

**Jackson County – Reynolds Field
Airport
Jackson, Michigan**

**Marketing Plan
2011**



OVERVIEW

Jackson County Airport - Reynolds Field is located in south central Michigan near the intersection of I-94 and U.S. 127N approximately 35 miles south of Lansing and 40 miles west of Ann Arbor. The airport was created in 1927 when local industrialist Wiley Reynolds and his wife donated 160 acres of land to the City of Jackson for use as a municipal airport. In 1976 the County of Jackson acquired the airport from the City of Jackson for \$1.00 in order to create a wider tax base to support airport operations and infrastructure costs.

The airport today is a full-service airport situated on over 700 acres with air traffic control services, car rentals, restaurant, aviation fuel and aircraft repair, flight training and a variety of other airport based businesses. The runway system comprises Runway 6-24 at 5250' by 150' with ILS and GPS approaches and is grooved. Runway 14-32 is 4000' by 100' with GPS precision approaches and is grooved.

Runway 6-24 will be replaced by a new runway 7-25 within the next five years. This project's purpose is to gain compliance with FAA runway standards for safety areas at both ends of 7-25. The existing runway 6-24 is not in compliance with these FAA standards.

Jackson County Airport – Reynolds Field, like most other general aviation airports, has been impacted by a sluggish economy, rising aviation fuel prices and a generally poor business climate. Inspired by the publication “Marketing Guide Book for Small Airports” created by the Cooperative Research Program sponsored by the FAA, the airport decided to develop a “marketing plan” of its own. The Jackson County Airport Board charged the Jackson County Airport Advisory Council with this task which initiated the process in February of 2011 with plans to complete the process in November of 2011. The Advisory Council invited representatives from airport-based businesses to participate in the planning process. The goal of developing a marketing plan for the airport is to gain broad input into methods or ideas to improve the business climate for the airport along with current and future airport related businesses.

THE COMMITTEE

The following individuals participated in the Marketing Plan development:

Name	Representing
Jim Bogie	Advisory Council & pilot
Harold Burke	Advisory Council & pilot/local business owner
John Feldvary	Advisory Council & pilot/EAA #304 representative
Linda Ferguson	Airport Business - AVIS
Jeff Fisher	Advisory Council & pilot
	Airport Business – JCC Flight Center
David Flynn	Advisory Council
	Airport Business – Midwest Air Traffic
Ben Jordan	Airport Business - Skyway Aviation
Chris Kilmer	Advisory Council & pilot
Jack Koch	Advisory Council
Kent Maurer	Airport Manager
Alan McCardell	Advisory Council & pilot
Pat Mills	Airport Administration
Amy Torres	Advisory Council – Enterprise Group
Dianne Weems	Airport Business – Airport Restaurant
Steve Wellman	Airport Board & pilot

ISSUES ANALYSIS

The committee identified key issues by responding to standard questions. The summary of results is offered as follows:

- 1) *Our customers think:* we are friendly and helpful; a destination airport because of the restaurant; great and full featured; a good place for the “general public” to come, look at airplanes and eat; a good place for pilots to visit because of the air traffic control tower and good food; that the air traffic control tower staff is friendly; we offer exceptional service given the size of the airport; this is a convenient airport and that feedback is important; and it is a great airport and people enjoy coming here.
- 2) *Our employees think:* they are understaffed and overworked; it is a good/great place to work; that they are kept informed; and it is a positive environment.
- 3) *We stand out from our competition because:* we have easy access and availability; air traffic control accepts and tries to work out unusual air traffic requests to enhance pilot training; the based businesses are very customer friendly; we are small, yet offer great service; we have an air traffic control tower, food and are centrally located in the tri-state area; and we try for the “unusual”.
- 4) *Our airport is known for its:* restaurant; air traffic control tower, the Experimental Aircraft Association, Jackson Community College Flight Center; food; good service; excellent views; and its great location.
- 5) *We are great at:* working on a minimal budget; being a team; providing a full-service airport; making people feel welcomed in Jackson; food; and working as a group and getting people involved.
- 6) *We want our customers to:* know what the airport has to offer; become part of the airport family; want to visit us and come back often and bring more people and airplanes via word of mouth; be satisfied with their experience; feel welcomed; talk to friends about how positive we are; feel comfortable; and feel like they are at home.
- 7) *We want to be remembered for:* friendly and exceptional customer service from the airport-based businesses, air traffic control staff, airport staff and the restaurant; a great airport; excellent general aviation services and commercial air service possibilities; and being fun.
- 8) *We are proud of:* our Aviation Heritage Park; the experience of our air traffic controllers; the willingness to provide quality service; being asked to have input into our airport’s direction; the airport facilities, flight schools, EAA, food, MIS race air craft and constant airport improvements; our heritage; the JCC flight school’s safety record; our restaurant employees and the way they care about their customers; and the air traffic control tower;

