



Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The following report presents the Airport Master Plan Update for DeKalb Peachtree Airport (PDK or the airport) located in Chamblee, Georgia. This report was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and DeKalb County (Sponsor). All portions of this document are based upon the guidelines set forth in FAA Advisory Circulars (AC) 150/5070-6B, *Airport Master Plans* and AC 150/5300-13A, *Airport Design*.

The intent of this master plan is to provide the framework needed to guide future airport development of PDK Airport.

PDK's vision is to be the Southeast's finest general aviation airport. Along with its mission statement, PDK's vision translates into goals established in the master plan that support modernization of airport facilities, enhance compatible land use, foster economic development, respond to aeronautical demand, and ensure the safety and security of the traveling public.

PDK is a general aviation airport in northeast metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia within the city limits of Chamblee of DeKalb County. The airport is bordered by Chamblee Tucker Road to the north, Buford Highway to the east, Dresden Drive to the south and Clairmont Road to the west. Immediately surrounding the airport are the metropolitan cities of Dunwoody, Doraville, and Brookhaven. The airport is located near the major business districts of Atlanta, including 8 miles north of Decatur, 12 miles northeast of downtown Atlanta, 8 miles east of Buckhead, 6 miles east of Lindbergh and 4 miles southeast of Perimeter Center. Interstate 285 is reachable by Peachtree Industrial Boulevard in 4 miles and Interstate 85 is reachable by Clairmont Road in 3 miles.

PDK's prime location has made it the business travelers' choice when visiting the metropolitan area, which is why the airport has been the busiest general aviation airport in the state since its transition from Naval Air Station to general aviation airport in 1959.

1.2 History

The Chamblee area was settled in the 1820s as an agricultural community. The first rail line through Chamblee was established in 1845. The town was incorporated as the City of Chamblee in 1908.

The land PDK was built upon originally contained woods and several farms. In 1917, the land became the location of Camp Gordon, a World War I (WWI) training camp. After WWI, the property was sold and in 1940, DeKalb County purchased the property with the intention of building an airport.

World War II (WWII) began and shortly thereafter, the U.S. Navy leased the entire property and constructed a Navy Reserve training station. Eventually, the airport became large enough to commission as a full Naval Air Station. The Naval Air Station continued to operate at PDK for 20 years until it was handed over to the County in 1959.

Following its transition from a military base into a general aviation airport and under the guidance of PDK's first airport manager, Henry Doc Manget, Jr., planning and construction began rapidly to convert the



facility into civilian uses during the rise of the Jet Age. In 1966, the Navy control tower was replaced by a new and modern facility. In 1968, a 5,000-foot all-weather runway and parallel taxiway system was constructed. At the same time, land areas were developed for aircraft storage and major leaseholders. By 1972, over 300 aircraft were based at PDK, increasing to 530 by 1986. In 1980, the airport commissioned its instrument landing system which provided a much higher degree of safety during poor weather. In 1988, the primary runway was extended 1,000 feet and a new modern air traffic control tower was constructed. Over time, older military facilities have been modernized or replaced to support the growing general aviation needs of the community.

In the post-WWII years, industry came to Chamblee and slowly transitioned the community from a farming community into what it is today. The General Motors Corporation (GM) moved to Chamblee in 1948, which prompted the paving of what has become Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. The addition of the GM plant signaled a period of substantial industrial growth in the Chamblee area. Industrial growth also meant demand for housing. The construction of many neighborhoods primarily consisted of American Small Houses, in the late 1940s and early to mid-1950s. More housing as well as commercial development came to Chamblee from the late 1950s through the 1970s as the Atlanta suburbs expanded into the area.³ Close-in neighborhoods to PDK include areas commonly referred to as Ashford Park, Brookhaven, Briarcliff Woods, Drew Valley, and Sexton Woods.

Although, Chamblee is the closest city to the airport, additional cities in the nearby vicinity include Brookhaven to the west, Doraville and Dunwoody to the north, and Decatur to the south.

