



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In an effort to establish a solid plan for the future development of the Asheville Regional Airport (Airport), the Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority, in conjunction with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), elected to update the Airport's master plan. Significant development and growth at the Airport, since the last master plan study was completed in 2001, called for an updated review of its facilities to measure how they will meet the future air transportation demands of Western North Carolina. Needed infrastructure improvements identified through this process will help guide the planning and development decisions of Airport officials and the FAA for the next 20 years.

A structured and measured approach is critical in developing an effective master plan that adequately addresses what will be needed for the Airport to meet future aviation demand. This chapter, organized into the following sections, outlines the approach taken to prepare an airport master plan and describes its purpose, objectives and the importance of involving key stakeholders and the public as a part of the planning process.

- 1.1 Purpose
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Master Planning Process
- 1.4 Stakeholder and Public Involvement
- 1.5 Conclusion

### 1.1 Purpose

A master plan is a comprehensive study of an airport that analyzes short-, medium-, and long-term infrastructure needs over a 20 year period to identify cost-effective solutions that will be necessary to meet anticipated aviation demand. A master plan may vary in complexity and scope, based on the size, function, issues and challenges of an individual airport. Primarily intended for use by an airport sponsor, its staff, consultants, the FAA and state aviation officials, a master plan also serves as a beneficial planning document for board members, municipal officials, community planners and the general public.

The purpose of a master plan is to provide the framework necessary to guide the future development of an airport, considering environmental and socioeconomic issues. In addition, master plans help to evaluate the costs associated with the alternative concepts and establish a timeline and financial approach towards their implementation. Master plans also help to provide preliminary information needed to further evaluate environmental and socioeconomic impacts of each proposed alternative.

It should be noted that airport master plans are intended to be fluid documents that are updated periodically. Recommendations and findings from the study effort are not intended to be concrete and may change as other factors such as activity levels, aviation trends, levels of demand, or airport tenants and users change. Master plans should be evaluated periodically and updated as necessary to provide an airport with an effective planning document that adequately guides future development decisions.

## 1.2 Objectives

The primary objective of a master plan is to identify the long-term development goals of an airport and indicate the infrastructure improvements that will be necessary to meet future aviation demand. Additional master plan objectives include justifying the purpose and need for each improvement and establishing a timeline and financial schedule for implementation. Guidance outlined in FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5070-6B, *Airport Master Plans*, states master plans should:

- Document the issues that the proposed development actions will address.
- Justify the proposed development actions through technical, economic and environmental investigation of concepts and alternatives.
- Provide an effective graphic presentation of the proposed development at an airport and anticipated land uses within its vicinity.
- Establish a realistic schedule for the implementation of the proposed developments, particularly through a short-term capital improvement program.
- Propose an achievable financial plan to support the implementation of the proposed developments.
- Provide sufficient definition and detail for subsequent environmental evaluations that may be required before recommended development actions are approved.
- Present a plan that adequately addresses any issues to satisfy local, state and federal regulations.
- Document policies and future aeronautical demand to support municipal or local deliberations on spending, debt, land use controls and other policies necessary to preserve the integrity of an airport and its surroundings.
- Establish the framework for a continuing planning process. This process should monitor key conditions and permit changes in plan recommendations as required.

Master plans may also meet specific objectives, directly related to the development needs of an individual airport. These are often determined during the pre-planning element of the master planning process and

can become the emphasis of the master plan study effort. For example, an airport may have identified the need for additional runway length, improved facilities for maintenance and Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) equipment, or additional general aviation hangars prior to the initiation of the study. In these instances, a master planning effort may instead focus on the justification for these projects and the identification of preferred alternatives. .

### 1.3 Master Planning Process

The airport master planning process focuses on a series of fundamental elements that are carefully coordinated to evaluate the infrastructure developments needed to meet future aviation demand. While some elements may vary in complexity based on an airport's defined scope and development, they all play an essential role in the master planning process. Each element is typically identified as a specific task in the study effort and may be presented as an individual chapter in the master plan report. The following summarizes each master planning process element:

- **Pre-planning** – An airport begins the master planning process by completing a needs determination and releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP). After interviewing candidates, a consultant is selected, upon which a contract is negotiated and the study design is developed.
- **Public Involvement** – Once a contract has been negotiated with a consultant, funding obtained, and a notice-to-proceed issued, a public involvement program is initiated. Typically, an advisory committee of various airport stakeholders assembles and convenes at critical points throughout the project schedule to provide input and technical advice. In addition, public input meetings may also be held to gauge the general public's opinion on future airport development and to receive feedback on proposed alternatives.
- **Inventory of Existing Conditions** – An inventory of existing facilities and services is collected and assembled into a database that can be utilized for subsequent plan elements.
- **Aviation Forecasts** – Short-, medium-, and long-term forecasts of aeronautical demand are prepared for enplanements, operations and based aircraft. These forecasts serve as a baseline to measure future aviation demands.
- **Facility Requirements** – Existing facilities are assessed to determine their ability to meet the forecasted aviation projections. Facilities that are unable to accommodate the increase in demand are identified for improvements.
- **Alternative Development and Evaluation** – Options to meet facility requirements are prepared and evaluated against operational, environmental, and financial criteria. This process helps identify a recommended development action that results in the least amount of environmental and socioeconomic impacts.
- **Environmental Considerations** – A review of the surrounding environment is conducted to identify constraints that may impact the selection of the preferred alternative or its implementation.

