



Disney Abandons Billion-Dollar Florida Development Plan, Shuttters ‘Galactic Starcruiser’ Hotel Amid DeSantis Suit

Description

Disney is pulling the plug on a \$1 billion development in Orlando Florida amid a fierce dispute with Governor Ron DeSantis (D). The complex would have brought in over **2,000 jobs** to the region, with an average salary of \$120,000, according to the *NY Times*, citing an estimate from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

The project, known as the Lake Nona Town Center, was supposed to involve the relocation of more than 1,000 employees from Southern California, including most of a department known as Imagineering, which works with Disney’s movie studios to develop theme park attractions. Most of the affected employees complained bitterly about having to move — some quit — but Disney largely held firm, partly because of a Florida tax credit that would have allowed the company to recoup as much as \$570 million over 20 years for building and occupying the complex. —[NY Times](#)

In a Thursday email to employees, Josh D’Amaro, Disney’s theme park and consumer products chairman, cited “changing business conditions” as a reason for the cancellation, adding “I remain optimistic about the direction of our Walt Disney World business.”

D’Amaro noted that \$17 billion was still earmarked for construction at Disney World over the next decade, a plan which would create an estimated 13,000 additional jobs.

The *Times* notes that around 200 employees had already relocated from California to Florida, for which D’Amaro said the company would discuss options, “including the possibility of moving you back.”

The Lake Nona campus, about 20 miles from Disney World near the Orlando International Airport, had been championed by Bob Chapek, who served as Disney’s chief executive from 2020 until he was fired last year. Mr. Iger, who came out of retirement to retake Disney’s reins, was much less enthusiastic about the project — even before the company became mired in its battle with Mr. DeSantis. As soon as he returned to Disney,

*Mr. Iger began telling lieutenants, for instance, that **it made little sense to move Imagineering so far away from Disney's movie studios. As he is fond of saying, "Creative teams need to be together."** -NY Times*



Visitors walk along Main Street at The Magic Kingdom of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., on Sept. 30, 2022. (Bryan R. Smith/AFP via Getty Images)

The company is also **closing a luxury hotel at Walt Disney World**, *Bloomberg* reports.

The Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser – pet project of former CEO Bob Chapek, will shutter its doors at the end of September. The 100-room property, for which prices start at \$4,800 per couple, **takes guests on a two-day imaginary cruise in a space ship.**

Meanwhile, as [The Epoch Times](#) reports, **Disney has also asked a Florida court to dismiss a lawsuit filed by the board of supervisors appointed by Gov. Ron DeSantis to oversee Walt Disney World's theme park operations.**

DeSantis took over Disney World's self-governing district through legislation passed by the Florida legislature before appointing new overseers to run it.

The entertainment company's former Reedy Creek Improvement District where Disney World is located, now called the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District, has been the center of a year-long feud between Disney and the Republican governor of Florida.

The new board filed a legal challenge against Disney's case in Federal court after it accused the governor and the board members of carrying out a campaign of political retribution for opposing a bill

against grooming in schools.

Disney filed a May 17 lawsuit, arguing that the board's challenge against it was rendered moot after DeSantis signed a bill voiding the development plans for its theme park.

DeSantis has been battling Disney as he appears to be positioning himself for a run as a Republican presidential candidate for 2024.

Disney's Long-Running Feud With Florida Over Gay Politics

Disney claimed it was the victim of "weaponizing" actions by Florida Republicans who wanted to punish it for opposing the bill.

The entertainment giant publicly criticized the controversial Florida bill, which prohibits the promotion of sexual orientation and gender identity propaganda in schools.

Florida Republicans and DeSantis targeted Disney's special tax district, formerly called the Reedy Creek Improvement District, which granted it the right to effectively self-govern its theme parks in Orlando since 1968.

The special tax district was left intact, but its five-member board was sacked and replaced with the governor's hand-picked nominees.

Right before the new board came in, Disney signed agreements with the old board in March and stripped the new supervisors of development authority over the 25,000-acre district.

DeSantis' board sued Disney for illicitly crafting the "11th-hour" modifications to the district charter that would have removed their powers of oversight.

Disney countered those accusations against the last-minute move and argued that the changes were merely written to secure its long-term development plans.

DeSantis Attempts to Weaken Disney's Power

The new board voted to revoke Disney's last-minute changes to the charter, which it claimed it made to secure its investments.

DeSantis separately pushed legislation to nullify changes to the charter that voided Disney's future development deals in Orlando.

The entertainment giant expanded its lawsuit against Florida last week and accused DeSantis of raising the stakes after he signed the new round of legislation to stop its plans.

"This motion by Disney is entirely predictable and an acknowledgement they know they will lose this case," a spokesman for the pro-DeSantis board overseeing the special tax district, [told CNBC](#)

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Disney argued that by signing the bill to reduce its power over the district, the Florida governor had essentially carried out the same action that his board was trying to achieve through the courts.

The company claimed that the governor's signature "makes any order this Court could issue—in either party's favor—legally irrelevant" and argued that DeSantis's legislation had undercut the new board's claim against it, regardless of who would have won in court.

Disney said if the Florida court rules that its changes were valid, then "the board would still be prohibited from complying with them under the new state statute."

However, if the court sides with DeSantis's picked board, its ruling "would be pointless because the contracts would already be void under the new state statute," Disney explained.

"In short, any declaration about the contracts' enforceability, voidness, or validity—either way—would be an advisory opinion with no real-world consequence. Trial courts in Florida are forbidden from issuing advisory opinions, and this case should be dismissed," the company argued.

DeSantis is currently former President Donald Trump's main challenger for the 2024 Republican nomination and has been trying to gain favor among his base, while gaining nationwide attention over challenging left-wing activism in the state.

by Tyler Durden

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