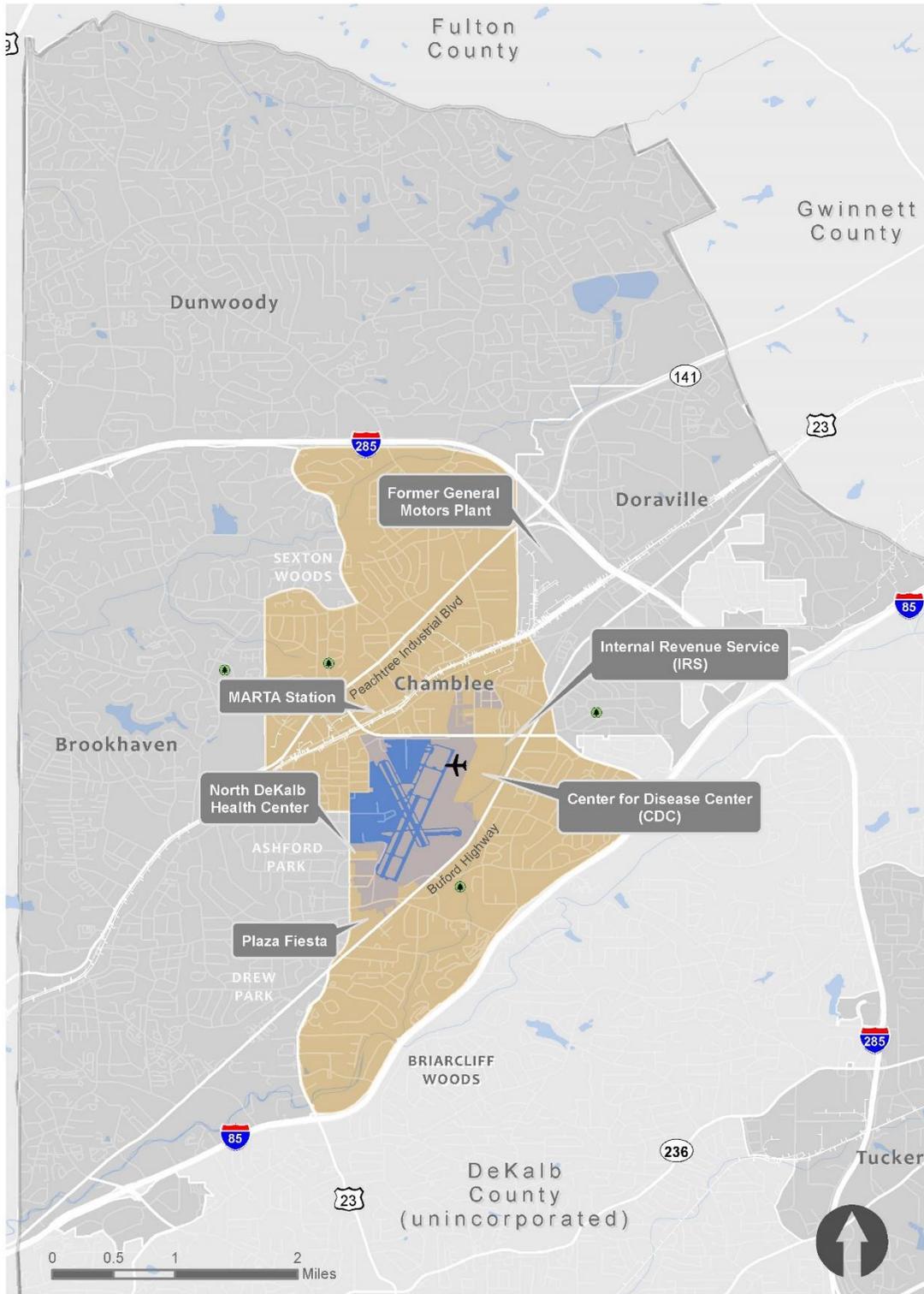
Currently, land uses surrounding PDK are a mixture of single-family residential, multi-family apartments and condominiums, commercial, industrial, institutional and public uses. Nearby major non-residential uses include: Chamblee Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) Station, North DeKalb Health Center, Plaza Fiesta, Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Dresden Park, Brook Park, Keswick Park, Blackburn Park, and Briarwood Recreational Center are also in the vicinity. In nearby Doraville, the GM plant was closed in 2008 and is currently being redeveloped into a mixed-use transit-oriented development.