9) *What makes us different is:* our restaurant; the friendly and experienced air traffic control tower staff; the airport community takes extra effort to accommodate the patrons of the airport; we are a good airport for pilot training; we can accommodate both general aviation and commercial aviation needs, are strong community members by sponsoring the Blues Festival, Hot Air Jubilee and other community events; the infrastructure of the airport; we are unique; our location; the EAA museum and Aviation Heritage Park; and projects to create tributes to military pilots.

10) *We have gotten better at:* being flexible; relationships with airport businesses and users; working together; community involvement; providing service; communicating; taking the time to plan and do things differently; opening lines of communication; and negotiating the path of obtaining Federal funding for airport projects.

11) *We strive to:* provide good service to all; become the best and friendliest airport in Mid-Michigan; grow; do more with less; be the best at what we do; be better; build business opportunities on airport premises; and increase the use of the airport.

12) *We have achieved:* a positive direction in stimulating involvement in the airport; great teamwork; facility improvements; a new and safer runway 14-32; a great airport restaurant; notoriety for a successful flight school.

13) *Our community thinks:* very little of us; of us as a positive asset to the community; there should be more events at the airport; that the airport is important; we are a country club; and the airport is a strong selling point in attracting new businesses.

14) *Our community would like:* the airport to continue to be successful and to increase its use; to know how the airport serves the community; to see more things going on at the airport; to be more informed; to spend less money on the airport; to see us gone; and to see the airport as a business center.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Effective planning must first establish an assessment of the current situation. As with most planning efforts, a SWOT analysis was performed by committee members, a summary of which follows:

STRENGTHS: Airport restaurant, air traffic control tower, two runways, airport management and staff, Aviation Heritage Park, the airport's location, room to add more hangars, the local political support for the airport, "Big Little Airport", full aviation services available at the airport, handicap accessibility, and the County's population growth.

WEAKNESSES: Limited resources for the airport, appearance of the airfield prior to the first grass cutting, fencing is too low to prevent deer from entering, pilots have a fear of utilizing the air traffic control system (Tower Phobia), declining airport infrastructure, and no aircraft electronics shop at the airport.

OPPORTUNITIES: More special events at the airport, promoting existing special events, industrial areas available for development, room to grow, promotion of aviation, aircraft rentals, and an electronic sign at the entrance.

THREATS: Funding, competition from other airports, fuel prices, loss of air traffic control services, insurance rates for businesses, declining pilot population, negative public perception about the airport, declining resources and declining pool of volunteers.

The results of the SWOT analysis were not ranked, except through discussion of the merits of each. For example, the opportunity for "more special events" was tempered by the "declining pool of volunteers", etc. The resultant marketing strategies will take into account the results of the SWOT analysis.

SURVEYS

Additional customer input was obtained via a customer survey distributed at the Airport Restaurant. A copy of the survey instrument and results can be found in the appendix section of this report. The results of this survey were very positive as indicated in the following summary.

Respondents to the survey (N=77) come to the airport for the restaurant, to see the airplanes, aviation needs, special events, car rentals and for “business and friend meetings”. The most convenient aspects of the airport are its; location, friendliness, accessibility parking and fueling airplanes/restaurant. The least convenient aspects of the airport are said to be; no commercial flights, no hand towels in the restrooms, non-customers using restaurant parking spots, the seating in the restaurant, limited restaurant hours, heating and air conditioning in the restaurant and limited parking during special events.

Ratings for other categories were queried on a 5-scale with five being the highest rating. The percentage of respondents rating the following areas with either a “4” or “5” were as follows:

Question	Rated a “4” or “5”
“Services/products are well-priced”	86% of respondents
“Would you recommend the airport?”	98% of respondents
“Was the airport easy to find?”	96% of respondents
“Aircraft/vehicle parking was?”	96% of respondents
“Terminal cleanliness was?”	100% of respondents
“Airport/restaurant staff was pleasant?”	100% of respondents

Survey respondents were given two open ended questions:

“I’ll remember the airport for . . .”

