



Department of Community Development and Economic Development Community Engagement Strategy

Prepared for:

Department of Community Development and Economic Development

Alexandra Daum, Deputy Commissioner

Binu Chandy, Deputy Director, Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development

Prepared by:

BFJ Planning

Frank Fish, FAICP, Principal;

Thomas Madden, AICP, Associate Principal

Taylor Young, Senior Associate

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BFJ Planning

1. Introduction

Public Act No. 22-118, Section 426, mandates the CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) on behalf of the state to assess the benefits and opportunity costs to the City of Hartford and the State of Connecticut of the current and alternative uses of the Hartford-Brainard Airport property. The state must do so in a way that is consistent with and supports the bill's stated goals of promoting the health, welfare, and safety of people in Connecticut; increasing their quality of life; boosting tourism; stimulating the economy, and enhancing people's ability to enjoy the Connecticut river.

I. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The purpose of this Community Engagement Strategy (CES) is to detail how the BFJ Planning consultant team will inform and seek input from all stakeholders in the community.

This includes, but is not limited to, State government, key employers and institutions, residents, business owners, the city of Hartford, the town of East Hartford, the town of Wethersfield and regional economic development groups, stakeholder groups and organizations, and the general public. The objective will be to ensure that all stakeholders have ample opportunity to know and understand the Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment process and its intended outcomes; to comment on the process and plan as it moves along; to feel their concerns and ideas have been heard; and to contribute to building a consensus about the vision for the Airport and potential redevelopment scenarios that will provide the highest and best use for the site.

BFJ Planning team is working with Wilson Camelo from Camelo Communications (MBE) to implement a CES that addresses the needs of all stakeholders near or impacted by airport operations. The Strategy is built on the following four principles:

- *The public shall have adequate access to information:* A record of all public outreach events and other interim deliverables will be kept and placed in available locations, including the BFJ Planning project website.
- *The public shall have clarity in the information presented:* Technical information and planning concepts will be presented in terms that are understandable to the public, and technical jargon and industry lingo will be avoided.
- *The public shall be able to engage and comment on the plan development as it progresses with a responsive and timely Project Team:* The public will receive sufficient notice of all public meetings to be held at a time and place that is convenient and comfortable. Ample time to review project-related materials will also be provided. All general questions and inquiries will be answered promptly in a manner approved by DECD.

- *The public shall be able to participate in a well-coordinated process:* Good coordination, communication, and collaboration among all concerned entities are critical to providing the public with the most current and correct information and the overall success of the study.

The BFJ Planning Team is committed to a planning process based on meaningful citizen input guided collaboratively by professional planners. Our experience has shown that early and consistent involvement of the community—concerned residents and business owners, civic leaders, elected and appointed officials, and municipal staff—inevitably enriches the final plan’s study process and content. BFJ Planning Team will conduct targeted focus group meetings, public meetings, and/or community meetings held by local organizations, organize public surveys, and design charrettes to gather information and discuss specific topics of concern with residents, business owners, and community groups. This includes creating strong links to the following: groups covered under Title 6/Environmental Justice Law (i.e., African-American, Hispanic-American, and low-income population); those with Limited English Proficiency; and other groups who rarely participate.

With well-designed, interactive outreach and coordination with State government, key employers and institutions, residents, business owners, the city of Hartford, the town of East Hartford, the town of Wethersfield and regional economic development groups, stakeholder groups and organizations, and the general public, we will gain a clear understanding of the varying and sometimes differing perspectives about Hartford-Brainard Airports’ future. Meaningful public participation doesn’t simply happen; it must be carefully considered and planned to be most effective and efficient. With this in mind, the following outlines a plan for fully involving the community in updating the Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study. The Community Engagement Strategy will be implemented by the BFJ Planning team and through the cooperation of all stakeholders.

II. PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

The Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study will involve five public meetings/workshops to provide ample opportunity for members of the public to be informed of the process and provide meaningful input. The BFJ Planning team plans to host joint public meetings/workshops to meet the FAA requirements and work through the four development scenarios required as part of Public Act No. 22-118, Section 426. We have tentatively planned for the public meetings to be in February, April, May, July, and August. We are working with Camelo Communications to secure the meeting sites used for their visioning process.

Public Workshop #1: This opening public workshop will be held in February. This meeting will introduce the project and begin the participatory process, which will build a foundation of community engagement that will carry through the project’s duration. For this introductory meeting, a Town Hall format will be used. The meeting will begin with a formal presentation where the consultants explain the study’s purpose, background, timeline, and goals. The team will also present a summary of the prior studies, plans, and initial observations of existing conditions. The presentation will also explain the project’s public participation process and further involvement opportunities. After the formal presentation, the

consultants will facilitate an informal question-and-answer session in which participants can discuss issues of concern regarding current operations and future development of the airport.

