



PRESERVATION OUTLEASING SUCCESS STORY

Launch Complex 39A: A Historic Legacy of Supporting Space Travel Merritt Island, Florida

THE PROJECT

In 1965, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) began construction of Launch Complex (LC) 39A to support the Apollo Program. The historic launch site of *Apollo 11* in 1969, which landed men on the Moon and returned them safely to Earth, LC-39A hosted Apollo missions until 1972 with the launch of *Apollo 17*. LC-39A was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 for its association with the Man in Space Program, and amended in 2000 under the historic context for Apollo. During the next three decades, the pad was the launch site for 82 space shuttle missions, including STS-1, the first shuttle launch; STS-7, first flight of U.S. woman astronaut Sally Ride; STS-125, the final servicing mission for the Hubble Space Telescope; and many more throughout the program's 30-year-span, which also includes launches for the first U.S. space station, Skylab, and in July 1975, the site of the first crewed international space mission, the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project. On July 21, 2011, Space Shuttle *Atlantis*' wheels came to a full stop on Kennedy Space Center's (KSC) runway, concluding the STS-135 mission and bringing the Space Shuttle Program to an end. NASA expanded the period of significance for LC-39A to include the Space Shuttle Program dating from 1981-2011. In 2012, NASA began to transform the government-use-only launch site to a multi-user spaceport as part of an effort to make NASA's assets and facilities available to the commercial space industry.

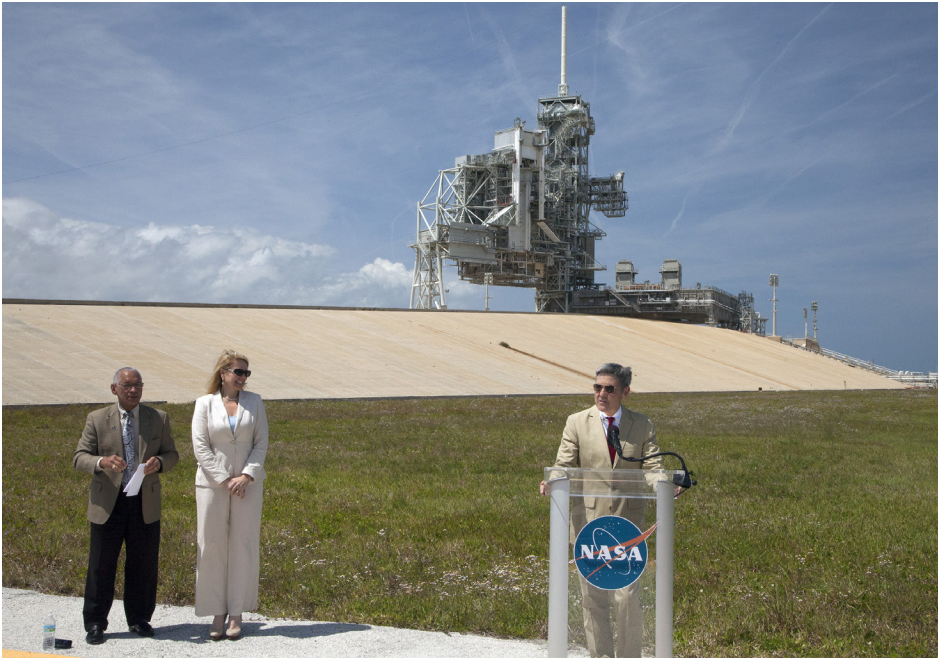
THE PROCESS

In 2014, KSC began the process to lease—or outlease—LC-39A to a commercial partner, which would necessitate modifications to the site, including the construction of facilities to support launch processing activities. NASA determined that the planned modifications would enable LC-39A to continue its legacy of launching new space vehicles in support of NASA and commercial space exploration activities. On April 14, 2014, NASA entered into a property agreement with Space Explorations Technologies Corp. (SpaceX) for use of the launch complex for the next 20 years. Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for SpaceX's modifications to LC-39A would be achieved through continued

“Leasing excess Kennedy Space Center infrastructure for use by our commercial partners supports the space industry, promotes economic development, allows continuing operations in low-Earth orbit, and keeps our nation's space program strong while allowing NASA to focus resources on our exploration goals.”

— Robert D. Cabana, Director, NASA
Kennedy Space Center

A 1966 aerial view of Launch Complex 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, with the 500F facilities verification vehicle on the pad during testing of the site where NASA planned to launch astronauts to the moon as part of the Apollo Program. (NASA)



consultation pursuant to NASA's 2009 Programmatic Agreement (PA) regarding management of historic properties at KSC, which governs the ongoing management of LC-39A, and the terms of the executed lease agreement.

THE SUCCESS

This endeavor represents a true success in the the NHPA Section 106 process highlighting the utilization of an existing program alternative (the 2009 management PA) in concert with a successful leasing agreement to prepare for and facilitate the leasing of a historic property. Leasing has allowed LC-39A to continue its historic legacy of supporting space travel. SpaceX has successfully maintained significant portions of the historic structure while modifying the complex to meet its own technological/operational needs. SpaceX modified the launch complex to support its Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy rockets and built a processing hangar at the base of the pad. On February 19, 2017, a Falcon 9 rocket and uncrewed *Dragon* spacecraft lifted off on the company's first launch from LC-39A. On November 15, 2020, NASA's SpaceX Crew-1 mission lifted off from LC-39A and became the site of the first NASA-certified commercial human spacecraft system in history. LC-39A exemplifies the balance between historic preservation and supporting agency mission.

Left, Kennedy Space Center Director Robert Cabana announces that on April 14, 2014, NASA signed a property agreement with SpaceX for use and operation of Launch Complex 39A. NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden, left, and Gwynne Shotwell, president and chief operating officer of SpaceX, look on. (NASA/ Dan Casper); *Right*, SpaceX built a horizontal processing facility at the base of LC-39A where it will process rockets and spacecraft before they are transported to the pad for launch. (NASA/Dimitri Gerondidakis)

Partners:

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Kennedy Space Center

National Park Service/Canaveral
National Seashore

Cape Canaveral Air Force Station

Merritt Island National Wildlife
Refuge/Fish and Wildlife Services

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Florida State Historic Preservation Office

Air Force Space and Missile Museum

Apollo One Memorial Foundation

Brevard County Historic Commission

North Brevard Heritage Foundation

Spacewalk Hall of Fame

North Brevard Historical Society

Space Explorations Technologies Corp.

Veterans Memorial Foundation