

## Public Workshop #1 Event Summary

February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 6:30-8:30 PM  
Metzner Early Learning Center, 680 Franklin Avenue, Hartford, CT

### Introduction

The first Public Workshop for the Hartford-Brainard Airport Property Study was held on February 16th, 2023, at the Metzner Early Learning Center at 680 Franklin Avenue in Hartford, CT. Approximately 90 people attended the workshop. It consisted of a presentation from Frank Fish, Thomas Madden, and Taylor Young of BFJ Planning, Jamison Dague of HR&A Advisors, James Olsen of Tighe & Bond, and Ron Price of QED Aviation and Airports. The presentation covered the study's scope, process, timeline, and public outreach strategy. Members of the public were invited to share strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the site area and ask questions following the presentation.



# Hartford-Brainard Airport Property Study

State of Connecticut

Department of Economic and Community Development



## Presentation Summary

### **Legislative Mandate (Public Act No. 22-118, Section 426): Study Objective and Components**

The State shall be consistent with and supportive of the goals of promoting the health, welfare, and safety of the people of the State and increasing their quality of life, boosting tourism, stimulating the economy, and enhancing the ability of people to enjoy the Connecticut River, assess the benefits and opportunity costs to the city of Hartford and the State of the current use and alternative uses of the Hartford Brainard Airport property.

BFJ Planning will submit to the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee a Final Report which will synthesize; 1) a decision pathway for continued use or redevelopment of the Airport following Federal and State regulations; 2) a preferred development scenario with a clear regulatory pathway for redevelopment following Federal, State, and Local laws; and, 3) a Final Report summarizing the community engagement program, identify impacts and an environmental remediation phasing plan. The report will highlight development constraints and provide other recommendations to assist the final decision-making by members of the State Legislature.

### **Community Outreach**

#### *Public Meetings:*

- Meeting #1 – February 16th, 2023, 6:30 to 8:00 PM
- Meeting #2 – April 13th, 2023, 6:30 to 8:00 PM
- Meeting #3 – May 18th, 2023, 6:30 to 8:00 PM
- Meeting #4 – July 13th, 2023, 6:30 to 8:00 PM
- Meeting #5 – August 10th, 2023, 6:30 to 8:00 PM

#### *Public Engagement Events:*

- Public Engagement Event #1 – April 2023 – Format, location, and time TBD
- Public Engagement Event #2 – June 2023 – Format, location, and time TBD

#### *Public Survey:*

- The public survey will be online between April and June 2023.
- Social PinPoint: Online mapping tool
- Website: <https://hartfordbrainardairportstudy2023.com>

### **Analysis of Current Airport Operations**

#### *Economic Impacts of Current Airport Use (QED)*

##### **Case 1 - Brainard Airport Operational Assessment**

- Task 1 – Aviation Demand
  - Airport Activity Survey and Registered Aircraft Owner Survey
- Task 2 – Existing Facilities Overview
- Task 3 – Airport Development Analysis
- Task 4 – Airport Economic Impact
  - Fiscal impact of current operations vs. closure

### *Economic Impacts of Current Airport Use (QED & Tighe & Bond)*

#### Case 2 - Brainard Airport Regulatory Pathway (Continuation or Closure)

- Task 1 – Capital Improvements and Cost at Region Airports
- Task 2 - Review grant agreements
- Task 3 - Fair market value appraisal
- Task 4 -- Reallocation of Aviation Demand in the Event of Airport Closure
- Task 5 - Assessment of the compatibility of the Airport closure with the needs of civil aviation
- Task 6 - Environmental impacts associated with the redistribution of aircraft activity

### **Analysis of Current Airport Operations and Environmental Due Diligence**

#### *Environmental Due Diligence Assessment (Notification at Federal and State levels) (Tighe & Bond)*

- Phase I Environmental records review
  - 51 identified areas of concern on the property
  - Records Review, Site Reconnaissance, Interviews
- Phase 2 - Soil testing and suggested mitigation
  - Development of the work plan,
  - Subsurface investigation, and
  - Preparation of report.
- Remedial Action Plan and Opinion of Probable Remediation Cost
- Land Survey and Flood Plain delineation
- CTDEEP PREPARED Municipal Workbook Analysis

### **Highest and Best Use Development Strategies**

#### *Alternative Use Development Scenarios (BFJ Planning & PE Strategies)*

- Commercial, Residential, Recreational, Mixed-use
- Market Scan of Existing Uses
- Phasing of Development (in relation to development in Hartford)
- Economic Impacts of Alternative Developments Scenarios (Cost-benefit)
- Environmental Considerations of Alternative Development Scenarios
- Regulatory Analysis of Alternative Development Scenarios (Federal, State, and Local)
- Obstacles for Alternative Development Scenarios Report

### **Highest and Best Use Development Strategies**

#### *Airport Use Recommendations*

- Decision pathway for continued use or redevelopment (Federal and State)
- Preferred Development Alternative and Phasing
- Regulatory pathway for redevelopment (Federal, State and Local laws)
- Environmental Remediation Phasing

#### *Final Report and Presentation*

- Draft Report: August 31st, 2023 to DECD
- Revisions, presentation to DECD, and final plan

- Final presentation to the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee by October 15th, 2023.

