

Happy  
Holidays

Hartford Brainard  
Airport Association,  
Inc. (HBAA)

is a grass-roots organization of general aviation, private and commercial pilots, business leaders and others dedicated to preserving the airport as a valuable community asset and vital economic resource that supports Connecticut's economy and provides significant benefits to the capital city and region.

**HBAA** works to promote the educational opportunities that already exist at Brainard, encouraging city residents to pursue careers in the fields of aviation and aircraft maintenance.



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**From the HBAA Executive Committee:**

At the end of this month, [Hartford Brainard Airport Association, Inc.](http://www.hfdbaa.org/), a grassroots, non-profit organization celebrates its first year in existence. It was founded in early January 2022 by local pilots and business leaders in the community who understood the importance of a general aviation (GA) airport to the city of Hartford, the region and the state. Our organization is led by an executive committee of 9 volunteer members and has the support of hundreds of local, state and national members. Over the past year, HBAA's position statements and comments have been published in dozens of press articles locally and nationally. We have become a loud voice in support of all aspects of general aviation and for the preservation and revitalization of our local [Hartford Brainard Airport](http://www.hfdbaa.org/).

What was clear to us early on was that aside from pilots who use the airport and aviation businesses on the field, few people understood what happens in the [world of general aviation](http://www.hfdbaa.org/). Specifically, what happens at a general aviation facility like Brainard is *quite* different from what happens at more familiar, larger airports like Bradley.

We learned, for example, that hardly anyone outside of aviation knew that the Connecticut State Police, Homeland Security and the Civil Air Patrol all have their headquarters right on the field at Brainard. Few understood that Brainard is the 3<sup>rd</sup> busiest airport in the state, claiming over 60,000 operations there annually. Few knew that several important businesses on the field conduct [aircraft](http://www.hfdbaa.org/) and [avionics](http://www.hfdbaa.org/) service, repair and maintenance, not only for local pilots but for many in southern New England and New York. The customer volume they support is high and their essential services for maintenance and aircraft safety cannot be relocated.

We learned that the public in general and few of our state officials knew that Brainard airport hosts three active flight schools that train and graduate almost 100 private pilots annually. In past years, up to 25% of these private pilot graduates have gone on to fly professionally for major airlines and private corporations. ➡



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While there is a commonly held notion that airline pilots of today are trained in the military, the fact is that most professional pilots now initiate their training at one of the several thousand GA fields in the country. Once they obtain their private, instrument and commercial certificates, they become flight instructors at their local field and then apply for a major airline position once they have accumulated enough flight hours.

Brainard Airport is also the home to our state – sponsored [CT Aero Tech](#), a beautiful training facility located on the field. After two years of post-high school training, over 25 local students annually receive an FAA certificate to become certified aviation technicians. Once trained, these students have immediate employment opportunities in any one of the dozens of local aerospace manufacturing facilities that exist in the greater [Hartford “Aerospace Alley”](#).

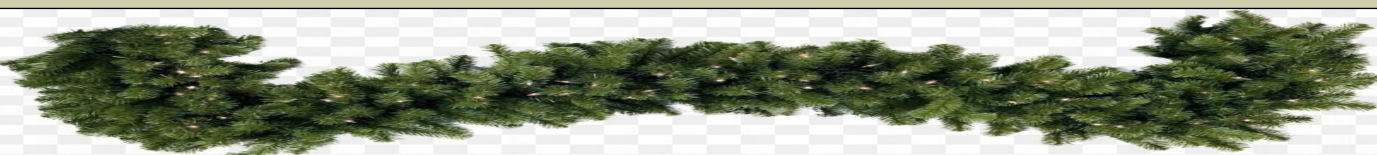
Recently, [Aquiline Drones, Inc.](#) has relocated its corporate headquarters to Hangar 1 at Brainard. Led by CEO Barry Alexander, this drone manufacturer and trainer has the potential to expand dramatically with important uses for businesses as well as training for law enforcement, firefighting, and aerial surveillance. One such emerging and exciting business operation will be high-rise building window cleaning, eliminating the need for highly unsafe scaffold cleaning.

