

The Historic Columbia Airport / Museum

The goal of this project is to build at no cost to the local, county, state or Federal government a, self-sufficient, state of the art, general aviation airport ,“The Historic Columbia Airport / Museum,” (hereinafter referred to as the airport). The location of the airport will be on the original site of the deactivated general aviation airport known as the “Columbia Air Center” located in Croom, Maryland.

The Columbia Air center was the first Black¹ owned and operated licensed airport in the United States of America. The site has unquestionable county, state, and national historical significance. The Columbia Air Center consisted of a 450 acre potato field leased from Rebecca Fisher for fifty dollars (\$50.00) a month. The first flight took place February 22, 1941.² Mr. John W. Greene, Jr., managed the Columbia Air Center, received pilot certificate number 10658, September 15, 1939, at Boston, Massachusetts. He was the only African-American to hold both a pilot license and an aircraft mechanic license. He was the first African-American awarded the Transport Pilot rating. Today that rating is called an “Airline Transport Pilot License” that is held by pilots flying for commercial airlines.³ During World War II the Defense Department initiated a program called the “Civilian Pilot Training Program” (CPT program) to meet the military’s need for pilots. Three Black universities were involved in the CPT program, Howard University, Hampton Institute (Hampton University) and West Virginia State. Howard University students did their flight training at the Columbia Air Center.⁴ The Columbia Air Center was the site for so many contributions by Black aviators to aviation that it would not be prudent to attempt to discuss them all in this document. The accomplishments and history of the Columbia Air Center will be preserved in the airport museum. The airport may have continued to flourish if the owner of the land had not died or if her heirs had not refused to renew the airport lease.

The airport project objectives are as follows:

1. Obtain permission (“Letter of Intent” or “Memorandum of Understanding”) from the owner of the land (The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission) to authorize, in writing, the use of the land for the specific purpose to operate a general aviation airport with all the rights and privileges required for such purpose. “The Letter of Intent” will include the legal description of the site, its boundaries, and its mailing address. Title to the site

¹ The term “Black” in this document is synonymous with “African American,” “Negro,” and “Colored.”

² See “Columbia Air Center, Croom, Maryland © Clayton Davis, Page 2.

³ See “Columbia Air Center, Croom, Maryland @ Clayton Davis, Page 4.

⁴ See “Columbia Air Center, Croom, Maryland @ Clayton Davis, Page 4.

stays with The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. However, the airport assumes all liability associated with the airport once the project is approved and the land is under the control of the airport.

2. Upon receipt of the ruling letter dated November 9, 2018 from the Internal Revenue Service recognizing the airport as exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code we are ready to began some of the activities the airport will need to initiate, which includes but are not limited to the following; fund raising, conduct geological surveys, environmental impact study, prepare the airport layout plan, conduct a detailed on site inspection of the land to determine the cost of site preparation, construction, insurance, ingress, egress, maintenance and security .
3. Present the airport business plan and all associated documents to the appropriate government officials for their approval.
4. Obtain the appropriate licenses, permits, and regulatory compliance documents.
5. Construct a state of the art, aesthetically compatible, environmentally friendly, self-sustaining general aviation airport.

The airport cannot start fund raising, or obtain meaningful estimates on construction costs until it has secured the land by actual possession or by establishing a date agreed upon by the owner (Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission).

A letter of intent to shift control of the site with all accompanying liability for the land to the airport on a date certain in the future with the right to enter upon the land to conduct all necessary site surveys, inspections, and tests required for site preparation is critical to the success of this project. The organization cannot do anything until it receives the authority from the owner of the land to enter upon the land to conduct airport related matters.

Upon completion of the project the airport will request permission from the owner to register the site as a state and Federal historical site. The site will be included in the State and Federal publications and web pages of historical sites to visit.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Form 7480 "Notice of Landing Area Proposal" was submitted in March 2014 to the Federal Aviation Administration for a "Final Determination" regarding the use of the airspace over the historic Columbia Air Center site for general aviation purposes as they would relate to the National Air Space (NAS). A copy of the FAA Form 7480 "Notice of Landing Area Proposal" was also sent to the Maryland Aviation Administration.

The FAA issued a "Final Determination" dated September 10, 2014. The "Final Determination" states in part:

"Description: Establishment of New Airport

We do not object with conditions to the construction described in this proposal provided:

You comply with the requirements set forth in FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-2, “Operational Safety on Airports During Construction.”

This determination does not constitute FAA approval or disapproval of the physical development involved in the proposal. It is a determination with respect to the safe and efficient use of navigable airspace by aircraft and with respect to the safety of persons and property on the ground.