### **Next Steps and Meetings**

#### *February-March Work Plan:*

- Environmental
  - Phase 1 Environmental Report
- Regulatory
  - Aviation Demand
  - Existing Facilities Overview
  - Airport Development Analysis
- Economic
  - Review of Prior Studies and Reports
  - Airport Activity Survey and Registered Aircraft Owner Survey
  - Hartford Market Assessment Report



### **SWOT Analysis**

#### **Strengths**

- Central location
  - Within a 300-mile radius of major cities
  - Highway access
  - Close to healthcare facilities
  - View of the CT River
- Historical significance
- Strong aviation industry and job training
  - Strong aviation industry and aviation-oriented population in the region
  - Inspiring youth to get into the field of aviation

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- EAA providing free flights to youth and training future pilots
- Youth employment
- Helping expose students to various STEM disciplines
- Over 50 people enrolled in aviation school
- Only A&P school accessible to students in this area
- Jobs, flight training, aviation tours, little children to watch the planes
- Flight school partnered with Utah Valley University for aviation-related degree

### Weaknesses

- Underutilized for aviation
  - Too few hangars
  - Underused and underdeveloped
  - Failure to pursue potential development complementary to the airport
  - Federal programs that bring Enterprise Zones to Airport Areas
  - Not encouraging and attracting corporate business aviation jobs
  - It needs more exposure and visibility to the aviation community
  - Lack of infrastructure (hangars, maintenance facilities, etc.) and runway length too short
- Political and financial barriers
  - Unnecessary political corrosion/control/influence
  - Property taxes which can be ameliorated through a PILOT program
- Environmental issues
  - Cost of remediation
  - Flood danger
  - The site is ill-suited as an airport. It's too close to schools, homes, wetlands, and precious natural resources
  - Blocks access to the river and opportunities
  - The site is a brownfield, very polluted, and will take many years to remediate and build on. Will become an endless over-budget project city of Hartford will have to support with tax money from surrounding communities. Pointless venture when other areas of Hartford in great disrepair. Parkville has so much potential; maybe fix the roads in the North End. Just as silly as Dunkin Park, it will bring nothing to Hartford.
  - Nice polluted, dirty air river walk

### Opportunities

- Increased aviation presence
  - Aviation training, flying licenses, education, discovery programs
  - Vibrant aviation community
  - High-tech workforce with the aviation school
  - Emerging electric aircraft, shuttles to Boston, and direct flights to smaller Northeast cities
  - Small airshows, Banner Towing, tourist flights, seaplanes
  - More marketing regarding the fact that this was the first stop for Charles Lindberg after his trip across the Atlantic

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- Future Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) hub
  - Electric aircraft being phased into the State at this airport
- A logistical and industrial center
  - Cargo and transportation hub for the Northeast
  - As part of the Hydrogen Hub, the airport can produce H<sub>2</sub> for air/road transport
  - Field of solar panels
- Business and workforce development
  - Youth programs
  - Bring businesses to Hartford via easy airport access
  - Business and economic development, i.e., healthcare
  - The city needs to support the airport for more businesses and opportunities
- Recreational and environmental uses
  - Add bike and pedestrian paths from Wethersfield into the dikes and CT River

### Threats

- Political and financial barriers
  - Short-sighted visions
  - Politics, political greed, unnecessary political control/influence
  - Lack of investment
  - Policies have been anti-business and anti-corporate aviation, losing jobs
  - That a well-organized, funded, and represented pilot group will prevent a fair look at the property
  - People who do nothing but complain and refuse to educate themselves about aviation
  - Uneducated people buying homes near airports without checking proximity before buying
- The odor from the trash facility is bad during the warm weather

## Questions & Answer Session

Following the presentation, the project team opened the floor for attendees to make comments and ask questions. Below are summaries of the comments and questions received and answers provided. Comments are not copied verbatim.

- Concern over environmental issues on the property, including the stability of the dike and the overall cost of remediation
- Opportunities for attracting corporations and large businesses to the airport
- Interest in expanding the aviation industry onsite and investing in the airport as an economic asset
- Priority to improve the site for Hartford residents and its role in the region
- Concerns over an influx in residential and mixed-use development in downtown Hartford over the past years