

JET TASK FORCE
Economic Development Committee
Working Group Report

I. Executive Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

In April 2014, Mayor Michael B. Coleman appointed the Jobs, Expansion and Transportation (JET) Task Force to enhance and leverage the Port Columbus airport as an economic hub and the center of transportation for the region. The JET Task Force is comprised of three working groups: air services, economic development, and transportation. This report summarizes the work of the economic development working group. This group's charge was to consider how best to *leverage and partner with community stakeholders to grow the economic wealth of our region by creating joint economic development strategies to coordinate future land use planning, infrastructure investment, service delivery, development incentives and marketing efforts for the entire area around Port Columbus.*

Areas of Inquiry

The work of the economic development working group focused on five areas of inquiry in the Study Area:

- ✓ Assessing the types and needs of the employers and businesses to determine how best to retain and expand jobs.
- ✓ Evaluating and cataloguing the available development sites to ensure business growth is possible in the Study Area.
- ✓ Exploring the look, feel, and aesthetics and probing ways to improve the area's image.
- ✓ Understanding the status of the infrastructure and recommending critical improvements.
- ✓ Reviewing the number of governmental jurisdictions with responsibilities in the area and identifying ways to coordinate public resources.

Key Findings

- ✓ The Study Area is home to over 1,200 businesses and more than 19,000 employees. While the retail trade represents the largest employment sector at 12%, Defense Supply Center Columbus (DSCC) is the largest employer with 8,000 employees.
- ✓ Given the economic impact of DSCC, Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is a significant concern.
- ✓ Many of the remaining sites for development are infill sites, posing greater development limitations.

- ✓ The general appearance and condition of many properties detract from development potential of the area.
- ✓ Access to the Port Columbus study area via I-670 and I-270 is excellent.
- ✓ Public transportation options and access are minimal.
- ✓ Road networks to or within the Study Area are inadequate, limiting the potential of targeted sites.
- ✓ The study area's jurisdictions have seen increasing demands and constrained resources hampering the ability to address critical economic development needs including costly infrastructure.
- ✓ Focused, aligned, investment in the Port Columbus study area is needed for it to reach its highest potential.

Key Recommendations

- ✓ Establish a marketing plan.
- ✓ The plan should include a joint marketing effort among Columbus, Whitehall, Gahanna, Franklin County, Columbus 2020, the Ohio Rail Development Commission and the Genesee and Wyoming Railroad to promote industrial sites along the Columbus and Ohio River Railroad running directly south of Port Columbus.
- ✓ Develop a working group with Columbus, Gahanna, Whitehall, Franklin County and the Airport Authority to coordinate retention efforts.
- ✓ Position DSCC for future success by continuing to support the Columbus Region Defense Efforts to prepare and respond appropriately for a BRAC.
- ✓ Develop a plan for adding signage, lighting, and other amenities to enhance the area, most specifically the gateways to the Port Columbus Study Area.
- ✓ Incorporate design standards, such as those identified in the 2008 Port Columbus Joint Economic Development Strategy, in new development.
- ✓ Support commuter rail connectivity from Port Columbus to Downtown and beyond.
- ✓ If light rail is established between Downtown and the Study Area, Transit Oriented Development should be facilitated in the vicinity of transit stations. This would include identification of sites and incentive tools to encourage transit supportive uses and densities. A key benefit of fixed-guideway transit systems is their potential as a catalyst for development in areas such as the Fifth Avenue corridor.
- ✓ Upgrade Fifth Avenue from Stelzer Road to Hamilton Road to facilitate redevelopment of the corridor. Improvements should consider inclusion of access management, streetscape, and contemporary elements including conduits for future fiber optic connectivity and accommodations for walking, ground transit, and bicycling.

II. Administration

The JET economic development working group was created in May 2014 with the charge of creating economic development strategies for the Port Columbus Study area, for the consideration of the JET Task Force.