In making this determination, the FAA has considered matters such as the effects the proposal would have on existing or planned traffic patterns of neighboring airports, the effects it would have on the existing airspace structure and projected programs of the FAA, the effects it would have on the safety of persons and property on the ground, and the effects that existing or proposed manmade objects (on file with the FAA), and known natural objects within the affected area would have on the airport proposal.” The Maryland – National Capital Park and Planning Commission (the owner of the site) never responded to the request from the Maryland Aviation Administration to meet with the Maryland Aviation Administration and Wayne A. Tonkins, Sr. to discuss the proposed general aviation airport.

Benefits:

The site, in the possession of the airport, would cease to be a county and state expense. The site would become a source of revenue for the county and state. General Aviation contributes more than \$150 billion to the United States economy annually and employs more than 1.2 million people.⁵

The airport will design and implement the construction of a safe state of the art airport on the site of the former Columbia Air Center.

The airport will not have multiple grass runways as it previously had when operating as the Columbia Air Center because grass runways today are not safe, useful or practical for general aviation purposes.

The dimensions of the runway will be 7,000 feet by 150 feet for optimum efficiency and safety.

The runway’s length will accommodate rescue efforts by the civil air patrol and Maryland State Police if necessary.

The airport could function as a relief staging area before, during or after a disaster or emergency situation.

⁵ See, “2013 General Aviation Statistical Databook & 2014 Industry Outlook, Page 2.

The airport will enhance and simplify accessibility to the Tanger facility, the National Harbor, The Equestrian Center, FedEx Stadium, and the many other tourist attractions in Prince George's County and the Washington DC Metropolitan area.

The airport will generate sufficient revenue from aviation related educational services such as; hanger operations, light cargo operations, flight instruction, aircraft repair / maintenance, inspections operations, corporate traffic operations, charter traffic operations, refueling operations, and ancillary service operations to be self-sustaining. Students will experience via observation and internships how science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills are applied by the aviation daily work force. Just as future doctors learn by observing doctors performing their duties the future work force of Prince George's County will learn by observing general aviation employees in a general aviation airport environment.

The airport offers an alternative to the crowded, security-restricted airspace at National Airport and the considerable distance from BWI or Dulles to the Metropolitan area.

The airport will provide opportunities for all people regardless of sex, race, creed or color to have a chance to participate in aviation and career skill enhancement.

The airport will subsidize off site the classroom (theory) segment of aviation training.

The airport will subsidize ground school and flying lessons.

The aviation activities are ideal to expose Prince George's County students, "At Risk Youth," exchange students, veterans, and out of state students to viable aviation trades and professions.

The airport programs and activities may significantly reduce juvenile delinquency.

The airport intends to contribute, as funds become available, to 501(c)(3) organizations providing academic scholarships.

The airport intends to support other 501(c)(3) organizations as the funds become available.

The site is ideal for a museum to collect and preserve aviation artifacts.

The museum will add to the viability of the airport as a focal point for fly-ins, tourists, and dissemination of information regarding African-American contributions to aviation.

The airport location is ideal for tourists, professional and collegiate sport fans, and general aviation activities.

The site is ideal to serve as an emergency evacuation point during a disaster.

The site is ideal to serve as a staging area for relief efforts after a disaster.

The site is ideal to serve as an in-place shelter during a disaster.

The site location is ideal to assist general aviation travelers (corporate, recreational, national, and global) to use the National Harbor facilities, the Tanger Outlets, the MGM Casino facilities and other places of interest located in Prince George's County, Virginia, and/or in Washington, D.C.

The site will provide needed hanger space for general aviation aircraft.

The site will provide superior repair services for general aviation aircraft.

The airport is located outside the restricted airspace surrounding Washington D.C. making it extremely desirable for general aviation purposes.

The proposed 7,000 foot runway is a superb safety feature and potentially provides virtually unlimited economic benefit to Prince George's County and general aviation.

The airport has light cargo potential (UPS, US Mail, Amazon, etc.)

The airport will pay for any infrastructure enhancements, if any are required.

The airport has the potential to provide middle class income producing skills and jobs to the unemployed (veterans, the underemployed, young people without viable job skills).

Present Situation

The Columbia Air Center site referred to as Croom Airport by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County is a designated picnic area. It is described in the Patuxent River Park Jug Bay Natural Area (published by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County) as "a large open field, is available for organized day-use activities. A pavilion with picnic tables and grills provided." The site is not on the National Register of Historic Places. The site is not on the State of Maryland's register of places of historic significance. The site is classified on the Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, Inventory No. PG 82B-038. Item number 7 entitled "Description" categorize the condition of the site as "ruins." The site is further described as follows; ". . . The airfield retains very low integrity for association, design, location, feeling,

setting, workmanship and materials, as the site is now a cornfield. Some feeling remains as the site is situated in a rural park.”

