



**CT DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW OF EXISTING STUDIES**

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INTRODUCTION

The Brainard Airport site has been the focus of plans and studies, ranging from airport operations to transformative development and waterfront access. These plans help provide a foundation for this study of Brainard Airport’s operations and potential redevelopment, and they are summarized in the following sections. The Hartford-Brainard Airport Visioning Plan produced by the City of Hartford is presented in greater detail than other studies due to its recent release by the City and its direct relation to this process.

HARTFORD-BRAINARD AIRPORT VISIONING PLAN [2022]

CITY OF HARTFORD

The City of Hartford created a visioning plan for the future of the Brainard Airport site and analyzed four potential development strategies:

- Continued airport use,
- Logistics and distribution center,
- Mixed-use activity center, and
- Advanced manufacturing, research and development (R&D), and aviation technology hub.



STUDY METHODOLOGY

The City of Hartford developed these strategies after meeting with the community, public agency, institutional, and real estate development stakeholders. The authors also analyzed the physical conditions of the Brainard site. They noted that it is isolated from the remainder of the City and the Connecticut River by Interstate 91 (I-91), surrounding industrial uses, and the berm that protects the site from flooding. Through public engagement and stakeholder interviews, the authors created four guiding principles for the site:

- Connect the site to the Connecticut River and create recreational opportunities,
- Link the site to neighborhoods, downtown Hartford, and institutions,
- Create jobs and enrich economic opportunity, and
- Bridge to and beyond the region.

The report’s analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) identified the site’s size and unique location as a key strength, the potential for connection to the river and adaptive reuse of industrial sites as an opportunity, the physical barriers and pollution concerns from existing infrastructure and historic industrial use as weaknesses, and the high cost of remediation and development at the site as threats.

The four development strategies discussed in the plan were each evaluated through seven criteria: community benefit, transformative potential, market demand, financial feasibility, management and governance viability, economic impact, and environmental justice and community impact.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

CONTINUED AIRPORT USE

The most straightforward development strategy would be to continue to use Brainard Airport as its existing aviation use and to explore opportunities for public access and economic development at the site. The site could be improved with public access to the Connecticut River along the towpath, the site could continue to support the small aviation schools and businesses, and the airport would continue its function as an overflow site for Bradley International Airport and other regional airports. This option would continue the airport's annual operating loss and keep the 200-acre site from being used for something that has a more significant economic and community benefit.



Continued Airport Use Scenario. Credit: WXY Studio

LOGISTICS AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER

There is high demand for logistics and distribution facilities in the Hartford area, and reusing the site as a distribution center would require relatively low infrastructure costs. Distribution centers offer middle-wage jobs, and the use would be compatible with the existing industrial services in the neighborhood. The site could be developed to provide public access to the Connecticut River, and there could be potential



Logistics & Distribution Center Scenario. Credit: WXY Studio

recreation or urban agriculture facilities constructed on the roofs of the distribution buildings. This option would increase truck traffic in the area, worsening traffic bottlenecks and air quality. It would also not be a highly transformative project and would not have high job densities for such a large site.

MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER

A mixed-use activity center on the site could combine residential development near the river, open space, commercial/office/retail, and event/entertainment and recreation space in a significant effect that brings new residents and economic activity to the area. A large mixed-use development would catalyze the neighborhood and provide context for the redevelopment of the MIRA plant just north of the site.



Mixed-Use Activity Center. Credit: WXY Studio

This development scenario would have high community benefits and positive economic and environmental justice impacts, adding to Hartford'. However, a mixed-use redevelopment on 200 acres is not financially feasible in the Hartford market and would have a high up-front cost for environmental remediation and infrastructure.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, AND AVIATION TECHNOLOGY HUB

An advanced manufacturing, R&D, and aviation hub would close the airport for recreational aviation but would retain the key use of the site while promoting innovation and economic development in Hartford. The site could be used for drone and aviation research, drawing on Hartford's long history of aviation manufacturing, and would continue using its FAA designation as an airfield. The site could also be designed to provide public access to the Connecticut River, and compatible industrial uses could be developed on portions of the site. The market for an advanced manufacturing, R&D, and aviation technology hub is speculative, and research positions may not employ large numbers of nearby working-class communities. Large portions of the site would also remain relatively underutilized.



