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Lunar association to build center in Waimea

By Carolyn Lucas-Zenk

West Hawaii Today

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The International Lunar Observatory Association is planning to build a global headquarters and research center in Waimea.

The project, estimated to cost between \$2 million and \$3 million, will provide a central location for ILOA to manage and operate its four lunar missions, now in development. The facility will also provide education opportunities for research in lunar science and astronomy to professional scientists and local students, said Steve Durst, ILOA founder and director.

The cost includes design, construction, land and equipment. Kick-starting the project is a \$15,000 grant from the Colorado-based Change Happens Foundation, a private, family-based organization committed to helping highly motivated groups with pioneering programs. That money will pay for the conceptual architectural design of the roughly 2,500-square-foot facility, which will employ four to eight people. ILOA is working with two architects, one in Hilo and another in Waimea. The design should be completed by this summer and a fundraising campaign will follow, Durst said.

ILOA is looking for possible sites for the facility and would prefer it to be located between the Canada France Hawaii Telescope observatory headquarters and the W.M. Keck Observatory headquarters. A land donation would speed up the project, likely to be completed in two to three years, Durst said. Site suggestions are welcomed, he added.

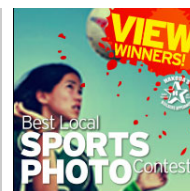
ILOA currently does not have an office. Though, ILOA does occasionally share space with its commercial affiliate, Space Age Publishing Co., located in the Carter Professional Center in Waimea. ILOA has wanted a place of its own for the past couple of years, Durst said.

An interglobal enterprise and 501(c)(3) nonprofit, ILOA strives "to advance human knowledge of the cosmos through observation from our moon and to participate in an internationally cooperative lunar base build-out." Hoping to contribute to humanity's growth as a multiworld species, ILOA seeks to first establish a scientific presence on the moon, followed by human exploration and eventual settlement, Durst said.

ILOA is participating in China's Chang'e-3 moon lander, scheduled to arrive on the moon in mid-December. The lander will have a telescope that will take images in ultraviolet wavelengths. Under an agreement signed in September 2012 with the National Astronomical Observatories of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, ILOA will use the telescope to take the first images of the core of our galaxy from the moon, Durst said.

In exchange, the Chinese will be able to use two of ILOA's own space-bound telescopes when they arrive on the moon, possibly in two or three years.

ILOA will place a telescope on a lander, belonging to Moon Express, a privately funded lunar transportation and data services company in California, which is blazing a trail to the moon and establishing new avenues for commercial space activities beyond Earth's orbit. Moon Express is



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also one of the Google Lunar XPrize teams competing to be the first to put a lander on the moon by December 2015.

ILOA is also planning to put a telescope on the south polar region of the moon and establish a permanent communications post for spacecraft and future human missions. Space Age Publishing Co. intends to broadcast its Space Calendar weekly and Lunar Enterprise Daily via this observatory. This mission could take place as early as 2016.

At the global headquarters and research center, ILOA scientists will be able to oversee the operations of these mission, including sending commands to instruments and processing the data received, said Phil Merrell, ILOA Galaxy Forum coordinator.

The facility will also be key for ILOA's free public Galaxy Forums and its Galaxy 21st Century Education programs, all of which help provide a greater global awareness, capabilities and action in galaxy science, exploration and enterprise, said ILOA board member Joseph Sulla. A forum was held Tuesday evening.

For more information about ILOA or this project, call 885-3474 or email info@iloa.org.

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