

Preliminary PDK Master Plan Projections for Operations Growth (2019) are Excessive and Unrealistic

Re: PDK Master Plan Working Paper #1 (2019) from Michael Baker International

(<https://www.pdkmasterplan.com/pdk-master-plan-working-paper-1/>)

July 7, 2019 by Jaime Dutro, PDK Citizens Advisory Committee and Resident of Sagamore Hills, Dekalb County

Realistic projections for future PDK growth and careful consideration of the environmental impacts of such growth on surrounding neighborhoods are essential if a valid PDK Master Plan is to be produced that can be approved by the Dekalb County Board of Commissioners.

The PDK Master Plan Working Paper #1 (2019) from Michael Baker International, however, includes aggressive and unrealistic forecasts for both *operations* and *based-aircraft* growth that are more than the projected population growth of Dekalb or the FAA Terminal Area Forecast (TAF) projection for both.

The following draws on Working Paper #1 (p. 3-18):

“The FAA Aerospace Forecast Fiscal Years 2018-2038 projects virtually no growth in the nationwide GA [General Aviation] fleet from 2018 to 2038 and a decline in fixed-wing piston aircraft.” The FAA TAF only projects operations growth of 0.42% average annual growth rate (AAGR) for PDK, but the Baker paper projects 1.45% AAGR.

Population growth over the time period for the 10-county metro region is reported at only 1.20%, Dekalb at only 0.73% AAGR. Other factors used such as rental car revenue on site, national aircraft demand based on 2017-2018 only, and fuel sales projected from a period of strong economic recovery since the 2008 recession are referenced as justification for overly-optimistic continued strong growth, while many economists are now anticipating a cyclical recession soon.

The FAA AAGR for based-aircraft is however 1.30%, while Baker projects 1.45% and notes that “...the ability to provide hangar space is the only factor affecting the growth in based aircraft at PDK.” The amount of hangar space at PDK Airport is something that PDK and the County control entirely.

Recognizing that because of FAA regulations, PDK cannot restrict operations of aircraft landing and departing other than for safety reasons, one of the few protections for residents in the surrounding area is to limit the number of aircraft based at PDK.

For neighborhoods such as Sagamore Hills, this means especially jets whose approaches and take-offs frequently pass directly overhead. While the airport is land-locked, there is still significant area to add hangars or acquire adjacent land and exceeding air traffic capacity tolerable to the public.

As this area is rapidly urbanizing, any additional growth at the airport negatively affects not only current and future property values and tax revenue, but also the health, safety, and quality of life of all surrounding citizens.

In a survey conducted on NextDoor of Sagamore Hills and surrounding neighborhoods, when presented with the Baker growth forecasts, 84% of the 180 respondents wanted *zero or limited growth* at PDK, (the majority - 53% said *zero*, 31% limited); 11% unlimited growth, with 3% having no interest. Smartegies, the PR firm hired by PDK for the master planning process, held a public survey at the beginning of the Master Planning process, but prior to the Baker paper's aggressive growth forecasts. To the question regarding concerns, the top three highest percentages of respondents “very or somewhat concerned” was for Noise at 69.85%, Future Construction and Expansion at 66.86%, Diminished Greenspace at 57.76%. A majority of respondents, 52.8%, commented that pollution, noise, low-flying aircraft, and/or location of the airport in a residential area as weaknesses of PDK.

Note that the 1998 PDK Cost-Benefit Study of PDK Airport, conducted under the auspices of DeKalb County, reported that the property values and quality of life of 80,000 residents of the County *at that time* were already negatively impacted by PDK Airport operations. (see pdkwatch.org home page).

Significant increases in future airport operations and based-aircraft can be expected to increase the number of homeowners and businesses negatively impacted by PDK noise and pollution.