The economic development working group met bi-weekly from May through November, with a minimum meeting duration of an hour and a half. The working group was comprised by the following:

- Jean Carter Ryan, Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority, Chair – Economic Development Committee, JET Task Force
- Michael Dalby, Columbus Chamber, JET Task Force member
- Michael Johnson, East Columbus Civic Association, JET Task Force member
- Mark Barbash, Finance Fund
- Drew Vennemeyer, Quandel Construction, NAIOP representative
- Bob White, Daimler
- Irene Alvarez, Columbus 2020
- Elaine Roberts, CRAA
- Tory Richardson, CRAA
- Steve Campbell, Columbus
- Randy Bowman, Columbus
- Jonathan Pittman, Columbus
- Anthony Jones, Gahanna
- Zach Woodruff, Whitehall
- Alex Beres, Franklin County Economic Development

III. Findings and Recommendations

Port Columbus Development Partnership

In 2008, a partnership of Columbus, Gahanna, Whitehall and the Columbus Regional Airport Authority led to a Joint Economic Development Strategy. This strategy served as a starting point for the economic development working group, which determined that many of its conclusions and vision remain very relevant. Key provisions include:

- ✓ Establishing business sector priorities
- ✓ Joint business retention and expansion
- ✓ Maximizing investments in economic and infrastructure assets
- ✓ Supporting airport operations and improvements through expansion and land use controls
- ✓ Joint marketing
- ✓ Higher development standards and environmental enhancements
- ✓ Strengthening existing commercial nodes
- ✓ Establishing new mixed-use nodes

- ✓ Strengthening light industrial and office uses
- ✓ Supporting airport expansion
- ✓ Maintaining sensitivity to noise contours
- ✓ Connectivity through improvements to the road network and bikeways

A key element of the Joint Economic Development Strategy was the identification of 15 opportunity sites. The economic development working group revisited these sites, updating ownership, land use and zoning information. Some sites were eliminated and some sites were added. A series of maps depicting this information is appended to this report.

Area of Inquiry No. 1:

Assessing the types and needs of the employers and businesses to determine how best to retain and expand jobs.

Findings

- ✓ The Port Columbus Study area spans 10.72 square miles, with property in Columbus, Gahanna, Whitehall and Mifflin Township.
- ✓ The Study Area is home to over 1,200 businesses and more than 19,000 employees. While the retail trade represents the largest employment sector at 12%, Defense Supply Center Columbus (DSCC) is the largest employer with 8,000 employees.
- ✓ Given the economic impact of DSCC, Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is a significant concern.
- ✓ The last BRAC was in 2005, and they are typically held every 5-10 years. It is currently projected that DSCC is over capacity by 25%.
- ✓ The State of Ohio, CRAA, Franklin County, and the Cities of Columbus, Gahanna, and Whitehall offer economic incentives to area employers based upon business sector; location of operations; jobs created and/or retained, and type and extent of investment.

Recommendations: Job Retention

- ✓ Develop a working group with Columbus, Gahanna, Whitehall, Franklin County and the Airport Authority to coordinate retention efforts.
- ✓ Explore a joint marketing effort among Columbus, Whitehall, Gahanna, Franklin County, Columbus 2020, the Ohio Rail Development Commission

and the Genesee and Wyoming Railroad to promote industrial sites along the Columbus and Ohio River Railroad running directly south of Port Columbus. Many rail lines serving potential industrial sites are either a Class I railroad – too large to make smaller “retail” industrial stops – or a smaller Class II line that connects directly to only one Class I line. In contrast, the Class II Columbus and Ohio River Railroad serves smaller industrial stops with the option of connecting to both CSX and Norfolk Southern. A number of the Study Area’s development sites are served by this line. In addition to rail service, they have adjacent airport and interstate access and their central location within a major metropolitan area provides an available work force.

- ✓ Position DSCC for future success by continuing to support the Columbus Region Defense Efforts to prepare and respond appropriately for a BRAC.
- ✓ Encourage the development of more significant public-private partnerships with regard to defense efforts.
- ✓ Work with property owners and businesses to ensure runway airport property remains available for aviation-related services.
- ✓ Establish a periodic meeting of businesses in the area.
- ✓ Ensure local Retention and Expansion programs include aspects of businesses’ interaction with and relationship to the airport, as well as engaging businesses on workforce and transportation-related needs.

Recommendations: Job Attraction

- ✓ Identify opportunity sites with the best job-ready attributes and market to appropriate end users. Coordinate information on available sites and share with local realtors and Columbus 2020.
- ✓ Prepare an airport area information guide with available sites, incentives, and contact information.
- ✓ Develop targeted marketing for growth sectors. Consider air service maintenance facilities as a key target for the airport and its immediate footprint. Focus local workforce resources to ensure a qualified workforce is available.
- ✓ Consider marketing to bring Next Generation technology (NextGen) to the region based on Central Ohio’s aviation-related assets. NextGen is a new air

traffic management system for year 2025 and beyond which will replace ground-based radar and radio navigation aids.