Advanced Manufacturing, R&D, and Aviation Technology Hub Scenario. Credit: WXY Studio

CONNECTICUT STATEWIDE AIRPORT SYSTEM PLAN [2016]

CONNECTICUT AIRPORT AUTHORITY

The Connecticut Airport Authority produced this plan to examine aviation infrastructure, activity, and trends statewide to influence resources and policy. The objective of the plan is to identify and address issues related to aviation's impact on the statewide economy.



KEY FINDINGS

- The plan forecasts modest growth in airport operations, passenger enplanements, and based aircraft between 2015 and 2035.
- Statewide system needs to include increased runway lengths, improved access, and high-end general aviation hangar facilities. Other issues facing airports across the state include obstruction clearance, compliance with FAA standards, streamlining environmental permitting, zoning, and governance/cost structures.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on high-end support at Brainard and other general aviation airports, and look for ways to enhance and diversify revenue.
- Continue working to meet FAA standards and ideal runway length.
- Support developing and expanding economic incentive zones near airports and establish airport land use compatibility guidelines.
- Pursue runway extensions so runways have at least 5,000 feet of takeoff length.
- Prepare hangar and service development areas.

CONNECTICUT AIRPORT AUTHORITY STRATEGIC PLAN [2016]

CONNECTICUT AIRPORT AUTHORITY

The 2016 strategic plan is a five-year plan that guides the direction of the Connecticut Airport Authority. The plan identified a few key observations and challenges:

- Capacity and passenger levels have grown at Bradley, mirroring economic improvements after the Great Recession. Growing air service helps attract new businesses to the region, and increasing service creates a positive cycle where more service allows for reducing costs to airlines.
- Airport infrastructure is in good condition, but addressing outstanding needs requires substantial capital investment.
- Funding from state and federal sources can be inconsistent or remain flat yearly. State budgets play a particular role in the operation of Brainard and the other General Aviation airports.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

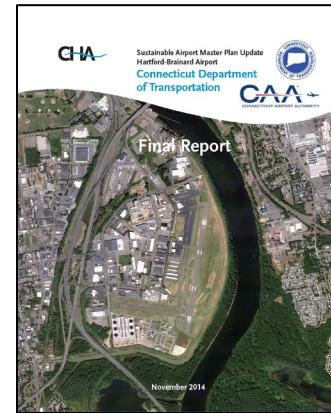
- Streamline and improve the home-to-plane experience. Invest in modern facilities, and provide amenities and services to meet customer expectations.
- Achieve operating self-sufficiency for General Aviation airports, and achieve and maintain the lowest cost per enplanement among regional competitors.
- Encourage a favorable statutory and regulatory environment for better-operating conditions.
- Increase the value generated by CAA's airports. Enhance the Authority's economic contribution, implement airport sustainability initiatives, and increase value recognition to customers, neighbors, and other stakeholders.

HARTFORD-BRAINARD AIRPORT MASTER PLAN UPDATE [2014]

