

A massive Minneapolis model of the Millennium Falcon is fated for destruction

The nonprofit workspace Leonardo's Basement has to move, and its massive, kid-built starship is too big and heavy to come along.

By [Richard Chin](#) Star Tribune

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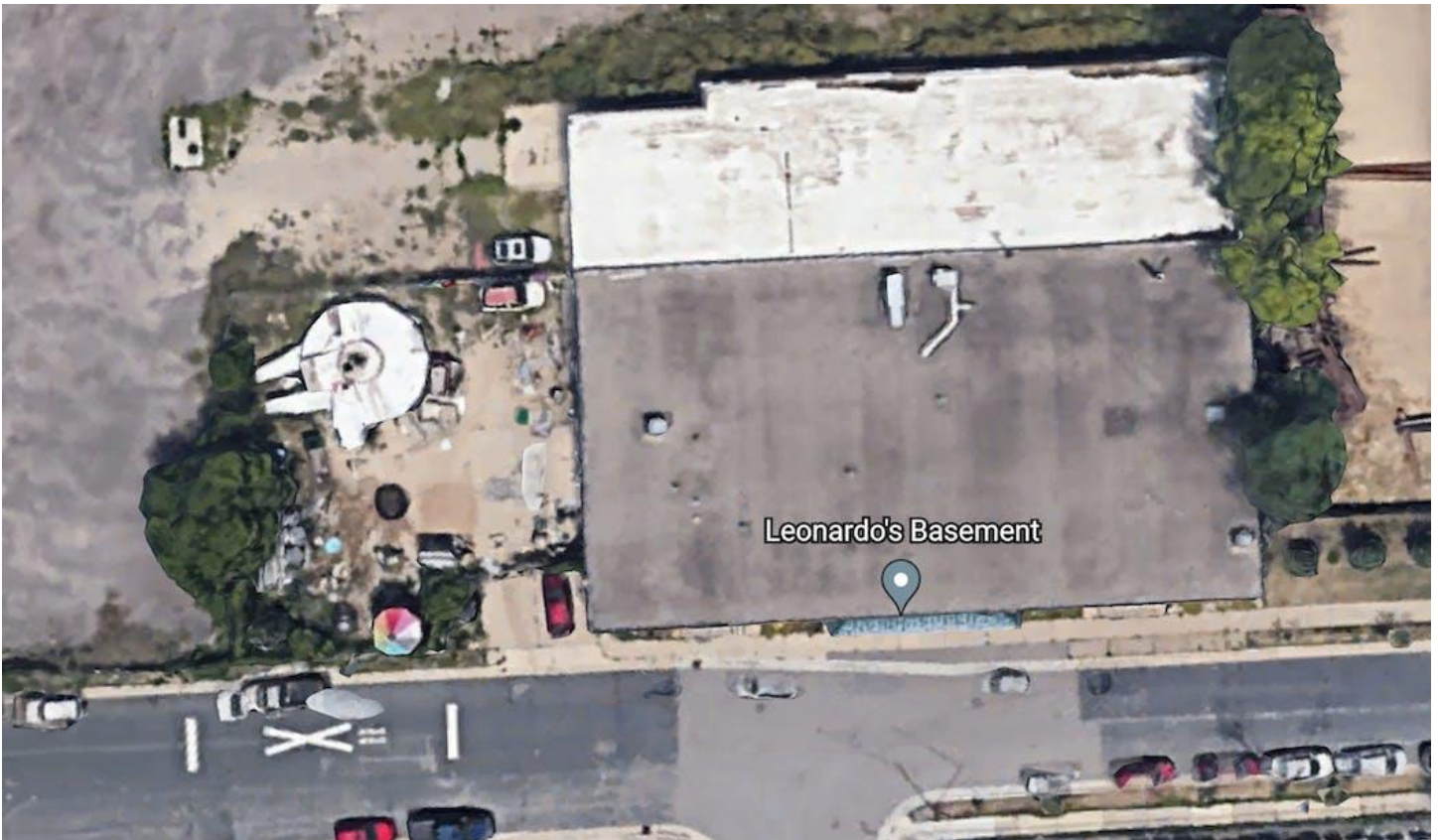


BRIAN PETERSON, STAR TRIBUNE

It's the end of the road for the 1/3 scale model of the Star Wars Millennium Falcon starship built at Leonardo's Basement in Minneapolis.

