



ALMOST READY - A massive B-52 Stratofortress bomber, transported in pieces to Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale in June, is undergoing restoration and reassembly at Joe Davies Heritage Airpark at the facility. City of Palmdale photos

B-52 restoration nears completion

Bomber to be displayed at Joe Davies Heritage Airpark

This story appeared in the Antelope Valley Press

Saturday, December 22, 2007.

By ALLISON GATLIN

Valley Press Staff Writer

PALMDALE - The latest, and largest, addition to the Joe Davies Heritage Airpark at Air Force Plant 42 is readying for its debut.

The massive B-52 Stratofortress bomber, transported in pieces to the site in June, is undergoing restoration and reassembly at the airpark at Avenue P and 25th Street East.

Thanks to mostly favorable weather conditions and speedy work, the project is expected to be completed by next week, about half the originally estimated time, said Tim Hughes, deputy Public Works director.

The city hired Oklahoma-based Turnlow Company to complete the project.

"They were highly recommended," Hughes said.

The company, one of three which submitted bids to the city for the project, was chosen in part because they were the subcontractor that transported the bomber from its previous display site at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds in Oklahoma City to Palmdale, Hughes said.

"They were very good to work with. They did a very good job (before)," he said.

For example, the company was very conscientious about the little details, such as touching up the aircraft before transporting it.

The company specializes in warbird restoration, typically getting aircraft into flying condition.

One of the men on the crew working the restoration was part of the original team that mounted the bomber for display at the fairgrounds.

"There's a little bit of history there," Hughes said.

Turnlow Company is under a \$65,000 fixed-price contract for the reassembly work, with up to \$15,000 in reimbursement for rental of equipment such as the crane used to hoist parts into place.

Altogether, the B-52 acquisition is estimated to cost the city \$440,000, including the disassembly in Oklahoma, transportation to Palmdale and reassembly, Hughes said.

That number may change slightly as the reassembly work is completed, owing to equipment costs.

The total cost, while higher than originally estimated, is at about the midpoint of the original four proposals the city received for the work, he said.

Those proposals were for \$248,000, \$293,000, \$500,000 and \$850,000, he said.

Although none of the 1950s-era bombers were built at Plant 42 by the Boeing Co., some have been modified at the military facility for the testing of other aircraft, and some B-52's assigned to Edwards Air Force Base have used Plant 42 for refueling as well as practice takeoffs and landings.

At the airpark, a work in progress, displays include an F-86 Sabre, an F-100 Super Sabre, an F-104 Starfighter, an F-105 Thunderchief, an A-4C Skyhawk, an F-4 Phantom, an A-7 Corsair, an F-5 Tiger, an F-101 Voodoo, an F-14 Tomcat, a C-140 that once saw duty for NASA, a T-38 Talon, a trainer related to the F-5 fighter, and a Burt Rutan-designed Triumph. Alongside is a scale model of the B-2 stealth bomber, appearing as if in flight.

Once completed, the airpark eventually will house more than 40 aircraft and a visitor's center. The landscaped grounds already include a shaded picnic area alongside the aircraft.

agatlin@avpress.com