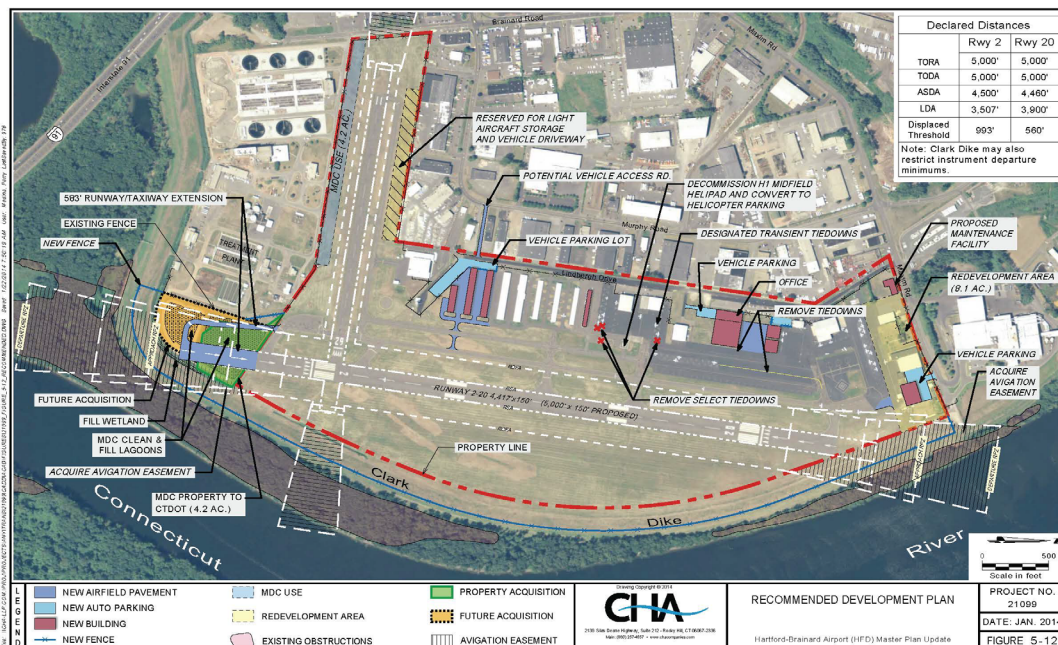
CONNECTICUT AIRPORT AUTHORITY

The Master Plan Update studied five development alternatives to improve Brainard Airport. The selected alternative included:

- Improve Runway 2 through a small land swap between Brainard Airport and the MCD wastewater treatment plant south of the airport.
- Extend the runway slightly and fill portions of the MCD wastewater treatment lagoons.
- Create a new vehicle access road and new hangars along Lindbergh Drive.
- Create a new maintenance facility for airport operations staff, and redevelop buildings along Maxim Road as their useful life expires or as market conditions permit.
- This alternative would meet FAA design standards; the property needs of Brainard Airport have a minimal environmental impact with a moderate fiscal cost.



Alternatives that were not chosen included making no changes to the airport, shortening or closing runways, rotating a runway, and making any alterations to the Clark Dike. Modifications to the Dike were infeasible due to environmental impacts, very high costs, and a high level of coordination needed between the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the City.



Recommended Development Plan. Credit: CAA

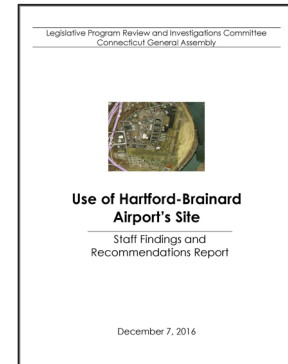
USE OF HARTFORD-BRAINARD AIRPORT SITE [2016]

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE (PRI)

The PRI examined the Brainard Airport to determine whether the airport use was the best for the site.

KEY FINDINGS

- The airport benefits the local, regional, and state economy; the estimated contribution to the state is \$43 million (2016 dollars). Large employers in the region stated that closing the airport would make Hartford a less attractive place for business, and other companies depend on the airport for business operations.
- The airport costs the City of Hartford a substantial amount of lost tax revenue.
- Closing the airport would be difficult and costly. The quickest process for closing the airport is applying for closure approval from the FAA, but success is unlikely.
- Redevelopment of the site would be costly and require a large public subsidy. The most significant costs would be closing the airport, remediating the site, and constructing new support infrastructure. Mixed-use development appears infeasible; warehousing and distribution would be the most likely scenario, but those are not high-paying jobs.



