

Anduril's Zack Mears Details Vision for Arsenal-1 Facility, Workforce Development, and Future of Defense Manufacturing in Ohio

By Jeremy Newman - 04/27/2025



PICKAWAY COUNTY, Ohio — Anduril Industries is making a major investment in the future of defense manufacturing with its announcement of “Arsenal-1,” a massive hyperscale production facility set to rise in Pickaway County. Zack Mears, Senior Vice President of Strategy at Anduril, sat down with us about the project’s vision, timeline, and broader impact on the community.

According to Mears, site selection began about a year ago with an aggressive timeline in mind — a necessity driven by Anduril’s goal to meet rising customer demands. Ohio stood out quickly among potential locations, offering a wide diversity of viable sites, an experienced construction network, and an accessible workforce.

“Pickaway County offered the size, the partnership potential, and the workforce density we needed,” Mears said, adding that the region’s proximity to Rickenbacker International Airport was a major bonus for logistics and international shipping. There was space available, a strong partner to work with, and a skilled workforce in the Columbus region—and more broadly across south and southwest Ohio—centered around the core trades we’ll need. Within about a 45-minute to one-hour drive, there’s a population of nearly a million people we can draw from, which is critical given the fast timelines we’re working against. We’re targeting mid-next year, around July, to begin moving the first deliveries of the Collaborative Combat Aircraft program for the United States Air Force out of Arsenal-1. Having the ability to meet that timeline, access critical workforce, and work with partners who can move at the pace of our build—both local and national construction teams—made it clear that this site could best support our needs, our customers, and ultimately the broader community.”

The Arsenal-1 facility is expected to be fully operational within a decade, employing approximately 4,000 people and covering 5 million square feet under the roof. The first major milestone: beginning initial production lines for the U.S. Air Force’s Collaborative Combat Aircraft program as early as July 2026.

Beyond manufacturing, Anduril plans to invest heavily in workforce development, partnering with local schools like Teays Valley and organizations such as Pickaway-Ross Career and Technology Center. These efforts will help build pathways for students from an early age, connecting education directly to high-tech career opportunities.

“Our goal is to plant the seeds early,” Mears said. “Imagine a fifth grader getting excited about designing and building the next generation of defense technology — that’s the future we want to create.”

While the main focus of Arsenal-1 will be high-rate manufacturing, the campus will also feature a central “hub” supporting limited research and development activities to ensure close integration between engineering and production.

"The Arsenal campus will primarily serve as a manufacturing hub. Most of the early-stage work—such as product engineering, design, prototype development, and testing to refine mature designs for production—will continue to take place around our core engineering centers of excellence, particularly in California, where our key software and hardware engineering talent is based. Additional early-stage development will occur at our sites with specialized capabilities, such as underwater systems in the Northeast and robotics and unmanned aerial systems in Georgia. While Arsenal will focus predominantly on full-rate production, we recognize the importance of maintaining a tight feedback loop between production and early-stage engineering. To support that, we plan to establish a "hub" at the center of the campus, integrating some research and development to keep our cycle of innovation strong. Maintaining proximity between engineering and production teams is critical to preserving our ability to move quickly, stabilize designs, and deliver reliable products. As Arsenal ramps up, we also envision adding customer account management and site administration functions, particularly for products with high recurring volume, although those decisions will be guided by the contracts we secure.

"We call it Arsenal-1 for a reason—we believe there will eventually be a need for additional facilities. While the exact timeline and locations for future sites remain uncertain, what's clear today is the immediate need for a campus designed to deliver thousands of products annually. This requires a concentrated set of facilities, and a workforce specifically built to produce at the necessary volume. The Rickenbacker site ultimately stood out because it offered several key advantages in development, production density, and delivery capabilities."

Mears also highlighted the importance of affordability in defense manufacturing — a major focus for Anduril. As traditional defense programs have grown smaller and more expensive over the decades, Anduril aims to reverse that trend by delivering highly capable systems at a fraction of the traditional cost, ensuring scalability and sustainability over long-term conflicts.

"We're willing to take on more early-stage risk ourselves to create better, faster, and more affordable solutions," said Mears.

Mears expressed enthusiasm not only for the direct jobs being created through the buildout of the Arsenal-1 facility, but also for the significant indirect benefits it will drive across the region. He compared the project's potential impact to developments like Tesla's Gigafactory and SpaceX's manufacturing expansions, which have spurred economic growth by attracting and scaling supporting businesses. Mears emphasized that the Arsenal-1 project is expected to generate opportunities for both new and existing companies, creating a ripple effect of employment and investment that will be felt across the entire state of Ohio. While direct hiring projections are clear, with Anduril aiming to create around 4,000 jobs, Mears noted that indirect job growth could add another 3,000 to 3,500 jobs over time. He added that while the timeline for indirect growth may lag slightly behind the initial buildout, the long-term durability of this expansion promises sustained economic benefits over decades.

He highlighted the critical role strong partnerships have played in laying the groundwork for Anduril's Arsenal-1 project, even before specific companies or outcomes were fully defined. He emphasized that having committed partners across utilities, infrastructure, and core services enabled the early investments needed to support major growth. Mears acknowledged that while large projects naturally bring change—and sometimes friction—the trust, transparency, and early collaboration with local and state leaders have positioned the project for long-term success. He praised Ohio's leadership, from local officials to JobsOhio, Governor Mike DeWine, and Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted, for creating an environment of cooperation and problem-solving that made the state stand out as the ideal location for Anduril's major expansion.

The five-million-square-foot facility was announced earlier this year and will be located on 500 acres of land in Pickaway County near Rickenbacker International Airport with plenty of room for growth. Anduril is a global leader in advanced defense technology.

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