

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Flagler County Airport is a county-owned, public use, general aviation airport that is operated and maintained under the direction of the Flagler County Board of County Commissioners and the County Administrator. Ongoing aviation activities at the Airport are primarily comprised of local and itinerant operations, as well as instruction in the areas of single-engine, multiengine, helicopter, and seaplane training, along with instruction in ultra-light aircraft and gyrocopters. Flagler County Airport is located along the Eastern Seaboard training corridor and provides service to a large number of student pilots from other airports.

The study and development of this Airport Master Plan Update was undertaken for two primary purposes. First, sound management of general aviation facilities is inherent upon responsible governments, as economic conditions continue to place limitations on the availability of state and local funding resources. Second, the County recognizes the untapped potential and role of the Airport in the future success of County economic development efforts. Additionally, as public awareness of aviation operations and security issues has increased subsequent to the 9-11 tragedy, responsible airport agencies must make efforts to ensure the safety of their facilities for both operators and for the communities where they reside.

This Airport Master Plan Update serves as a planning tool to assist the Flagler County Board of County Commissioners in making decisions concerning the future operation and development of the Airport. Second, the Plan can also be utilized as an economic development tool that can assist local groups such as Enterprise Flagler in attracting businesses to locate within the County.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recommends the conduct of regular reviews and updates of airport master plans. Typically these studies are undertaken every five to 10 years, however the frequency of these revisions depends mostly upon the rate and degree of changes that are occurring at the airport or in the community. Some of these changes include increased rate of population and employment growth; increased pressure for residential and commercial development; increased demand for aircraft storage space; increased activity such as business, sport, and/or recreational operations; or increased demand for general aviation services such as maintenance, training, and fuel.

The Flagler County Airport Master Plan was last updated in April 1997. The 1997 Plan was an update of a previous plan dating back to July 1987. Between the completions of these two documents, the County and the Airport experienced significant growth. The years since the last plan have been no different. In fact, based on 2003 FAA Terminal Area Forecast Report figures, total aircraft operations have increased by nearly 23,000 (12 percent) since 1997, with based aircraft in 2003 including one jet for a total of 62. Additionally, population growth has propelled the County to place 8th out of the 10 fastest growing counties in the United States.

1.3 REGIONAL CLIMATE

Weather conditions are an important consideration in the planning and development of an airport. For example, temperature is a critical factor in determining runway length. Wind speed and direction determine runway orientation. Another factor in determining the need for navigational aids and lighting is the percentage of time cloud cover limits area visibility.

Due to its location on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, Flagler County Airport experiences a subtropical climate with two distinct seasons: a dry season during the winter months and a wet season during the summer months. Temperatures during the summer are typically less extreme than that of inland or southern regions of the state, as afternoon sea breezes and frequent summertime rainfall often provide relief to summer heat.

Based upon climatic data collected between July 1948 and December 2000 for the City of Daytona Beach by the Southeast Regional Climate Center (SERCC), the average annual maximum temperature is approximately 80° Fahrenheit (F), and the average annual minimum temperature is just over 61° F. Average annual rainfall is about 49 inches, and approximately 60 percent of the year's rain falls during the months of June through October in the form of convection thunderstorms. The average maximum temperature of the hottest month, July, is 90° F. During the fall and early winter, heavy fog is common early in the morning, but usually dissipates soon after sunrise.

1.4 SOCIOECONOMIC DATA

Socioeconomic characteristics of the community are an important consideration in the planning and development of an airport. The availability of the Airport to current and future users is important when one realizes that airports, even general aviation facilities, are a great generator of economic development. In fact, economic impact studies being conducted across the country indicate that major employers rank the proximity to a general aviation airport among the top 10 locational factors when selecting a site. This proximity shows the strong reliance businesses have on aviation today, where upwards of 90 percent use air express services, 85 percent use commercial passenger service at least once per year, 33 percent ship by air cargo, and 25 percent charter aircraft.

Table 1-1 depicts population and employment growth for Flagler County from 1960 to 2000. As the figures indicate, the County has experienced significant increases in population over the last 30 years, since 1970. After a slight population decrease during the 1960s, growth surged through the 70s at an annual rate of 9.4 percent, with a total increase of 6,459 (145 percent) persons. Growth accelerated during the 80s, up to 10.2 percent annually, recording a total increase of 17,788 persons (163 percent) in just one decade. By the time of the 2000 Census, Flagler County was home to 45,378 new residents, at an annual rate of 6.2 percent since 1960.

While a significant portion of Florida's growth that occurred in the 1990s can be attributed to the top three counties (Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties combined for over 31 percent of statewide population growth, or 951,464 people), Flagler County experienced the

largest percentage growth in the State during the same period. As shown in Table 1-1, the County grew by nearly 74 percent during the 1990s, with an increase of 21,131 people.