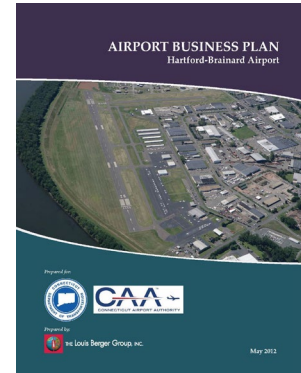
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue operating the site as an airport.
- Maximize the airport's value. Support the CAA's business plans, and encourage the state to increase the payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) made to Hartford.
- Expand the aviation mechanic school and recruit local students.
- The City of Hartford should request an Airport Development Zone for the site.

HARTFORD-BRAINARD AIRPORT BUSINESS PLAN [2012]

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTICUT AIRPORT AUTHORITY

The objective of the Airport Business Plan was to identify opportunities for economic development and operational improvements to optimize the airport for the community it serves. The plan also seeks to improve the airport's financial performance and long-term viability as an aviation facility and makes recommendations for the airport facility and administrative processes.

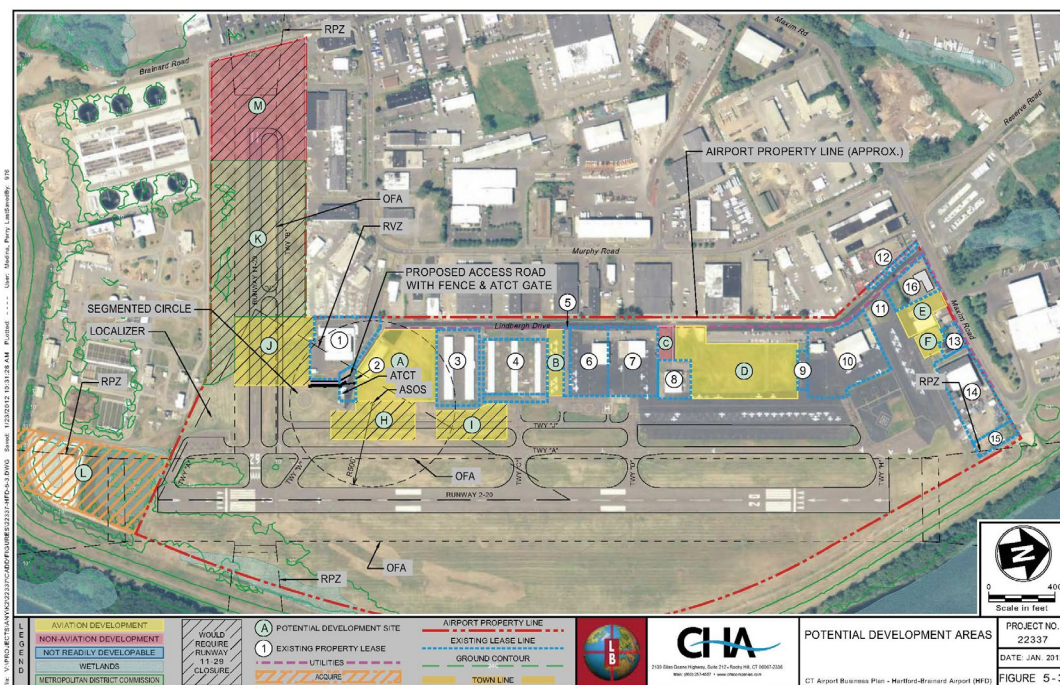


KEY FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pursue development on six parcels within the airport.
- Solicit a request for proposals (RFP) for an additional fixed base operation (FBO).
- Continue active local marketing and outreach.

KEY ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Complete transition of airports from the Connecticut Department of Transportation to the Connecticut Airport Authority.
- Improve and shorten the lease development process.
- Coordinate state economic development initiatives to include airport development zones, promote potential development sites, and actively pursue prospective users and tenants.



