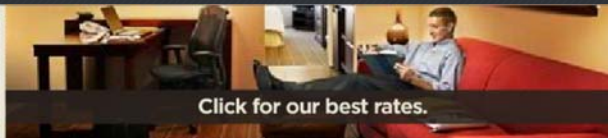


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England Authority unveils 20-year plan

RT MORGAN • RTMORGAN@THETOWNTALK.COM • JANUARY 23, 2009

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The sky is the limit for the England Airpark, according to a new master plan.

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Unveiled Thursday night, the plan lays out development for the airpark's next 20 years and, in some cases, beyond. It focuses on not only England's air operations but also on the land side -- road/bridge maintenance, growth of retail and residential as well as warehouse expansion.

"It's the most comprehensive thing I've ever seen," remarked Wayne Denley, following the plan's presentation at the monthly meeting of the England Economic and Industrial Development District, of which Denley is a member.

The plan was spearheaded by the South Carolina-based LPA Group, an aviation-specific firm of engineers, architects and planners, along with the aid of other specialty firms. It carries a price tag of approximately \$650,000 and was developed over 18 months.

The England Authority now will send the plan to the Federal Aviation Administration for approval.

Some of the more noteworthy projects proposed for the airpark's next 20 years include expansion of England's education campus, which currently includes the Learning Center of Rapides Parish; and development of England Estates, a residential development consisting of apartments, town homes and single-family houses.

Together all the suggested projects -- both air and land -- are estimated at more than \$600 million, and many are eligible for FAA funding. Also, they are scheduled over a 20-year period.

For example, only three projects are suggested for 2010. That involves acquisition of 103 acres, the authority's ongoing noise mitigation projects and a \$12 million rehabilitation of the airport's southeast ramp area.

Economic development also is an area explored in the plan. And according to Mark Sweeney of McCallum/Sweeney Consulting, the airpark's location stands to gain considerable interest from industry due to its existing building space, available land and access to different travel methods.

Possible industry types that could target England Airpark include regional distribution companies, rail car companies and plastic manufacturers.

Asked about his primary goal, Jon Grafton, England's executive director, said it depended largely on the times. All of these projects are doable, he explained, as long as pieces like the economy and government funding fall into place.

And due to the numerous projects included, if one does not work out, Grafton said, it will be placed on the back burner and replaced by another.

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Overall, Grafton said the authority will adopt a "broad front" to getting the master plan implemented, meaning they will put forth as many projects as possible. What he's most excited about, however, is that at the end of 20 to 30 years England will stand alone in the Gulf States.

Grafton added that implementation of this master plan will make England Airpark a "unique" facility within the entire southern region.

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