Prince George’s County has embarked upon an unprecedented effort to bring business into the county and the state with projects like the National Harbor, Tanger and MGM Casino. These projects would benefit significantly from access to out of state customers. Just as Washington, DC’s hotels, convention Center, business space and tourists are linked to accessibility to the city, mostly via National airport. The airport has the potential to enhance the accessibility of the National Harbor, Tanger, MGM Casino and other Prince George’s County attractions to tourists, out of state customers and international traffic. The airport will have the potential to allow the county to benefit economically from its close proximity to Washington DC. One of the greatest tourist attractions in this country is the nation’s capital city (Museums, Kennedy Center, Convention Centers, monuments, etc.). The place to conduct business with the Federal Government is Washington DC. (Lobbyist, international business people, embassies, world trade representatives, etc.). These people do not fly on commercial carriers; they fly general aviation corporate / business aircraft. The airport would provide a site close to Washington DC that meets their needs.

The airports located within reasonable proximity to the Washington DC metropolitan area are as follows:

Washington National Airport, runways: 7,169 feet long & 150 feet wide

5,204 feet long & 150 feet wide

4,911 feet long & 150 feet wide

Washington Executive / Hyde Field, runway 3,000 feet long & 60 feet wide – currently closed

Potomac Air Field, runway 2,665 feet long & 40 feet wide

Maryland Airport, runway 3,000 feet long & 50 feet wide

College Park Airport, runway 2,607 feet long & 75 feet wide

Tipton Airport, runway 3,000 feet long & 75 feet wide

Homeland Security has designated the airspace around Washington DC as security restricted airspace. This designation has added extra procedures and requirements for operating aircraft in the security restricted area. Washington National Airport, Washington Executive Airport/Hyde Field – currently closed, Potomac Airfield, College Park Airport are located within the security restricted airspace.

The airport site is located outside of the restricted air space surrounding Washington, DC. The airport will have a concrete runway that is 7,000 feet long and 150 feet wide. The airport's 7,000 foot long runway would enhance operational safety for general aviation aircraft.

Economic snapshot:

Annual worldwide spending on airport maintenance and airline and jet repair businesses is approximately one trillion dollars, according to the annual Global Small and Medium Business Market Study released by access Markets International (AMI) Partners, Inc. The U.S. airport maintenance and airline and jet repairs business industry generates annual sales revenue of more than \$51 billion.

The Primary Market Area (PMA) consists of approximately a 250-mile radius of the airport. The primary target market is the smaller Air Lines consisting of between 1 and 25 Jet Planes and which are located within the Primary Market Area. They have a heavy reliance on Aircraft Maintenance and have limited or no internal resources.

The airport will provide a full service maintenance shop that will do more than just repair general aviation aircraft. The airport will provide preventive services to prolong the life of aircraft. That saves our customers money by avoiding unnecessary repair expenses. The airport will also offer aviation maintenance management for corporate / general aviation premier customers. The airport will also perform on-call and emergency maintenance on a first come basis. Students will have the opportunity to observe the performance of these services for clients. The students participating in airport programs and activities will have exposure to aviation theory and real world application in a work environment.

Competitive Analysis:

There are approximately 16,300 competing businesses operating within the PMA. The airport will differentiate itself from the competitors by focusing on the smaller firms which are often ignored by the other competing businesses. The airport will possess the space and accessibility desired by the client for maintenance services. The airport will benefit significantly from established client base referrals, new accounts through association and the diverse portfolio of Air Craft selection, maintenance, and repair services offered. This will allow the airport to follow a price matching strategy, rather than an entry pricing strategy.

Goals and Objectives:

The goal of the airport is to help make Prince George's County conveniently accessible to tourists, business people, and global vacationers while preparing the future work force, reducing juvenile delinquency, and preserving the historical significance of the site of the first Black owned and operated licensed airport in the United States.

The airport will blend its activities into the rural environment accentuating the wholesome, simplistic, serene beauty of the county and state. This will ensure that both the airport and the

county are viable as well as beautiful. It is envisioned that pilots using the airport will see virtually the same view that the Columbia Air Center pilots saw when they flew in and out of that historic airfield.

The airport has no desire to create a massive commercial industrial park or commercial airport. The airport intends to enhance and augment existing businesses.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to bring this project to your attention for the betterment of the residents of Prince George's County, Maryland by implementing this one of a kind historically significant, economically viable, and culturally significant project.

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I look forward to hearing from you and working with you.

Respectfully

Wayne A. Tonkins, Sr., Esq.