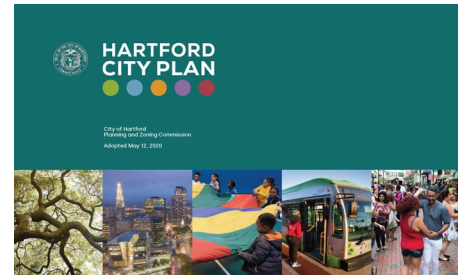
Potential Development Areas. Credit: ConnDOT and CAA

CITY OF HARTFORD PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT 2035 PLAN [2020]

CITY OF HARTFORD

Key recommendations that pertain to Brainard Airport include:

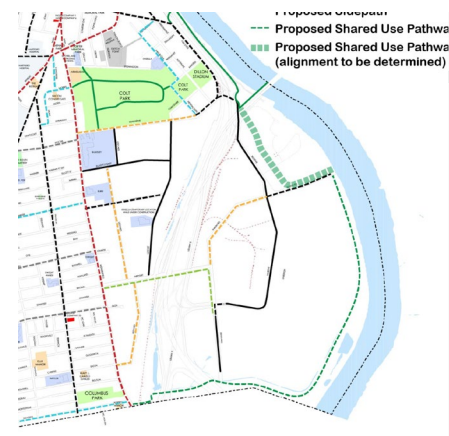
- Hartford strives to reconnect the City to the Connecticut River.
- The South Meadows area is shown as one of the ten areas planned for transformative projects.
- The plan seeks to revitalize the Brainard Airport and Regional Market sites with their highest and best uses while connecting people to the river with trails and infrastructure improvements.



CITY OF HARTFORD BICYCLE MASTER PLAN [2019]

CITY OF HARTFORD

- Plan proposes a shared-use pathway along the Connecticut River towpath around the Brainard Airport site.
- The proposed riverfront shared-use path would connect to a proposed route around the MIRA Plant, linking to Riverfront Recapture to the north and proposed bicycle lanes on Wethersfield Avenue west of the airport.
- Bicycle lanes currently exist on portions of Bainard Avenue and Murphy Road near the airport. The plan calls for new sidepaths and buffered bike lanes on Maxim Road and Airport Road that would connect to the existing and planned bicycle facilities.



Proposed Bicycle Facilities. Credit: City of Hartford

CONNECTICUT REGIONAL MARKET REPORT [2022]

CAPITAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- The Capital Regional Development Authority proposes reimagining the existing Regional Market north of Brainard Airport for a new aggregation, distribution, and storage facility. The proposal would retain the existing Fresh Point distribution center and restaurant as separate facilities.
- In addition to aggregation, distribution, and storage space, the new market would have new produce and meat processing space.
- The plan notes the site's access to I-91 and I-84 as critical assets. The nearby industrial uses make it an ideal location for truck and space-intensive distribution and production uses.

Regional Market Redevelopment. Credit: Capital Regional Development Authority

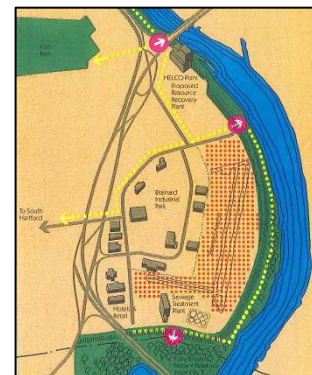
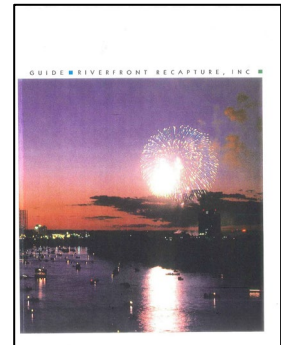


RIVERFRONT GUIDE [1982]

RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE, INC.

The Riverfront Guide is a foundational plan for how the City of Hartford and East Hartford relate to the Connecticut River. Before 1982 the river was primarily out of reach for urban residents, but the plan's implementation has created a significant waterfront park that has catalyzed commercial and community development.

- The plan proposed a continuous riverfront walkway from the North Meadows of Hartford south into northern Wethersfield.
- The South Meadows was seen as the final 'action area' with riverfront access points north of Brainard Airport on Maxim Road and south of the MDC plant on Brainard Road.
- The plan identified the Brainard site as a potential redevelopment area and identified its potential as a new employment center.



Plan for the South Meadows.
Credit: Riverfront Recapture