- ✓ Encourage stakeholder/property owner input on development of marketing plans and studies for their sites.

Area of Inquiry No. 2:

Evaluating and cataloguing the available development sites to ensure business growth is possible in the Study Area.

Findings

- ✓ Greenfield properties are scattered throughout the Study Area with no significant aggregation.
- ✓ Many of the remaining sites for development are infill sites, posing greater development limitations.

Recommendations

- ✓ Identify opportunity sites with the best job-ready attributes and market to appropriate end users. Coordinate information on available sites and share with local realtors and Columbus 2020.
- ✓ Prepare an airport area information guide with available sites, incentives, and contact information.
- ✓ Work with property owners and businesses to ensure that property with direct airport access remains available and is marketed to succeed in the area of aviation-related services.

Area of Inquiry No. 3:

Exploring the Study Area's look, feel, and aesthetics and probing ways to improve its image.

Findings

- ✓ The area immediately in and around the Port Columbus Study Area is developed with a wide array of urban uses.
- ✓ The general appearance and condition of many properties detract from development potential.
- ✓ The area would benefit from enhanced code enforcement and other property code actions.

Recommendations

- ✓ Support Columbus' newly enacted program that would allow the city to assess civil penalties for damaged and unsafe properties as a means to step up code enforcement.
- ✓ Develop a plan for adding signage, lighting, and other amenities to enhance the area, most specifically the gateways to the Port Columbus Study Area.
- ✓ Incorporate design standards, such as those identified in the 2008 Port Columbus Joint Economic Development Strategy, in new development.
- ✓ Implement permanent signage and gateway features within Gahanna's Office, Commerce and Technology (OCT) District. The OCT district is located south of Taylor Road, west of Reynoldsburg-New Albany Road, north of the railroad tracks (which form the south city limits) and east of Morrison Road.

Area of Inquiry No. 4:

Understanding the status of the infrastructure and recommending critical improvements.

Findings

- ✓ Access to the Port Columbus study area via I-670 and I-270 is excellent.
- ✓ Public transportation options and access are minimal.
- ✓ Targeted areas within the study area lack sufficient infrastructure, such as centralized utilities.

- ✓ Road networks to or within targeted sites are inadequate.
- ✓ Key streets and intersections require improvement.

Recommendations

- ✓ If light rail is established between Downtown and the Study Area, Transit Oriented Development should be facilitated in the vicinity of transit stations. This would include identification of sites and incentive tools to encourage transit supportive uses and densities. A key benefit of fixed-guideway transit systems is their potential as a catalyst for development in areas such as the Fifth Avenue corridor.
- ✓ Coordinate business retention/expansion plans with ongoing development of improved transit connections to Port Columbus.
- ✓ Support commuter rail connectivity from Port Columbus to Downtown and beyond.
- ✓ Improve the intersection of Fifth and Hamilton to facilitate smoother traffic flow, visibility and corridor branding, including a gateway feature.
- ✓ Improve infrastructure to redevelop the Bedford II landfill site by paving Bricklawn Avenue and extending Leavitt Service Road.
- ✓ Extend Tech Center Drive from Science Boulevard to Taylor Station Road in order to encourage development throughout the OCT District.
- ✓ Upgrade Fifth Avenue from Stelzer Road to Hamilton Road to facilitate redevelopment of the corridor. Improvements should consider inclusion of access management, streetscape, and contemporary elements including conduits for future fiber optic connectivity and accommodations for walking, ground transit, and bicycling.
- ✓ Improve the intersection of Fifth and Stelzer to facilitate smoother traffic flow, visibility and corridor branding, including a gateway feature.
- ✓ Improve the entrance to the Veterans Hospital located at the intersection of Stelzer Road and North James Road for smoother traffic flow and improved accessibility.
- ✓ Improve the intersection of Stelzer Road and Johnstown Road to facilitate redevelopment of the corridor. Improvements should consider inclusion of

access management, streetscape, and contemporary elements including conduits for future fiber optic connectivity and accommodations for walking, ground transit, and bicycling.

