

Importance of the Master Plan and Role for Citizens and Community Groups

Regarding National Aviation Noise Policy - in 1990 Congressman James Oberstar said, “I think it is clear most airports...just grew like topsy. And they do. They just sort of developed.”

Unfortunately, that statement applied to our PDK when the runway was extended, when our County Commissioners would not adopt airport policy to protect our community from airport growth that impacted us and may lead to scheduled passenger service (Hartsfield North), and topsy will continue to guide our airport unless we require our elected officials to ensure residential areas are considered in the development of the new Master Plan for PDK.

Developing a real partnership with PDK is a novel idea but it is one we must ensure in order to protect our investments in DeKalb County and to protect our quality of life.

The strategic airport issues PDK Watch addressed for years boil down to growth with its adverse consequences on our communities and a Board of Commissioners which adopts policy for everything but our airport. Unfortunately, once more, citizens had to revert to the courts to address the issues our County would not address on behalf of the its citizens. This would not have been necessary if our interests had been considered as PDK changed with no oversight from our elected off

What is the PDK Master Plan?

The Federal Aviation Administration says “the airport master plan is the planners concept of the long-term development of an airport. It displays the concept graphically and reports the data and logic upon which the plan is based. Master plans are prepared to support the modernization of existing airports and creation of new airports, regardless of size, complexity, or role.”

The key issue is how the word modernization will be defined for the PDK plan.

Why is the PDK Master Plan an important process for my community?

Unlike previous Master Plans, the current Board of Commissioners has required public participation in all aspects of the planning process. This is a recognition that communities affected by airport operations have a stake in this effort. The Board provided the opportunity for us to be involved in a meaningful manner, it is up to us to become involved. If we have a vision for our airports future, we can become effectively involved.

Who pays for our PDK Master Plan and for how much?

The Federal Aviation Administration pays about \$500,000, the State of Georgia aviation unit usually pays 5% and PDK pays 5%. These are all airport focused units of government. They historically disregard any comments from citizens. They all favor airport growth to accommodate future increases in use. Historically, they have not cared about the communities affected by airport operations.

There were two previous PDK Master Plans. What happened as a result?

The planned activity in both plans was essentially accomplished and most often with federal and state funds. The Master Plan does direct airport growth and change. It will continue to do so unless our elected officials ensure our quality of life is protected from more growth and noise and pollution.

Does the PDK Master Plan have any policy or regulatory status?

We understood and believed it was the basis for future growth and change at PDK. We understood and believed it was a statement of DeKalb County policy relative to airport growth. Because of recent PDK events, we are not certain. On four occasions, we asked our Congresslady to find out what the real status of the Master Plans is relative to the FAA. We have had no response to date.

Is there a way for my community to become involved in the PDK Master Plan development?

This is being defined, but consultants engaged to accomplish the Board of Commissioners direction to involve citizens seem to take the charge for public participation seriously. This does not seem to be the feeling of the Airport Advisory Board.

Do citizens in my community have to understand the airport and aviation business to become involved in the PDK Master Plan?

No. You just have to be prepared to present your desires and follow the planning process to ensure these views are fairly considered in all phases of the planning process.

Did the absence of a good Master Plan have any effect on the current legal case?

Absolutely. If the County had used the planning process to identify problems associated with change at PDK and developed policy elements, just as it uses the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, we would all know what was coming and the potential impact of these events. Thus, rational personal and community decisions could be made to protect our investments and quality of life.

In summary, the Master Plan process is underway, it is extremely important to the future of our area, the Board of Commissioners required the Plan be developed with meaningful citizen participation, the planners will be able to plan around our concerns if we can make them known, and you do not have to understand airport issues to become involved. You simply have to know what you think our airport should be in the future. Then we have to become engaged in the process, not the planning part, but the decisions for what the planners will consider.