Public Workshops #2-4: The workshops will be the same format, each beginning with a formal presentation, during which we will review the study's progress and work completed to date. We will also discuss initial findings on existing conditions, issues, and opportunities for the Study Area. Following the presentation and a short refreshment break, participants will engage in small roundtable discussion sessions related to specific topics. A representative from each table will then report their findings to the group. This format is effective in helping people feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and ideas while also allowing everyone in the room to hear what is discussed in the smaller groups. After the roundtable discussion report-backs, we will open the discussion to a traditional City hall format, where participants can ask questions or comment about any topic.

The BFJ Planning Team will hold the five workshops/meetings at the Metzner Early Childcare Center. BFJ will facilitate each workshop and provide the tools necessary for a successful engagement (large-scale maps, notepads, markers, etc.). We will also provide a summary report for each workshop, documenting the presentation and all comments received from attendees. The reports will include photographs of the meeting and any graphic materials that were presented and can be posted on the Hartford Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study website as appropriate. The three workshops will follow the schedule below:

Public Workshop #2: South End – Metzner Early Childcare Center
April 13, 2023
Focus: Visioning of the site and surrounding area.

Public Workshop #3: South End – Metzner Early Childcare Center
May 18, 2023
Focus: Analysis considerations from the market scan and environmental reports and development of options with the public.

Public Workshop #4: South End – Metzner Early Childcare Center
July 13, 2023
Focus: Presentation and comment on development options and exploration of the regulatory framework.

Public Workshop #5: This workshop, held on August 10, 2023, will present the initial findings of the Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study to the public. As with the opening workshop, this session will be in a Town Hall format. We will present key elements of the Draft Plan and its findings and then facilitate an informal question-and-answer session. This will allow participants to comment or ask questions about specific Plan components in a relatively relaxed atmosphere and help the consultant team and DECD identifies any needed revisions.

BFJ will facilitate each workshop and provide the tools necessary for a successful engagement (large-scale maps, notepads, markers, etc.). We will also provide a summary report for each workshop, documenting the presentation and all comments received from attendees. The reports will include photographs of the meeting and any presented graphic materials and can be posted on the Study's website as appropriate.

III. Publicity

To adequately publicize these workshops and ensure a strong level of participation from the community, we will employ various strategies in addition to standard press releases, as detailed below.

1. Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study Website

The BFJ Planning team will create a Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study website, which will include information on meetings and public workshops and all draft documents as the DECD's Steering Committee approves them for release to the public. BFJ Planning team will provide all documents to the DECD before posting on this website. The website will work with the virtual engagement tool [Social Pinpoint](#) for Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study. This tool provides a graphically engaging, user-friendly toolkit that allows participants to share ideas, express concerns, and respond to recommendations, enabling members of the public to contribute ideas and comments about an array of issues.

2. Press Releases Distributed to Local News Outlets

We will work with Wilson Camelo Communications to publicize all public workshops and other significant events in local English and Spanish newspapers.

3. E-blast Alerts

We will work with Wilson Camelo Communications and the city of Hartford, the town of East Hartford, and the town of Wethersfield to compile an email list of stakeholders and participants in the Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study Update process. The email list will include residents, elected officials, community organizations, regional groups, relevant State agencies, business owners, property owners, developers, and realtors. This list will benefit the overall outreach effort as we reach out to individual stakeholders and work to publicize major public events. We suggest that emailing be used rather than bulk mailings, given the cost and time required for traditional bulk mailings. E-blasts can be managed using a web-based bulk mailing service (e.g., Mailchimp or Constant Contact) so that all mailings can be tracked.

4. Social Media

Suppose there are existing social media outlets in Hartford (e.g., Facebook groups). In that case, we can post updates and meeting notifications on these pages and other social media websites, as appropriate, that we discover through our public outreach effort.

5. Municipal Boards and Commission Announcements

We will work with City staff and the Steering Committee to include updates and meeting notifications in announcements at meetings of City boards and commissions (e.g., City Board, Planning Board, etc.)

6. Flyers

In preparation for public workshops and other key public events, we will prepare a series of flyers that can be posted at the public library, schools, and any other locations the Steering Committee determines are appropriate. Flyers will also be distributed as PDF files to members of the Steering Committee for distribution to their professional and social networks.

7. Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice communities feature high concentrations of low-income and/or minority populations. The following principles will be adopted to support the involvement of local environmental justice communities in Hartford:

- Key community leaders and groups will be contacted to increase public notification of events and participation of constituent communities.
- Documents, notices, and meetings will be concise, free of jargon, and readily available to the public.
- All public events will be scheduled at convenient and accessible locations and times.

BFJ will work with Wilson Camelo Communications to distribute flyers at key public events, such as neighborhood association meetings, Church and recreation events.

IV. Coordination with the State Legislature

BFJ understands the importance of involving the Connecticut State Legislature throughout the Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study Update process, as the members of the Senate and House will ultimately decide the future of the Airport based on the final redevelopment report. The members will receive invitations to attend and participate in all public meetings. We also propose scheduling periodic briefings with these members to provide updates on the process.

V. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement will be undertaken through various strategies to reach as many residents, businesses, and community groups impacted by the Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study Update as possible. BFJ will conduct our research and coordinate with City staff and the Steering Committee to develop an extensive list of stakeholder organizations, including contact information, to assist in outreach. Our objective is to involve all key stakeholders to ensure that the Hartford-Brainard Airport Redevelopment Study reflects broad input, consensus on recommendations, and local commitment. Attached to this Community Engagement Strategy is a preliminary list of community organizations and local businesses that will be included in the stakeholder engagement process.

VI. Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the public meetings described above, the BFJ Project Team and subject matter experts will conduct stakeholder interviews to gather input from local stakeholders on community engagement, real estate market issues, and project ideas and details. Pre-engagement interviews will be scheduled early in the process (February – April) and are an opportunity to develop constructive stakeholder relationships and identify potential issues early in the process. Pre-engagement interviews will ask about the stakeholder's familiarity with Hartford Brainard Airport, their thoughts on issues and opportunities, and what they think are the best ways to reach members of the surrounding community. Additional stakeholder interviews will continue throughout the study process, and discussions focused on real estate issues, project ideas, and details will be scheduled in March–May.

II. STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Given the location of Hartford Brainard Airport, there are many stakeholders, all of whom have a vested interest in its future. For this project, the range of project stakeholders has been organized relative to their role in decision-making during the project process. They will include the following:

1. Key Local Stakeholder Groups

Key local stakeholders may have the strongest vested interest in the plan's outcomes and may be most directly affected. They may include, but are not limited to, representatives of local and regional government and quasi-governmental organizations; business advocacy groups; major employers; community and culture organizations; neighborhood residents; local business owners; and special interest groups. These stakeholders will be contacted to gain additional insight into potential project feasibility. Their input to the planning process will be solicited to help ensure and improve outreach to the balance of the community, foster broad support for project ideas, and facilitate ease of project implementation. The BFJ project team may meet with key stakeholders in small interviews or via conference calls as the project progresses. These targeted stakeholder meetings will inform the study process on specific focus topics.

2. General Public

The general public is also a stakeholder in this process. Virtual and in-person meetings will be recorded, and the recordings will be available online for members of the public to watch later. When meetings are held in person, members of the public will be invited to attend, but all in-person meetings will include a virtual component. The general public will also be encouraged to participate through public engagement events and virtual engagement tools. We will also engage with the general public through emails on the project mailing list, social media, and through the project website. The project website will include meeting materials and summaries, public outreach event flyers, and other project-related materials and information.

3. Meeting Circumstances Due to COVID-19

The project team will monitor COVID-19 conditions in Hartford and hold meetings virtually or in person as appropriate. Virtual meetings will allow stakeholders to participate in real time. Additionally, some materials will be available on-demand, so stakeholders can view materials and respond to questions or provide comments at their convenience. All public events that take place in person will be planned using current COVID-19 safety guidance and will include a virtual component for members of the public who cannot attend the meeting.

III. PROCESS TO IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGY

A Public Engagement Task Leader (Wilson Camelo, Camelo Communications, and Taylor Young of BFJ Planning) will be the lead point person for the management and implementation of the COS activities, working in coordination with the BFJ Project Team. The public outreach approach will be comprehensive, reaching out to a broad range of stakeholder groups and audiences. Although this Plan outlines a program of work tasks and outreach tools, the public involvement approach will also be flexible to adjust as the project advances to meet needs identified “on the ground.” After each meeting and set of public outreach efforts, the results of the outreach will be evaluated (who attended, whom we didn’t reach, and any comments received) to identify ways of improving the outreach (finding other methods to reach more people; especially those that are not participating).

Meetings will be documented in the form of meeting summaries that will be reviewed by the Project Team and saved for the record. Public comments will be reviewed, responded to, and kept in a comment log that the Project Team will regularly check to incorporate public input into the planning process as it moves forward.

APPENDIX A: KEY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Other Key Local Stakeholders

- Federal, State, and Local Elected Officials including, but not limited to:
 - Senator Murphy and Blumenthal’s Office
 - Congressman John B. Larson (East Hartford)
 - State Revenue, Finance, and Bonding committee
 - Connecticut Senate District 1,2,3,4 and 9
 - Connecticut Legislative District 1,3,4,5,6,7,10,11,28, 29, 31

- City of Hartford Agencies including, but not limited to:
 - Hartford City Manager’s Office
 - Hart City Council
 - Hartford Street Department
 - Hartford Department of Engineering
 - Hartford Department of Parks and Recreation
 - Hartford Police Department
 - Hartford Fire Department
 - Hartford Department of Municipal Light
 - Hartford Department of Water

- Quasi-governmental, Nonprofit Agencies and Organizations, including but not limited to:
 - Arts, Cultural, and Tourism Organizations
 - School District
 - NAACP

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC OUTREACH SCHEDULE

A preliminary schedule of public outreach meetings is located below. Meeting dates and times will be finalized based on input from LPC.

Study Meetings:

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