofitting operation, Clifford said. The operation may be in place by the end of this month, he said.

Clifford said that his company will market and license technology for retrofitting small business jets.

He said Hov-Aire and Anderson Engineering have been contracted to provide development and parts-manufacturing services and Williams International will provide a new-technology engine for planes.

The Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners agreed Tuesday night to set aside up to \$125,000 from the county's Economic Development Reserve to assist the business venture.

The funds would not be used until the end of a four-year period and only if Clifford's venture, also known as AZO LLC, exercises an option to purchase property adjacent to the airport from WMU, Deputy County Administrator Peter Battani said.

If that occurs, a payment to the city of Kalamazoo would be due as a result of a reverter interest the city has in the facility, Battani said.

Battani said if actual disbursement was necessary at the end of four years, it would be made directly to the airport to support upgrades related to the project and to offset waived concessionaires' fees.

The project could improve infrastructure at the airport that could leverage other economic-development projects, Battani said.

It would add real and personal property to the tax rolls as well, he said.

Airport Director Cliff Moshoginis said the Aeronautics Board of Trustees, which oversees the airport, is expected to vote on providing a concessionaires contract for AZO LLC at its Sept. 12 meeting. The contract allows the business and its customers access to airport property, he said.

The property AZO LLC is interested in has direct access to the airport and a taxiway for aircraft access to and from the airport's runways, Moshoginis said.

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