

The Central Coast—Built to Prove What's Next in Autonomous Systems and Advanced Air Mobility

California's Central Coast is one of the world's most dynamic and mature hubs for Autonomous Systems and Advanced Aircraft innovation and production. Spanning six counties from Santa Cruz to Ventura, the region is home to market-leading electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) and uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) firms, world-class dual-use research assets, versatile testing environments, and deep engineering and precision manufacturing expertise.

Advanced Aircraft technologies—including eVTOL vehicles, hydrogen-fueled aircraft, and drones—are poised to transform transportation, logistics, defense, emergency response, and wildfire abatement. As adoption accelerates, the Central Coast is uniquely positioned to shape the emerging low-altitude economy.

The Uplift Central Coast Coalition, led by the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership, REACH, and the Economic Development Collaborative, unites the six-county region to grow the Autonomous Systems and Advanced Aircraft sectors.

UPLIFT COALITION IS A COLLABORATION OF:

REACH
Ideas • Action for a Thriving Central Coast

MB Monterey Bay
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

EDC ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COLLABORATIVE



KEY DIFFERENTIATORS

A CONCENTRATION OF EVTOL AND UAS LEADERS

Home to three of the four leading U.S. eVTOL companies—Archer Aviation, Joby Aviation, and Wisk Aero—alongside a deep concentration of UAS innovators, counter-UAS leaders, and Advanced Aircraft supply chain manufacturers.

COMPLEMENTING AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP AND UNCREWED UNDERWATER VEHICLES (UUV)

The region's Advanced Aircraft ecosystem extends to autonomous water vehicles, with Naval Base Ventura County's Point Mugu Sea Range serving as a hub for UUV testing, R&D, and commercialization alongside its UAS mission.

A DUAL-USE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ENGINE

Federal defense assets—including the Naval Postgraduate School, Naval Base Ventura County, two NavalX Tech Bridge locations, and the JIFX program—alongside UC Santa Cruz, Cal Poly SLO, and UC Santa Barbara anchor a dynamic culture of innovation.

EXTENSIVE TESTING ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Uncongested airspace, diverse terrain, military facilities including Point Mugu Sea Range, Camp Roberts, and Fort Hunter Liggett, and the CAAMCI FAA-aligned multi-airport network make this one of the most versatile Advanced Aircraft testing environments in the country.

A DEEP AND SPECIALIZED TALENT PIPELINE

Seven decades of aerospace and precision manufacturing, combined with university engineering programs throughout California, has produced deep talent in advanced engineering, production, and aviation systems—sustained through apprenticeships, community college training, and high school STEM programs.

A REGION MOBILIZED FOR GROWTH

Business, government, civic leaders, military agencies, and K-16 institutions share a long-term strategy focused on talent, business attraction, testing access, infrastructure, and state incentives that strengthen the region's competitive position.

Join a region harnessing the power of **convergence**: where innovation meets opportunity, collaboration meets scale, and momentum meets its moment. There's no place like this.

FOR THE FULL REGIONAL PROSPECTUS AND DETAILED MARKET DATA, VISIT: UPLIFTCENTRALCOAST.ORG

REACH Central Coast

San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties anchor the corridor with decades of aerospace infrastructure and engineering depth. From this synergy of legacy and continued growth of innovation, the region is leading the charge in “the second space race.” Vandenberg Space Force Base ranks among the top launch sites in the U.S. by launch cadence and is one of the only sites to offer direct access to polar orbit. From surging space launch activity to advanced autonomous systems engineering, the corridor has the talent, rigor, and continuity that make long-term scale possible.

A DEEP AND SPECIALIZED TALENT PIPELINE

Seven decades of aerospace and precision manufacturing innovation, combined with advanced academic programs and apprenticeships, have sustained a talent pipeline to meet the needs of growing eVTOL and UAS firms in the region.

The Central Coast’s aerospace legacy provides long-standing credibility and has generated sustained momentum across generations of innovation. California Polytechnic State University and University of California, Santa Barbara serve as key workforce engines, producing highly regarded graduates who feed directly into regional industry. K–12 and community college programs are increasingly aligned with aerospace and advanced manufacturing pathways, strengthening future talent pipelines and supporting long-term sector growth.

CONCENTRATION OF INDUSTRY & ADVANCED MANUFACTURING ECOSYSTEM

The Central Coast is home to a robust high-tech and advanced manufacturing ecosystem with businesses that compete globally, including start-ups, federal contractors, and multinational and publicly traded companies. The region’s strong nucleus of highly specialized technology and manufacturing firms has grown 37% over the last decade, with continued potential for expansion. Today, there are 640 specialized manufacturing companies in the region supporting more than 14,000 jobs.

The region also hosts defense primes and homegrown firms, particularly in UAS and counter-drone technology. Trust Automation secured the largest military counter-drone contract in history, underscoring regional specialization in San Luis Obispo County. Honda Research Institute is advancing eVTOL research, contributing to the region’s depth in next-generation aviation systems.



PHOTO COURTESY OF INSPIRED FLIGHT

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS:

California Polytechnic State University and University of California, Santa Barbara are setting the bar for engineering excellence globally in aerospace, materials, propulsion systems and semiconductors.

- California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly)
- University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB)
- Allan Hancock College
- Cuesta College
- Santa Barbara City College (SBCC)

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