

'Aerotropolis' construction studied for Gillespie, Brown airports

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A two-part report has been launched to promote industrial, office and retail development surrounding Gillespie Field in El Cajon and Brown Field in the South Bay.

The South County Economic

Development Council and the San Diego East County Economic Development Council simultaneously released reports on how to foster what has been called an "aerotropolis."

The concept calls for the creation of concentrated economic hubs

around airports to connect workers, buyers, suppliers, executives and goods to the global marketplace.

The East and South County EDCs jointly received a \$40,000 grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to develop aerotropolis plans for the two airports.

Both Gillespie and Brown Field have additional acreage for future development.

At least six business clusters would stand to benefit from expanding or locating their manufactur-

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Aerotropolis

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ing, assembly and office needs to the areas surrounding the airports. The sectors include aviation and aeronautics; biocom and biotech; health, sports and environmental tourism; advanced parts manufacturing and assembly; commercial retail shopping and outlets; international research facilities; and educational institutions.

The aerotropolis committees comprised scores of volunteers with expertise in land-use law, planning, engineering, infrastructure, business, airports, marketing, government, and binational relations. There were pilots, adjacent property owners and community group representatives.

The area immediately surrounding Gillespie can support an additional 1.8 million square feet. Otay Mesa has 4,000 acres of planned industrial, institutional and commercial uses within five miles of Brown Field that could easily generate several million square feet.

The area surrounding Gillespie supports 11,807 jobs. With a build-out of 1.8 million square feet, it has the capacity to add 20,800 jobs by 2040, according to a Caltrans study.

Gillespie Field contributes more than \$400 million and nearly 3,200 local jobs, according to a recent county airports publication.

Gillespie may not be thought of as an international airport, but its runways provide access to destinations as far away as Russia and Venezuela.

The East County EDC reported that case studies suggest smart growth consisting of higher density and walkable development linking Gillespie to new or expanded transit services could lead to \$121.26 million in additional value and \$80.4 million in increased income.

Immediately developable land surrounding Gillespie includes 55 acres dedicated to aviation use and 37 acres for industrial use, with environmental clearances already

approved.

The greater Gillespie Field Study Area arrived at 1.3 square miles or 890 acres, of which 123 acres are vacant. The development area has an all too familiar handicap.

“With the state legislature’s dissolution of redevelopment agencies on February 1, 2012, a critical tool for the redevelopment of underserved communities has been taken away,” the East County EDC report stated.

“East County cities worked hard to protect as much of their redevelopment funds as possible by successfully defending existing obligations to the California Department of Finance.

“Santee was able to secure more than \$23 million for infrastructure improvements along Prospect Avenue, just north of the Gillespie Field fence line, and El Cajon matched funds to enable groundbreaking for East County’s first business class hotel [a Marriott Courtyard at Magnolia and Rea Street] in April 2015.”

"An aerotropolis will develop businesses outside the airport gates," said Joe Craver, former chair of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority and current chair of East County EDC's Aerotropolis Steering Committee in a statement.

"A successful aerotropolis will be a catalyst for economic growth that benefits the entire community by bringing investment and jobs to East County."

Officials also are considering ways to encourage hotel development on a site near the intersection of Broadway and state Route 67.

Gillespie Field includes a nine-acre vacant property next to Marshall Avenue. San Diego-based **Dentt Development LLC** was the successful bidder.

Dentt's proposed develop-

ment concept includes the construction of multi-tenant concrete tilt-up industrial buildings; the exact size is still being determined.

A 70-acre parcel at Gillespie between Joe Crosson Drive and Wing Avenue will be developed for aviation use. Known as the Cajon Air Center, this parcel will be phased into two, separate development cycles because of the traffic impacts of the Bradley/SR-67 Bridge interchange.

Brown Field

The recent Otay Mesa Community Plan Update has allocated 2,528 acres for future industrial use, 1,125 acres for institutional use and 284 acres for commercial usage within a five-mile radius of Brown Field, including industrial, commercial, mixed use, public use and

open space.

Plans for Brown Field call for the phased construction of aviation and support facilities. The 331-acre Metropolitan Airpark at Brown Field is expected to create 4,000 permanent jobs and contribute more than \$500 million annually to the local economy.

"Brown Field Airport already is an economic driver in the South County and San Diego region and has the potential to act as a catalyst for future economic development," said Xema Jacobson, chair of the South County EDC.

"The next step is to ensure that existing assets are leveraged to help encourage the growth of business clusters that can gain a competitive advantage through airport proximity."

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