If a Chinese spy balloon had floated over southwest Minneapolis, it would've spotted the unmistakable profile of one of the most famous flying objects of all time — the Millennium Falcon.

A giant mockup of Han Solo's starship from "Star Wars" has been parked outside a nondescript building in an industrial park for the past seven years. Built by a small army of kids at Leonardo's Basement, the [longtime Minneapolis creative workshop and maker space](#), the Minneapolis Millennium Falcon is so big it can be seen on Google Maps satellite view.



GOOGLE MAPS

The Minneapolis Millennium Falcon as seen from the skies on Google Maps.

But this Saturday, a ragtag group of volunteers armed with reciprocating saws will do something that Darth Vader and the entire Galactic Empire never could: destroy the Millennium Falcon.

At this point in our story, Han (or Luke or Leia or C-3PO) would probably say, "[I have a bad feeling about this.](#)" The fate of the Minneapolis Millennium Falcon was precipitated by the sale of the 10,000-square-foot space currently housing Leonardo's Basement. The nonprofit has to vacate its home by the end of February and take all its creative material — at least four truckloads of paint, pine cones, sewing machines, welding equipment, a half-million Lego pieces, a 21-foot-long two-headed dragon and other stuff collected or built in the past 25 years.

It found a new workshop space in a former heavy equipment repair garage in the Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis, but the wooden spaceship — 32 feet wide, 14 feet tall and weighing about a half ton — is too big and heavy to be moved.



ALEX KORMANN, STAR TRIBUNE

The Millennium Falcon at Leonardo's Basement as seen in 2018.

It's also too wide to be transported on roads. An idea to lift it with a helicopter and fly it to a new home was quickly deemed impractical.

"There's no amount of insurance you can buy that would cover that," said Steve Jevning, co-executive director of Leonardo's Basement.

And while it made [the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs](#) in the movie, the model wasn't built to be taken apart and reassembled.

Since there are no Jedi masters around [who can use the Force to levitate the starship into a new spot](#), a crew of volunteers plan to saw it apart and toss it into a dumpster. (If you're interested in helping out, send a message to info@leonardosbasement.org.)

The Minneapolis Millennium Falcon was originally built by about 60 kids ages 9 to 17 as part of what Leonardo's Basement calls an "[adventure playground](#)," which includes a two-story lighthouse and replica theme park vehicles from the "Jurassic Park" movie.



LEONARDO'S BASEMENT

The kid-built Millennium Falcon under construction.

Over the years, hundreds of kids participating in Leonardo's Basement programs have played in the Millennium Falcon, or have added modifications including a kid-sized cockpit, a rotating gun turret, ladders, hidden compartments, trap doors and an entry ramp.

"It's been a huge hit," Jevning said. "It has the added magic that it's 'Star Wars.' "



LEONARDO'S BASEMENT

About 60 kids worked to construct the Millennium Falcon.

Jevning, who designed the structure to be a 1/3 scale version of what the Millennium Falcon would be in real life, said he's not upset about its impending doom. "I'm really not sentimental," he said. If it didn't have to be taken apart, it would probably have undergone a restoration this year. The exterior has taken a beating from Minnesota winters.



ALEX KORMANN, STAR TRIBUNE

Max Paulson plays with the controls in the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon in 2018.

Tracy Nielsen, the other co-executive director of Leonardo's Basement, noted it's a favorite among regulars. "So many of our kids have an emotional attachment to it," she said.

Jevning said he hasn't planned any ceremony to honor the starship before it's taken apart.

"What's the opposite of breaking a wine bottle?" he said. "Do we hire someone to give a eulogy? Is Harrison Ford busy?"

Richard Chin is a feature reporter with the Star Tribune in Minneapolis. He has been a longtime Twin Cities-based journalist who has covered crime, courts, transportation, outdoor recreation and human-interest stories.

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