

BRANTFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

BRANTFORD MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

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The Brantford Municipal Airport is a public aerodrome that commenced operations at its present location in 1940 as a flight training school and a Royal Canadian Air Force British Commonwealth Air Training Plan airfield.

The Airport is owned by the City of Brantford but is situated in the County of Brant. As owner, the City is responsible for the maintenance, servicing, and leasing of airport lands and buildings as well as airport operations. Day-to-day management of the Airport operations is undertaken by the Brantford Flying Club under contract by the City.

The Airport provides many benefits to the community including general aviation (private and corporate travel, plane storage, parts, and maintenance), flight training through the Brantford Flying Club, a charter for the W. Ross McDonald School, Hope Air medical transport, pipeline maintenance, utility inspections, animal tracking, filming and airshows. The Airport is also important to the operation of existing aviation related businesses and jobs in the County of Brant.

As part of the broader City of Brantford Economic Development Strategy, a visioning process was undertaken regarding the Airport, to assess how to best utilize and leverage this asset. Specific to the Airport, 14 one-on-one interviews were completed, a visioning session was held with the Airport Board, and the Airport theme was incorporated into the larger Working Session where 50 participants provided input. Through these consultations a picture of the current strengths, challenges, opportunities, aspirations, and expected results was derived, mission and vision statements created, and goals alongside attainable actions drafted. These assessments are presented within this document.

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SCOAR®

Similar to the broader Brantford Economic Development SCOAR, a comprehensive Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SCOAR®)¹ was compiled for the Brantford Municipal Airport. The SCOAR® reflects direct input from key community stakeholders, gained through interviews, a focus group, and working session. This input helped in the assessment and formulation of recommendations for the Airport.

Strengths.

- Culture – people like using the Airport because of its welcoming culture.
- Situated close to two business parks and Highway 403.
- Good proximity to larger airports including Hamilton, Toronto, and Buffalo.
- Weather, wind and six usable runway options provide a valuable site for flight training.
- Aircraft can fly in from international locations (i.e., United States).
- Brantford Flying Club’s history at Airport and strong customer service.
- Good value with reasonable fees for tie downs, fuel and maintenance costs.
- Ready access to airplane parts and maintenance.
- Lots of land that provides room for expansion.
- Uncontrolled airport provides more relaxed environment for flight training.

Challenges.

- Current funding model is unsustainable with regard to future capital requirements.
- Aging infrastructure (runways, lighting, accessibility) and competing demands for budgetary funding.
- Lack of a terminal building.
- Uncontrolled airport.

¹ A SWOT analysis has a “50%” focus on “negative” aspects of analysis. While a SOAR analysis emphasizes the positive, it fails to address barriers or challenges to economic growth that every community faces. Our SCOAR® Analysis provides greater balance than either SWOT or SOAR analysis.

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- Length of runway is a barrier to some types of aircraft – need a 1,000-foot extension to get to the next tier of aircraft.
- Facilities are crowded and there is a waiting list for hangars.
- Perception from the community that the airport only benefits private pilots.
- On-site services lacking including card lock fuel and customs timing.
- Lack of serviced land for future growth.
- Non-aviation use of lands such as municipal document storage.

Opportunities.

- Secure partners to work together to develop a shared vision regarding the future of the Airport.
- Develop an Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub.
- Changes occurring in general aviation at neighbouring airports may present opportunities for Brantford to offer services to a wider market.
- Develop partnerships for aviation training programs with local post-secondary institutions.
- Become a film location that provides further revenue to support the Airport.
- Create more public awareness of the Airport and its benefits.

Aspirations.

The Brantford Municipal Airport will:

- Be recognized as the premier aviation hub in Ontario for small aircraft services and corporate access.
- Become a leading flight centre in Ontario for commercial flight training.
- Provide economic and social benefits to the Brantford community through the provision of aviation services and the development of an Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub.

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Results.

- A Joint Venture is established between the City of Brantford and partners that facilitates the future development and operation of the Airport and surrounding employment lands.
- Higher utilization of the Airport contributing to economic growth and jobs is realized.
- Brantford Municipal Airport becomes a leading commercial flight training facility that helps address the global pilot shortage.
- Improved infrastructure including a new terminal building, and expanded hangar availability is developed.
- An awareness campaign for the Airport is generating community and Council support for the long-term operation of the Airport.

Vision and Mission

Vision:

To be recognized as the premier destination in Ontario for small aircraft services, amenities, and flight training.

Mission:

The Brantford Municipal Airport provides private, corporate and emergency service users with a one-stop hub for small aircraft aviation services, amenities and flight training.

Core Values:

- Ensuring the safety and security of our employees and customers.
- Dedicated to responsibly overseeing the management of the Brantford Municipal Airport to promote environmental and community well-being as well as economic growth.

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Recommended Goals and Actions to Fulfill Long-Term Vision

The consultative process throughout this project outlined the current status of the Brantford Municipal Airport and highlighted opportunities that exist to build upon current strengths and address perceived weaknesses. Building off this work, the aim of the four goals listed below is to outline what is needed to fulfill the long-term vision of the Airport and turn current opportunities into future successes.

Goal 1: Explore potential partnerships to develop a shared vision and business model for an Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub.

Why is this important?

The major issue facing the Airport is its funding model. While current operations generate a surplus that contributes to capital costs, it is insufficient to address long-term needs. Because the Airport is situated in the County of Brant, taxes and development charges are paid to the County, rather than being reinvested in the Airport. Looking to the future, Brantford's challenge is to determine an appropriate business model that will provide long-term sustainability of the Airport with renewed investment in its aging infrastructure and opportunities for growth that support economic development and community benefit.