The commercial corridors of Peachtree Industrial and Buford Highway are comprised of restaurant, auto dealership/shops, and miscellaneous retail businesses. The Peachtree Industrial corridor follows CSX and MARTA railroad tracks north toward Interstate 285 (I-285). I-285 is Atlanta's perimeter major road and circles the eastern and northern areas near PDK. Another interstate (I-85) parallels the Buford Highway corridor east of the airport, traveling north and south.

The location relative to the surrounding area is depicted in **Figure 1-1**.

³ *Architectural Survey of the DeKalb Peachtree Airport Study Area, DeKalb County, Georgia, Brockington Associates, 2004.*

Figure 1-1: Location Map



Source: Michael Baker International, 2019.



1.3 PDK Characteristics

PDK is a public-use facility owned by DeKalb County and maintained by DeKalb County Airport Division. The airport serves a variety of general aviation users. Airport development is guided the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners in compliance with guidelines and regulations of the FAA and GDOT.

In 2018, PDK had 355 based aircraft comprised of 258 single-engine, 39 multi-engine 46 jets and 12 helicopters. In addition, the airport will routinely accommodate 50 to 60 visiting aircraft on an average day and upwards to 230 aircraft visiting aircraft during special events such as the 1996 Olympics, 2013 Final Four, and the recent Super Bowl LIII held in 2019.

According to airport records, PDK accommodated 151,132 general aviation operations in 2018, of which 72.3% where itinerant and 27.7% where local. Businesses operating at PDK include corporate flight departments, charter operations, aircraft maintenance and avionics repair, fixed wing helicopter training, aircraft scenic services and Fixed Based Operators (FBOs). Other activity consists of medical evacuation service and local new station helicopter units. The airport does not accommodate Part 121 commercial airline service or regular military activity.

The existing airport facilities include three active runways, taxiways, hangars, airport services, administration building and various airport users and businesses. A range of business and organizations make up the diverse list of airport users housed at the airport. There are three fixed based operators (FBOs) at the Airport: Atlantic Aviation, Epps Aviation, and Signature Flight. These businesses are an anchor to the general aviation activities providing a variety of services to travelers and aircraft at the airport.

In addition to the three FBOs, over 25 other businesses operate on the airport's property. These businesses include aircraft maintenance, car rental agencies, legal services, aircraft charter services, helicopter touring services and training, building and design consultants, an Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) station, 10 flight training schools, one park, a Public Safety K-9 facility, DeKalb County Sanitation, two restaurants, and number of corporate businesses with based aircraft.

1.4 PDK's Role in the National Transportation System

The following sections review the aeronautical roles of PDK within the national transportation system.

FAA National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems Role

In the United States, there are 5,136 public-use airports. Of these there are 3,321 airports that are identified by the FAA's *2019-2023 National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems* (NPIAS) as important to national air transportation and eligible to receive grants under the FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP). The NPIAS groups airports into two categories: Primary and Nonprimary. Primary airports are airports receiving scheduled air carrier service with more than 10,000 passengers a year. Primary airports are further grouped into four subcategories: large hub, medium hub, small hub and nonhub. Nonprimary airports primarily support general aviation aircraft. **Table 1-1-1** presents the NPIAS service level classifications and their criteria.