“The excellent food, friendly staff and good service. The beautiful view and hospitality. My grandkids enjoying seeing the planes. The great breakfasts. Nice folks. Balloon festivals, air shows and exhibits. Friendly atmosphere – never rushed. Michigan Speedway and balloon festival.”

“Other feedback . . .”

“Put towels in the bathroom. You guys are doing fine. Good outing. Great bunch of folks here. Liked the special aircraft exhibits. Good place to visit. No air conditioning in the restaurant. Shelly’s raisin toast, excellent wait staff, the owner is outstanding.”

SURVEYS

(Continued)

Committee members also completed a “customer inputs” survey. The summary of which follows:

- 1) *We use the airport for:* the restaurant, flight training, eating and watching airplanes, our aircraft’s base of operations, the scenery, social involvement and aircraft maintenance sources, flight physicals and refueling airplanes.
- 2) *These services are well priced:* hangar fees are competitive as well as the fuel prices and rental cars are reasonable.
- 3) *These prices are too expensive:* aviation fuel.
- 4) *The most convenient aspects of the airport are:* the location, our airspace, it’s close to down town, it is accessible, it is small and has an air traffic control tower and restaurant, east access to the terminal building and aviation fuel.
- 5) *The least convenient aspects of the airport are:* the cost of aviation, lack of after-hours services, lack of aircraft painting and avionics services.
- 6) *Would you recommend the airport to others?* Yes.
- 7) *Was it easy to find the airport?* Yes, but not always.
- 8) *Aircraft/car parking was:* very good, abundant, and excellent.
- 9) *General cleanliness of the terminal was:* very good, excellent.
- 10) *Your encounter with airport staff was:* good, positive, excellent, always positive and very good.
- 11) *I will remember the airport for:* seeing the airplanes and the food, the air traffic tower and restaurant, the nostalgic feel, friendliness, Aviation Heritage Park.
- 12) *The most important airport improvement is:* the runway improvements.
- 13) *We chose to lease at this airport because:* the space, convenience, and location.
- 14) *Other businesses that may be interested in this airport:* avionics shop and aircraft paint shop, pilot supply store and sport aircraft dealer.
- 15) *Our customers like this airport because:* of accessibility and services.

BRAINSTORMING

Brain storming discussion:

The airport- based businesses should consider a collaboration effort to advertise their services and goods. One example would be a mass email or postal mailing with coupons for the restaurant, flight center, AVIS and perhaps other businesses.

The airport and airport businesses should take additional advantage of existing airport events like the EAA pancake breakfast, Blues festival, EAA Ford Tri-motor visit and Aerobatics competition.

The airport and airport businesses should consider partnerships and collaboration with existing community events like the Rose Festival to determine areas of mutual advantage.

We need to continue to influence our young people to develop an interest in aviation. Using the required high school community requirements to be completed at the airport might be advantageous.

It would be positive to have an aircraft rental and aircraft rides services here at the airport.

The airport and based businesses should study unique advertising methods including an electronic entrance sign, web site development, email advertising, etc. A cost-benefit analysis should be conducted so that money is not wasted.

Discussion of a potential “branding” process for the airport was discussed. This committee would determine what brand might be useful for the airport. One suggestion was the “Big Little Airport” or “Pure Michigan campaign as examples.

Marketing Strategies

(In Ranked Order)

1. Encourage and enhance partnerships and collaboration efforts
 - A. Collaborate airport events with other existing community events e.g. the Rose Festival with the EAA Pancake Breakfast Fly-In
 - B. Airport businesses collaborate and cooperate with each other e.g. Airport Restaurant and Skyway Aviation grant mutual discounts for patronizing both businesses
 - C. Airport businesses collaborate with community events
2. Encourage young people to get involved with airport events and aviation in general
3. Market the airport as a venue for special events and as a location for community meetings and gatherings
4. Initiate a “branding” study to create an airport brand e.g. “The Big Little Airport”
5. Research the feasibility of a modern electronic sign for the main airport entrance
6. Encourage the availability of a based business that offers aircraft rentals and perhaps light sport aircraft sales and instruction

NOTE: #'s 2, 3 & 4 ranked equally. # 6 is not recommended for any further action at this time

Marketing Action Steps and Time Table

September 21, 2011	Airport Board Review
October 5, 2011	Selection of Marketing Plan sub-committee chair persons
November 2, 2011	First sub-committee meetings and development of action steps and timetable for work
February 2012	Sub-committee work
March 2012	Sub-committee work
April 2012	Sub-committee reports due