Over the past year, several events have been hosted at the [Hartford Jet Center](#), including the introduction of the [Pipistrel Alpha Electro](#), the world’s *first* 2-seat fully electric training aircraft. Brainard is credited as being the *first* airport in the state to begin usage of a fully electric aircraft. In addition, along with electric powered aircraft, Brainard will soon be supplying [100-octane no-lead](#) fuel for general aviation aircraft (instead of our present 100 octane *low-lead* fuel). No-lead fuel was recently certified for GA use by the FAA, demonstrating our commitment to promoting a healthy environment and decreasing the usage of fossil fuels. Electric aircraft and no-lead fuel point to the path of the future of general aviation nationally and the Hartford Jet Center, along with **HBAA** has been a leader in promoting that effort.

**HBAA’s** job over the past year has been to educate and get the word out. We published seven newsletters over the past year, informing our community as well as local and state lawmakers concerning what is happening at Brainard. Brainard, for example, welcomed President Biden when he visited Hartford in October 2021. Over the past year, **HBAA** has conducted dozens of personal tours of the airport. We testified before the legislature and successfully led strategy in response to legislation that would have harmed the airport. We conducted numerous meetings with lawmakers and officials. We hosted many state and local officials and lawmakers for tours of the airport at the field, including several members of the Hartford City Council, House Speaker Matt Ritter of Hartford and DECD Commissioner David Lehman.

**HBAA** has sought the support of several local business leaders who are members of the Aerospace Alley that constitutes the manufacturing community in the region. Thomas Barnes, CEO of the [Barnes Group](#), brothers Lou and Mark Auletta of [Bauer, Inc.](#) in Bristol and Peter Kelly of [Kell-Strom](#) in Wethersfield are a few who have voiced their strong support to keep Brainard open as a vital GA and community asset.

And finally, most recently, substantive discussions have taken place between the flight schools at Brainard and [Goodwin University](#) in East Hartford. Goodwin President Mark Scheinberg clearly acknowledges the vast national shortage of trained airline pilots and aviation mechanics in the country. To fill the growing





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need, Goodwin is exploring with us how to create a formal Bachelor's or Associates degree in Aviation Science that would be affiliated with flight schools at Brainard. Such a program, if developed successfully, would be a significant benefit to all students looking to launch a career in the many fields of aviation and a huge boost for Hartford.

Nationally, the economic future is **very** bright for general aviation. Having emerged from the COVID pandemic with tremendous travel needs, airports all across America are busier than ever to meet the demand. Business and corporate flights have skyrocketed and the need for pilot and technician training is greater than ever. We at **HBAA** believe that Brainard Airport is an important contributor to this effort and any effort to close the airport will be a very foolish decision. Presently, a \$1.5 million study is underway, with DECD oversight, to analyze the benefits and opportunity costs to Hartford and the state of the current and alternative uses of the 201-acre South Meadow property. Aside from the property being heavily contaminated with chemicals and with the location surrounded by an MDC waste treatment facility at one end and the decommissioned MI-RA trash-to-energy facility at the other, we are convinced that keeping Brainard open and letting it reach its potential is the only viable option for the property.

We understand that others agree with us. Former judge and state senator [Eric Coleman](#) recently declared his candidacy for mayor of Hartford to succeed Luke Bronin who will not be seeking a third term. Mr. Coleman clearly understands the importance of a thriving GA airport for our community. He has formally given us his support to keep Brainard alive. If elected, we look forward to working with him in the future as he steers a course that can make Brainard a financially beneficial **gem** for the city of Hartford and a model for all GA airports in the country.

The push to close Brainard Airport however still remains strong. The present mayor of Hartford, the Hartford city council and a very small number of state lawmakers continue to explore closure and other options with surprisingly vague "visions" for the property but without specific plans. The costs to close Brainard, remediate the property and then redevelop it would be a **massive** new burden on taxpayers who would be presented with unclear benefits that could take decades to realize. Our organization believes that Hartford leaders are misguided and should become much better educated about the benefits of aviation and focus on the profound potential an airport can have for their city's future. We encourage those opposing Brainard to work with us rather than create unrealistic, fanciful and highly expensive alternative.

To all of our Brainard supporters, the **Hartford Brainard Airport Association** would like to thank you for that support over the past year. You have helped make a difference for pilots, general aviation, students and the state. We wish you the very best for this holiday season and a safe, healthy and productive new year to come. We at HBAA commit to continuing our work as an organization to...

## **PROTECT, PRESERVE and GROW BRAINARD AIRPORT**

Visit our Web site:  
[www.hfdbaa.org](http://www.hfdbaa.org)

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