Table 1-1-1: FAA NPIAS Classifications

Airport Classifications		Hub Type: Percentage of Annual Passenger Boardings	Common Name
Commercial Service: Publicly owned airports that have at least 2,500 passenger boardings each calendar year and receive scheduled passenger service	Primary: Have more than 10,000 passenger boardings each year	Large: 1% or more	Large Hub
		Medium: At least 0.25%, but less than 1%	Medium Hub
		Small: At least 0.05%, but less than 0.25%	Small Hub
		Nonhub: More than 10,000, but less than 0.05%	Nonhub Primary
	Non Primary	Nonhub: At least 2,500 and no more than 10,000	Nonprimary Commercial Service
Nonprimary (PDK's Role) (Except Commercial Service)		Not Applicable	Reliever (PDK's Role) General Aviation

Source: 2019-2023 NPIAS.

In the FAA NPIAS, PDK is categorized as a *Nonprimary General Aviation – Reliever Airport*. The term “reliever” means that PDK relieves congestion from nearby Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) by offering an alternative airfield for use by general aviation aircraft.



As reported in the 2019-2023 NPIAS, the term “reliever” is defined in the FAA’s authorizing statute at 49 U.S.C., section 47102, as “an airport the Secretary designates to relieve congestion at a commercial service airport and to provide more general aviation access to the overall community.” The term “reliever” is relevant in a small number of contexts but is increasingly problematic because only a small number of commercial service airports still experience significant congestion. Regardless, because the term is still defined and used in statute, the FAA continues to report the current designations in the NPIAS.

In 2012, the FAA further defined the roles of General Aviation airports in *General Aviation Airports: A National Asset* (known as the ASSET report). This comprehensive study developed the following categories of general aviation airports: National, Regional, Local, Basic, and Unclassified. **Table 1-1-2** presents these categories and their descriptions. PDK is classified in the ASSET report as a *National* airport.

Table 1-1-2: FAA ASSET Categories

Category	Criteria
National (PDK’s Role)	Supports the national and state system by providing communities with access to national and international markets in multiple states and throughout the United States.
Regional	Supports regional economies by connecting communities to statewide and interstate markets.
Local	Supplements communities by providing access to primarily intrastate and some interstate markets.
Basic	Links the community with the national airport system and supports general aviation activities (e.g., emergency services, charter or critical passenger service, cargo operations, flight training and personal flying).
Unclassified	Airports that do not fit into any other category.

Source: “General Aviation Airports: A National Asset” and ASSET 2: In-Depth Review of the 497 Unclassified Airports”

Georgia Aviation System Plan Role

The *Georgia Aviation System Plan* is a state level planning document prepared by GDOT. Most recently updated in 2019, the system plan evaluated all public-use general aviation airports in Georgia and classified each according to the type of aviation demand served. **Table 1-1-3** presents the system plan airport role classifications.



Table 1-1-3: Georgia Aviation System Plan Airport Levels

Airport Level	Description
Level I	Minimum Standard General Aviation Airport
Level II	Business Airport of Local Impact
Level III (PDK's Role)	Business Airport of Regional Impact

Source: Georgia Aviation System Plan, 2019.

PDK is classified as a Level III airport, a *Business Airport of Regional Impact* and of significant importance to the state's aviation needs.

1.5 The Master Plan Process

This Master Plan report provides an outline of the development actions necessary to maintain airport facilities. This document along with the ALP drawing set provides officials responsible for scheduling, budgeting, and funding of the airport improvements with a planning guide and general timeline for development. To accomplish the objectives and allow for timely and orderly development, this process was separated into two phases as depicted in **Figure 1-2** below.

Phase 1 – Airport Visioning.

Airport visioning is the exercise of developing broad goals and objectives of the master plan through a process of stakeholder involvement, inventory of existing conditions, and preparation of a 20-year aeronautical forecast. Phase 1 does not identify recommend improvements, rather it sets the stage for Phase 2 by promoting an understanding of the current state of the airport, what the airport can expect growth wise, and how the airport's role in the transportation system and community will shape its goals and objectives moving forward.