The development of an Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub would provide a comprehensive approach to achieve full utilization of the Airport. A Joint Venture partnership would involve the development of a shared vision and business model which could open the door for new investment and employment. The Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub could be positioned as a one-stop destination for aviation services, complementing the existing maintenance and parts suppliers with businesses such as paint, propeller and engine shops, and interiors. With the growth in larger airports such as Hamilton and Waterloo, general aviation is being pushed out, providing an opportunity for a stable base of operation for services locally. As well, the Airport and adjacent lands could be developed for corporate uses, charters, hangars and warehouse space.

The 2016 Boundary Adjustment Agreement between the Corporation of the City of Brantford and the Corporation of the County of Brant includes a Joint Venture Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the employment lands in Cainsville and the Airport, with a view to developing the lands to their fullest potential. The MOU includes an undertaking by the City and County to develop a Feasibility Study as part of its exploration of joint venture opportunities regarding the Airport area. At the time of its execution, the proposed Feasibility Study signalled an interest by the City and County to work together on the development of the Airport to achieve its full potential. The important aspect to note is partnership – the City

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should be exploring partnership opportunities which could be public, private or some combination.

To explore potential partnerships regarding the development of an Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub, the following actions could be undertaken:

1. Develop a pitch package to initiate discussions with potential partners regarding a Joint Venture development of an Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub.
2. Identify the land, the land uses and ownership of the land adjacent to the Airport that would comprise the Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub.
3. Identify the major servicing that would be required to develop the Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub.
4. Develop a business plan, independently or through a partnership, for the Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub that would service small aircraft.

Note: Following Goal 1, all subsequent Goals and related Actions may change depending on the outcome of the possible partnerships and related discussions.

Goal 2: Partner with local institutions and flight training schools to deliver aviation training programs at the Brantford Municipal Airport.

Why is this important?

The Airport's roots date back to 1940 when the facility was constructed by the federal government for air force flight training. Today, flight training remains a major service provided at the Airport, through the Brantford Flying Club. With the current significant global pilot shortage anticipated to last for many years, the need for expanded flight training has become even more pronounced. Recent trends have witnessed partnerships between municipal airports and post-secondary institutions such as Seneca Polytechnic/Peterborough (Honours Bachelor of Aviation Technology) and Mount Royal University/Calgary (2-Year Aviation Diploma) where commercial programming is delivered at the respective airports. These programs complement existing private flight instruction available at the airports.

The City of Brantford has an opportunity to explore potential partnerships with community colleges which deliver commercial aviation training programs. That may include the potential for the construction of a combined flight school and terminal building at the Airport which would provide not only a training facility, but a new terminal facility that attracts corporate businesses. Other institutions have been successful in securing federal funding to develop flight training facilities at local airports.

In addition to flight training, a partnership with colleges that deliver aircraft mechanics training programs could be explored. This would provide a pipeline of qualified individuals to support

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the aircraft maintenance needs and help build the reputation of the Airport as a one-stop hub for general aviation needs.

Actions that could be taken to develop partnerships for aviation training include:

1. Initiate discussions with Ontario colleges to explore a potential partnership with the City of Brantford for the delivery of commercial aviation training programs at the Brantford Municipal Airport.
2. Research federal funding sources for aviation training facilities as well as institutional partnership models at other airports.

Goal 3: Grow existing and attract new revenue sources.

Why is this important?

The development of a business plan for an Aviation Business Park/Aviation Hub will take time to complete. In the interim, there are opportunities to increase revenue at the Airport. Some options could be considered “low hanging fruit” such as hangar leases for which there is currently a waiting list, or commercial filming given the success to date in attracting film shoots such as the TV series Mayday. Other options have a direct community benefit such as the use of the Airport site for community events. In addition to being a revenue generator, a multi-community benefit could be obtained by attracting emergency services such as Air Ambulance to locate on site.

Actions to grow existing and attract new revenue sources include:

1. Undertake a cost-benefit analysis to determine preferred options for revenue generation.
2. Review the fee structure for services provided with consideration of supply, demand, price elasticity, and competitive rates at other similar sized airports in Ontario.
3. Track demand and continue to construct new hangars or lease land, if required, for private sector construction, to address the demand for private and business-related storage.
4. Assess the infrastructure required to permit 24-hour fueling at the airport with card locks and update the current fueling contract with Brantford Flying Club.
5. Be proactive in seeking new commercial filming opportunities that would provide direct revenue to the Airport as well as indirect spending throughout the community.
6. Market the Airport site for community events where it is feasible for buildings and lands to be used for rentals.

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7. Research opportunities to attract emergency service organizations to locate at the Airport.

Goal 4: Build public awareness of the Airport.

Why is this important?

A public engagement survey was undertaken to help inform the City of Brantford 2023 Budget Priorities. A significant number of respondents voiced opposition to the Airport. Unless the negative perception of the Airport is changed, it is unlikely to receive public support for continued investment.

In 2023, as part of the visioning process for the Airport, stakeholder interviews, a focus group and working session were conducted. A common comment from these meetings was that many members of the public were unaware of the services provided at the Airport. Some people interviewed stated that there is a misconception that the Airport services only a few private plane owners. Building awareness of the Airport can provide the “what’s in it for me” messaging that demonstrates its benefit to residents and businesses in Brantford and throughout neighbouring communities.

Actions to market the Airport as a regional brand include:

1. Conduct a public awareness campaign and improve signage to inform residents of the Airport benefits.
2. Link the historical aspects of the Airport to other tourism related assets.
3. Host public outreach events such as a “Doors Open” event and airshows to bring people to the Airport.
4. Host class trips to the Airport.
5. Involve the Chamber of Commerce to communicate opportunities for local companies to make use of the Airport (i.e., transportation for goods and employees).