

HARTFORD BRAINARD AIRPORT ASSOCIATION POSITION STATEMENT



Volume 2 Issue 10 Page 1

Dec.27, 2023

Click the link below to read the final results of the \$1.5 million, 2023 DECD study on Brainard Airport:
[Complete DECD Study](#)
(Hint: It's massive. Read [Legislative Summary](#) First)

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.



PROTECT JOBS, EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY *PRESERVE, INVEST IN AND REVITALIZE HARTFORD-BRAINARD AIRPORT*

Hartford Brainard Airport Association supports the conclusion of a consultant that studied Brainard Airport and recently issued a report to the Department of Economic and Community Development. *The Brainard Airport Current and Alternative Use Study* found the airport **should remain open and active**. The state should capitalize on the study and invest in the airport's economic potential and educational opportunities to support jobs, the growth of general aviation in the state, increase state tax revenue and prevent future attempts to undermine and repurpose the facility.

Hartford Brainard Airport Association urges lawmakers to **support**:

Continued operation of Brainard Airport, which the report recommends. A general aviation airport located in the capital city minutes from downtown with a state-owned technical aviation and maintenance school on site presents an incredible opportunity for the state. Two state-funded studies, including a comprehensive and unbiased 2016 study by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, have now determined that retaining the property as an airport is the highest and best use. **Nonpartisan** General Assembly staff recommended that the state should take steps to maximize Hartford-Brainard Airport's value because the airport's **overall benefits** to the economy **outweigh its costs** and redevelopment would be **highly complex, time-consuming, and expensive** – with an uncertain outcome. State investment and support of Brainard will lift the cloud of uncertainty for investors and small businesses, maintain and grow the existing technical aviation school and support essential life-saving first responders and law enforcement aircraft.

Preserve Brainard's crosswind runway for pilot training purposes, safety and protection of nearby residents. The \$1.5 million study also found that the "optimal choice for the highest and best use" of the Brainard Airport property is to close Runway 11-29 and redevelop the approximately 18 acres for other purposes such as development of industrial buildings, accessory retail, and aviation-related development. However, CT Airport Authority would continue to own any parcel on the site. **HBAA opposes** this risky scenario, which could have significant unintended consequences for pilot safety and flight patterns impacting neighboring residents. Speculative redevelopment would harm the environment and pose a risk to public health if toxic waste and polluted soil on or in the vicinity of Brainard Airport is disturbed.

Revitalize Brainard Airport, which would support investment in the airport and general aviation related economic growth, add jobs and grow state tax revenue. Businesses should be allowed to invest in new hangar space and alternative and innovative aviation activity. The state should invest in the airport by authorizing bond funds that would support infrastructure improvements and enhance aviation safety. Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV, or drone) operations and electric Vertical Take Off and Landing (eVTOL) operations are the wave of the future in general aviation and can be enhanced at Brainard.

During this Holiday Season, **PLEASE** consider a generous donation to support HBAA's efforts to **insure** that Brainard Airport remains open



SCAN ME

OR

visit our web site:
www.hfdbaa.org/donations

December, 2023



The following editorial comment appeared in the **Hartford Courant** on December 3, 2023:

Opinion: CT must deny future attempts to close Hartford-Brainard Airport

For the second time in seven years, state-funded, unbiased assessments of [Hartford-Brainard Airport](#) have concluded what regionally-focused citizens and legislators, aviation businesses, educational organizations, aircraft owners, aircraft operators, aviation businesses and supporters have intuitively known for decades – the best use for the 200-plus acre site in Hartford's South Meadows is its continued operation as the capital city's (and region's) premier general aviation facility.

The recently released [\\$1.5 million Department of Economic and Community Development study](#), conducted by BFJ Planning, was tasked with determining the best use of the airport (bounded by MDC's sewage plant, closed MIRA trash burning facility, industrial buildings and the Connecticut River) in response to pressure from certain state legislators and Hartford officials to consider redevelopment of Brainard. This report generated four scenarios of future activity. Two closure/redevelopment scenarios were discarded as being unrealistic from financial, economic, environmental and logistical viewpoints. Two scenarios keeping the airport open were presented – one leaving the airport as is, with proposed enhancements; the other reducing the airport's future potential. BFJ recommended the latter.

Informed observers weren't surprised BFJ's conclusions are mostly a repeat of the 2016 State Legislature's Program Review and Investigations Committee's detailed study and report, which also found the best use of the South Meadows property is as an airport. Certain local politicians intent on closing Brainard were disappointed by the PRI report's conclusions, forcing the additional expenditure of public monies by sponsoring the \$1.5 million BFJ study. Once again, these politicians were disappointed when BFJ concluded it is in the state's and region's best interests to keep the airport open.

Regionally-minded citizens have long known what the BFJ consultants concluded: the proximity of a general aviation airport to downtown Hartford, coupled with vibrant aviation service companies, flight training and an aviation maintenance school is a vital asset that needs nurturing and support to enable Brainard to become even stronger and more valuable to Connecticut and the country. Brainard trains the future pilots and mechanics so desperately needed to support our national aviation industry, with graduates being employed in fulfilling, well-compensated, long-term careers. For those in and around Hartford, the airfield creates the educational opportunities residents need to pursue high-demand aviation and aerospace employment.

While BFJ reached fundamentally the same conclusion as the PRI report, it recommended a scenario which reduces the airport footprint by 18 acres for industrial use. This recommendation exceeded the legislative mandate for the study. With commercial and industrial property demand in Hartford declining and no apparent turnaround on the horizon, BFJ's reasoning for parceling off a portion of the airport property is opaque and vague. Without a well-thought-out plan, removing these 18 acres from the airport property would close the cross-runway, reducing the safety of landing aircraft in high crosswinds.

While strong aviation businesses and educational facilities currently thrive at Brainard, these two taxpayer-funded studies have not eliminated long-term uncertainty regarding the airport's future. Plans for additional investment, in the form of new businesses and expansion of existing concerns and infrastructure, are on hold until investors are confident the airport will remain open. With two comprehensive studies arriving at identical conclusions that Brainard should remain open, the legislature must end the uncertainty by ensuring the airport property is free from the threat of closure and redevelopment, support private investment in airport operations, and protect taxpayers by denying any future attempts to close Hartford-Brainard Airport.

Arthur Utay of South Windsor is a pilot and aircraft owner based at Hartford-Brainard Airport. He is a member of the executive board of HBAA. (Reprinted with permission of the author)

Visit our Web site:
www.hfdbaa.org

For additional information, please contact:
Hartford Brainard Airport Association, Inc.
info@hfdbaa.org,
or visit us on Facebook