As participants in the master planning process, the airport stakeholders provide meaningful input to the airport as it develops its master plan. The public involvement effort strives to establish new forums for information exchange while also taking advantage of existing groups and organizations. Outreach techniques were designed to encourage participation in the public process and to generate meaningful feedback. The plan provides tools for both disseminating project-related information and gathering public input that reflects community concerns and interests.

The key components of PDK's Public Involvement Plan are:

- **Project Website.** A repository for project updates, project schedule, sign up for email updates, online surveys, and master plan documents. The website address is www.pdkmasterplan.com.
- **Goals/Vision/Existing Conditions Survey.** An online survey was conducted early in the project to learn various viewpoints of airport stakeholders which helped guide development of goals and objectives and master plan initiatives.
- **Citizen's Advisory Committee Meetings.** A Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed to serve as an advisory body for overall direction and guidance in the development of the master plan. The CAC consists of individuals appointed by the County Commissioners and the Mayors of Brookhaven, Chamblee, Doraville and Dunwoody who have an interest in the airport and its operations. The CAC meets regularly to discuss plan developments and to provide input at decision-making milestones.
- **Technical Advisory Committee Meetings.** A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed to provide the project team with guidance on key technical components of the project. The TAC is comprised of airport users with substantial knowledge of the technical aspects of the airport. Members of the TAC were appointed by airport management and represent corporate pilots, flight schools, PDK - Airport Association, FBOs airport businesses, PDK Air Traffic Control Tower, National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA), Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association (AOPA), and tie down/T-hangar tenants. Additionally, staff from the FAA and the GDOT were invited to participate.
- **Intergovernmental Advisory Committee Meetings.** An Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) was formed to serve as a high-level, policy-oriented group to communicate the master plan process to the local governments within the airport vicinity. The ICC includes planning and/or economic development staff from the Cities of Brookhaven, Chamblee, Doraville and Dunwoody, as well as DeKalb County, MARTA and the Atlanta Regional Commission.
- **Public Workshops.** Workshops will be held at major milestones to disseminate project related information to a greater audience and to provide a question-and-answer forum.
- Updates and presentations to the **PDK Airport Advisory Board.**
- A presentation of the plan to the **DeKalb County Board of Commissioners.**



1.7 Master Plan Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives of the master plan have been developed based on stakeholder input in accordance with the existing *PDK Airport Vision and Mission Statement* established by DeKalb County. These ideals are:

Airport Vision: PDK's vision is to be the Southeast's finest general aviation airport.

Airport Mission Statement: Provide for the operations of a business-oriented airport in a safe, efficient, and fiscally responsible manner. Preserve the quality of life of the community, investing into its employees, recognizing a partnership among residents, general aviation, and general aviation interests.

In support of these ideals, the master plan focuses on the following five objectives.

Objective 1. Enhance Airport Communications to Airport Stakeholders.

During the initial proceedings of PDK's Public Involvement Plan, airport strengths and weakness were discussed with the committees (ICC, CAC TAC) and during a public workshop kickoff meeting. A common theme developed during this initial feedback that stated the airport should do more to enhance its communications effectiveness with its stakeholders. Not only should the airport improve communications during the master plan process but during its day-to-day operations as well. Based upon this feedback, the master plan will continually seek to improve effectiveness of study-related communications over the course of the project and the airport will pursue ways to improve day-to-day communications with its stakeholders.

Objective 2. Modernization of Airport Facilities.

Much of the infrastructure at PDK was constructed by the military in the 1940s during WWII and during the 1960s through 1980s as the airport grew into a busy general aviation airport. These facilities should be evaluated for their current efficiency, function, and useful life. The master plan should outline how airport infrastructure would be improved over the next 20 years to adequately support the needs of stakeholders.

Objective 3. Insure and Enhance Compatible Land Use.