- **Financial Feasibility Analysis** – A financial plan is prepared to outline the capital improvement needs of an airport, including how the recommended projects will be financed. This analysis helps to demonstrate the financial feasibility of the proposed projects.
- **Airport Layout Plan** – Recommended development options are illustrated in the Airport Layout Plan (ALP), which is a set of drawings of existing and future airport facilities. This graphic representation of master plan information is necessary for an airport to receive federal financial assistance for the proposed projects.

At the completion of the master planning process, the FAA will review all elements to ensure sound planning techniques have been applied. Though the FAA reviews all planning process elements, it only approves aviation forecasts and the ALP drawing set. This is done to ensure consistency with projections identified in the FAA's Terminal Area Forecast (TAF) and to indicate whether the proposed developments identified on the ALP are safe, efficient and conform to FAA airport design standards.

## 1.4 Stakeholder and Public Involvement

The involvement of major airport stakeholders and the general public is crucial when drafting an effective plan that adequately addresses the future development needs of an airport. Input including the needs, concerns and issues of airport users, tenants, resource agencies, public officials and the general public can be gathered through the use of a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) and public information meetings. The project team can then use this input to identify the critical infrastructure needs of an airport to develop a set of possible development solutions. Each avenue to engage the public offers an informational exchange platform appropriate to the technical expertise of the audience. The following sections describe how the public was involved in the preparation of the Asheville Regional Airport Master Plan.

### 1.4.a Master Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Stakeholder Advisory Committees (SACs) are typically assembled to provide insight on technical issues and to gather feedback on proposed development actions. SACs are often comprised of key airport stakeholders that possess high levels of technical expertise associated with aviation or airport operation. Committee members may also include key business or community leaders and members of the general public that have a vested interest in the airport. In addition to offering technical advice, SAC members also help foster the exchange of information between the interest groups they represent and the master plan project team.

It should be noted that SACs serve in an advisory role during the planning process and are granted no decision making power on their own. SACs typically meet with the project team during critical project decision points such as the review of existing capacity and future activity projections, development of proposed alternatives and selection of recommendations. The number of members that comprise a SAC varies based on the size of the airport, complexity of the project, and number of vested stakeholders.

Asheville Regional Airport Master Plan's SAC was comprised of 11 members and included representatives from Airport tenants and community planning representatives.

#### 1.4.b Public Information Meetings and Outreach

In addition to understanding the needs of key stakeholders, it is also important to gather the public's perception of future airport development needs. Public information meetings offer an interactive forum for the project team to collect input from the local community related to infrastructure needs while providing them with an opportunity to comment on proposed development plans. Public information meetings can vary from a traditional formal hearing format where public statements about the study are made between the project team and audience to an informal "open house" format where interactive stations and staff members are available to provide information about the planning process. Traditionally, "open house" formats are preferred to engage the public as it allows them to attend at their own convenience and to informally interact with project team members. This format has often proven to be the most effective method for collecting the public's thoughts, concerns and ideas on future airport development needs.



The number of public information meetings held during a study process is based on the scope of the project, the size of an airport, the population size of the surrounding community, and the level of interest or controversy anticipated with proposed alternatives. Meetings are held in conjunction with critical project decision points, such as the evaluation of proposed alternatives and the selection of recommended development actions. There were two public information meetings held as a part of the Asheville Regional Airport's master planning study. The first meeting, held upon the completion of the proposed development alternatives, offered the public an opportunity to speak with project team members and provide comments. A second meeting was held at the conclusion of the process to collect comments from the public on the findings of the master plan study.

In addition to the information meetings, other methods of public involvement were utilized to inform and collect community input about this master plan study. Public notices distributed to local media outlets helped inform the public about the information meetings and provided date, time, and location information. Handouts made available at the meetings allowed attendees take home information about the proposed developments and findings of the study and share with other members of the community who were not able to attend. A project website was created to also help inform the public about the master plan, the planning process, and the status of the project which was updated at key project milestones. Presentations given to the City of Asheville, County of Buncombe, and the County of Henderson briefed these local governmental bodies on the status of the process and allowed officials to ask questions and submit comments about the master planning effort with team members. Finally, outreach meetings held with local business groups helped inform the local business community on the progress and findings of the master plan.

## 1.5 Conclusion

Master plans provide airport officials, state aviation agencies, the FAA, community planners, and local governmental officials with a valuable decision making tool to help guide future development at an airport. Through a comprehensive master planning process that evaluates the condition of existing infrastructure and measures its ability to meet future aviation demand, alternatives can be developed to identify infrastructure improvements that will be needed over the next 20 years. Applying input received from key stakeholders and the general public, alternatives can be further refined to select a recommended development option that benefits the future capacity needs of an airport and limits adverse environmental and socioeconomic impacts. Timeframes and financial approaches identified through the planning process allow airport officials sufficient time to coordinate the resources necessary for each recommended project in advance of its implementation. In conjunction with the objectives and planning processes summarized in this section, an effective master plan can be prepared to establish the long-term development goals of an airport.

