

Dan Culhane: Airport modernization project – A key economic development asset for Ames

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The first national Economic Development week will be from May 8 to 14, 2016. With that in mind, I wanted to highlight one of the most important economic development projects currently going on in the Ames/Story County community.

The Ames Municipal Airport is undergoing a considerable makeover, thanks to a tremendous public-private partnership between the city of Ames, Iowa State University and the private sector. When you recall your last commercial airport experience, whether it was for business or pleasure, Des Moines, Minneapolis, or possibly Omaha, Neb., come to mind. While you cannot yet fly commercially out of Ames, we do have an airport facility which sits adjacent to the Iowa State University Research Park that often goes unnoticed by the general public. This airport is a critically important asset that provides services to the university, business community, and regularly serves as a front door to Ames/Story County.

The first construction project of the two-pronged approach to improving the airport is the development of a short-term storage hangar. The 11,400 square foot hangar with a price-tag of \$1.1 million is nearing completion. The project fundraising and construction has been led by the Ames Economic Development Commission (AEDC) and financially supported by ISU, Story County, a number of private sector companies in the area, as well as the

AEDC and economic development groups representing Nevada and Story City.

Once complete, the hangar will be donated to the city of Ames and ultimately managed by the Fixed-Base Operator (FBO) or management of the airport. Its purpose will be to provide storage to visiting aircraft and will also be large enough for a few locally-based aircraft to be stored, at the discretion of the FBO.

The second major improvement will be the development of a new airport terminal. This project, projected to cost in excess of \$2 million, is being led by the city of Ames with ISU and the AEDC joining the city for financing. The new terminal will provide a fresh and professional welcome to Ames/Story County with a modern design featuring a gracious lobby, offices for the FBO and support staff, private visiting pilot lounge, and two considerable meeting/training spaces, along with restrooms, kitchenette and flight planning offices.

The demand for private air service is growing. Frequent users include company aircraft bringing in corporate leadership, customers and vendors to our community. There is also a considerable amount of air traffic that arrives at the Ames Municipal Airport serving ISU to connect with faculty and researchers, visiting athletic teams and ISU administration.

The ISU Research Park is one of the only such parks in the United States with an airport directly adjacent. The Park and the Airport conveniently located next to one another is a significant benefit to both important Ames assets.

Finally, this modernization project is significant as the airport functions as another front door to Ames and Story County and may be the first impression for visitors to our region. Regardless of the reason they are here, giving visitors a professional and positive first impression of Ames is important, which is why the public-private partnership leading this major modernization was essential.

During Economic Development week, the AEDC would like to take time to applaud our elected officials and management of the city of Ames, the administration of ISU, the Story County Board of Supervisors, the business

community, and economic development groups in Nevada and Story City for their forward-thinking investment in this critical economic development asset for Ames and Story County. Thanks for helping make Ames the smart choice.

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