**TABLE 1-1
 FLAGLER COUNTY POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

Year	Population	Employment
1960	4,566	N/A
1970	4,454	N/A
1980	10,913	N/A
1990	28,701	10,542
2000	49,832	18,815

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Employment in the County has also risen markedly since 1990. Table 1-1 shows that County employment has increased by more than 78 percent, from 10,542 in 1990 to 18,815 in 2000. Average annual employment growth through the 1990s was nearly 6 percent, and is most likely due to increased demand in the areas of new construction, retail trade, and services (including health services). Based on data available from the Florida Department of Labor & Employment Security, as well as the *Florida Statistical Abstract*, published by the University of Florida, the largest industries of employment in Flagler County in 2000 were: services, 27 percent; health services, 19 percent; retail trade, 16 percent; construction, 10 percent; and, manufacturing, 10 percent. Based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates, these growth trends may continue. In fact, as shown in **Table 1-2**, Flagler County is estimated to be Florida's fastest-growing county, ranking 8th on a list of the 10 fastest-growing counties in the United States.

**TABLE 1-2
 10 FASTEST-GROWING COUNTIES IN THE U.S.
 BY PERCENTAGE INCREASE: APRIL 1, 2000 TO JULY 1, 2001**

Rank	County Name	State	% Increase	# Increase	7/1/01 Estimate
1	Douglas	CO	13.6	23,987	199,753
2	Loudoun	VA	12.6	21,304	190,903
3	Forsyth	GA	12.1	11,889	110,296
4	Rockwall	TX	11.4	4,903	47,983
5	Williamson	TX	11.2	28,100	278,067
6	Henry	GA	11.1	13,240	132,581
7	Spencer	KY	10.8	1,273	13,039
8	Flagler	FL	10.3	5,132	54,964*
9	Collin	TX	10.1	49,728	541,403
10	Paulding	GA	9.9	8,056	89,734

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

*Note: Population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau in April 2003 indicate that Flagler County has improved to the 5th Fastest Growing County in the U.S., surpassing Douglas County (CO), Williamson County (TX), and Spencer County (KY) with an estimated 6.9 percent increase between April 1, 2000 and July 1, 2002. The 2002 population estimate for Flagler County is 57,377.

Flagler County government is playing an active role in creating an attractive environment for existing businesses while developing incentive packages to allure potential businesses to establish a local presence in this highly competitive region. Enterprise Flagler Incorporated, a cooperative effort between the County and local businesses is the driving force in these efforts, by connecting businesses to the many resources that Flagler County has to offer, such as:

- Ever-growing County and area-wide workforce;
- Workforce education, training and development;
- State and Local tax advantages;
- Tax and finance incentive/inducement programs;
- Technology development and research;
- Transportation; and,
- Access to international trade opportunities.

As evidenced by this growth, and the continued efforts of the County in the areas of economic development, Flagler County is poised to reap the benefits of its geographic location between popular tourist destinations of Orlando, Jacksonville, and Daytona Beach, in neighboring Volusia County. The study and completion of this master planning effort will only enhance the efforts by the County and business groups to remain vital players in the community, while attracting quality development for many years to come.

1.5 AIRPORT HISTORY & CURRENT ISSUES

Flagler County Airport was first established in 1947 as Bunnell Auxiliary Airfield, a Navy World War II outlying field. The Airport is situated on 1,145 acres of land and is located three miles east of Bunnell, the County seat. The Airport is advised by a five-member Airport Advisory Board, which is appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. Members meet monthly with the Airport Manager and are selected to serve three-year terms.

As previously stated, two master planning efforts have been conducted for Flagler County Airport since the late 1980s, the latest of which culminated with the preparation of a plan in April 1997. The conclusion of the 1997 Plan presented a set of recommended improvements for Flagler County Airport, which included the projected scheduling and estimated costs for each item of development as either short-range (0-5 years), intermediate-range (6-10 years), and long-range (11-20 years).

While these recommendations were made based on anticipated time frames for future development, new facilities are generally constructed only when aviation demand demonstrates the need for them. For example, in late 2003 the Airport worked with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University toward the development of the Airpark Phase A and Flight Training Complex. Additionally, several parties are moving forward with plans to develop conventional hangars on the Airport. Naturally, these projects may cause aviation activity levels to increase in ways that were not previously expected. For this reason, the 2004 Plan endeavors to evaluate the present validity of recommendations made in the 1997 Plan, and develops a new set of alternatives for consideration that are based on issues relevant to the current process and future of the Airport.