- ✓ Improve Cassady Avenue Road from Bexley Corporate Limits south of Fifth Avenue to Agler Road to facilitate redevelopment of the corridor; improvements should consider inclusion of access management, streetscape, and contemporary elements including conduits for future fiber optic connectivity, and accommodation for walking, ground transit, and bicycling.
- ✓ Improve the Buckles Tract, a 90 acre vacant lot at the southwest corner of Tech Center Drive and I-270, with improvements such as roadways, water lines, sewer lines, utility lines, and storm water management components.
- ✓ Improve Central Park of Gahanna's infrastructure with upgrades including street widening, curb and gutters, multi-purpose paths, and right of way acquisition along Morrison Road, Claycraft Road, and Science Boulevard.
- ✓ Continue with Phase 3 of the fiber optic expansion project, which will increase the capacity of the GahannaNet Financial Incentive Program.

Area of Inquiry No. 5:

Recognizing the number of governmental jurisdictions with responsibilities in the area and identifying ways to coordinate public resources.

Findings

- ✓ The Port Columbus study area's jurisdictions have seen increasing demands and constrained resources hampering their ability to address critical economic development needs including costly infrastructure.
- ✓ Many governmental jurisdictions service or regulate activities within this area. The Columbus Regional Airport Authority, a public agency with a board appointed by the City of Columbus and Franklin County, operates Port Columbus. Local government services like police, fire, water, sewer, and streets, are provided by numerous entities, based upon location of the property. Port Columbus lies within the City of Columbus; however businesses, development sites, and residential neighborhoods in the Study Area lie within Columbus, Gahanna, Whitehall, Mifflin Township and Franklin County.

- ✓ As costs continue to increase, strategic investments become more difficult to make.
- ✓ Focused, aligned, investment in the Port Columbus study area is needed for it to reach its highest potential.

Recommendations

- ✓ Formalize a partnership working group. Identify and fund a staff person who would be responsible for convening the team and moving recommendations forward.
- ✓ Establish an annual work plan.

IV. Record of Proceedings

Appendices

- A. Working group speakers and presentations list
- B. Airport area opportunity sites map series
- C. Demographic & business data table
- D. Economic development incentives table
- E. East Columbus Neighborhood Business Summary
- F. East Fifth Avenue Corridor Business Table

Bibliography

- Aviation Activity Forecast Summary for Port Columbus
- BRAC/Columbus Region Defense Efforts Summary Document
- East Columbus Neighborhood Plan (2012), City of Columbus
- Hamilton Road Corridor Revitalization Plan (2008 Columbus Plan?)
- Joint Economic Development Strategy (2008), Port Columbus Area Development Partnership
- NextGen Initiative Summary for Columbus
- Northern Indiana/Ohio Passenger Rail Corridor Executive Summary
- Ohio Aerospace, Aviation and Defense 2013 Strategic Plan
- Port Columbus Land Use Plan, Columbus Regional Airport Authority
- Public Nuisances and New Civil Penalty Fact Sheet

Date	Meeting, Speaker, or Presentation
4/11/14	Kick-Off Meeting
5/30/14	Tour of airport and surrounding areas of interest
5/30/14	Meetings with George O'Donell, representing Columbus Landmarks Foundation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional meetings: 6/19/14, 7/8/14, 7/29/14, and 9/8/14
6/6/14	Joint Task Force Meeting
6/13/14	Discussion on available incentives
6/27/14	Committee meeting
7/11/14	Jung Kim (Columbus 2020): Aerotropolis and Port Columbus businesses presentation
7/25/14	Ohio Rail Commission presentation; Columbus & Ohio River Railroad presentation
8/8/14	East Columbus Neighborhood Plan overview by Kevin Wheeler; Local business owners meeting regarding needs and interests related Port Columbus: Fortner Upholstery, Daimler, Lisska Bar & Grille
8/15/14	Joint Task Force Meeting
8/20/14	Bob Tanner (NetJets): tour and discussion
8/22/14	Steve Tugend: BRAC & Columbus Region defense efforts
9/2/14	Meeting with VRG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/22/14 Memo received from Barry Fromm: <i>Central Park of Gahanna in the Airport Region</i>
9/5/14	Robin Holderman (CRAA): airport related issues including Rickenbacker, Bolton Field, and other airport-owned facilities
9/11/14	Committee meeting
9/15/14	Joint Task Force Meeting
9/19/14	Committee meeting
9/23/14	Seth Young (OSU Center for Aviation Studies): discussion on opportunities and areas of interest for Port Columbus
9/26/14	Joint meeting: Bill Swelbar (CRAA's aviation services consultant)
10/31/14	Joint Task Force Meeting: Loop Road Study presentation