PDK is located in a highly desirable community of metropolitan Atlanta. The airport is within the City of Chamblee and adjacent to Brookhaven, Doraville, Dunwoody and Unincorporated DeKalb County. As part of the master plan process, communication of future plans, goals and objectives is essential in order to create and foster a mutually beneficial environment that increases PDK's equity as a community asset and improves quality of life for its citizens while also maintaining safe, efficient use of the airport.

Objective 4. Foster Economic Development and Strong Economic Tax Base.

PDK offers a transportation gateway that attracts desirable economic development to the community and provides a valuable tax base. PDK is the third largest payer of property taxes in DeKalb County. A 2012 economic impact study found that PDK's total economic output is more than \$211 million annually and supports 1,834 total full-time jobs. From 1978 to 2018, over \$83 million has been invested in capital improvements by PDK, GDOT, and the FAA. PDK should identify airside, landside, and airspace



improvements and recommend options to further optimize the economic aspects of the airport while preserving compatible land use and enhancing the safety and operational capability of the airport.

Objective 5. Respond to Aeronautical Demand.

In support of PDK's vision to be the finest general aviation airport in the southeast, it is important that PDK understands and responds to the transportation needs of the community and makes necessary improvements to support this demand. This includes ensuring the airport facilities adequately serve the existing airport activity in a functionally efficient manner and establishes an implementation schedule for short, intermediate, and long-term improvements based upon the goals and objectives of the airport master plan.

Objective 6. Ensure Safety and Security of the Traveling Public.

Most importantly, the plan should identify improvements that ensure safety and security of the traveling public. This includes identifying improvements necessary to ensure that airport design guidelines are followed for runway safety areas, runway object free areas, runway protection zones, and obstructions to airspace. Advances in technology and safety guidelines should be reviewed to support potential improvements to airport lighting, airfield markings, taxiway geometry, fencing and access control, visual and navigational aids and enhanced poor weather safety.

1.8 Key Issues Discovered During the Master Plan

During the proceedings of the master plan, the following key issues were identified and evaluated in the master plan.

- Over the planning period, there is a projected demand for 132 additional based aircraft, including 85 single engine, 13 multi engine, 28 jet and 6 helicopter aircraft. Meeting this demand would require additional aircraft storage space.
- During preparation of the plan, COVID-19 affected airport operations initially. Operations have since recovered to pre-COVID levels.
- The most demanding aircraft with at least 500 takeoffs and landings at PDK is the Gulfstream 550 corporate aircraft.
- The pending decommissioning of the PDK VOR navigational aid will open the eastern side of the airport to future landside storage space; however, challenges exist including remediation of an inert landfill and providing airside and landside access to this area.
- A county-owned sanitation facility should be removed from the northern runway safety and object free area of Runway 3R-21L. Potential options for relocation were reviewed however a preferred site was not selected.
- Based upon a review of runway protection zone requirements, the protection zone north of Runway 3R-21L will be revised in the airport layout plan. Certain airport-owned land north of Chamblee Tucker Road will become available for future non-aeronautical uses. Future non-aeronautical uses are subject to approval by the Georgia Department of Transportation and zoning requirements of City of Chamblee.



- Previously planned runway incursion mitigation projects already underway are reflected in the plan.
- The airport administration building is showing signs of its age and requires major improvements to meet code. Alternatives for renovation or reconstruction of the building were evaluated including a proposed parking deck to increase parking capacity in the core airport area.
- Aging airport-owned storage hangars (t-hangars) are recommended for replacement with modern structures.
- The airfield pavements are showing signs of their age. A phasing plan has been developed to prioritize projects for preservation of pavements.

1.9 Summary of Proposed Improvements

Overall, the Master Plan will provide an overview of the airport's needs over the twenty-year planning period including issues related to cost, timing and funding. Major improvement recommended in the plan are shown on **Table 1-4** and **Figure 1-3**.

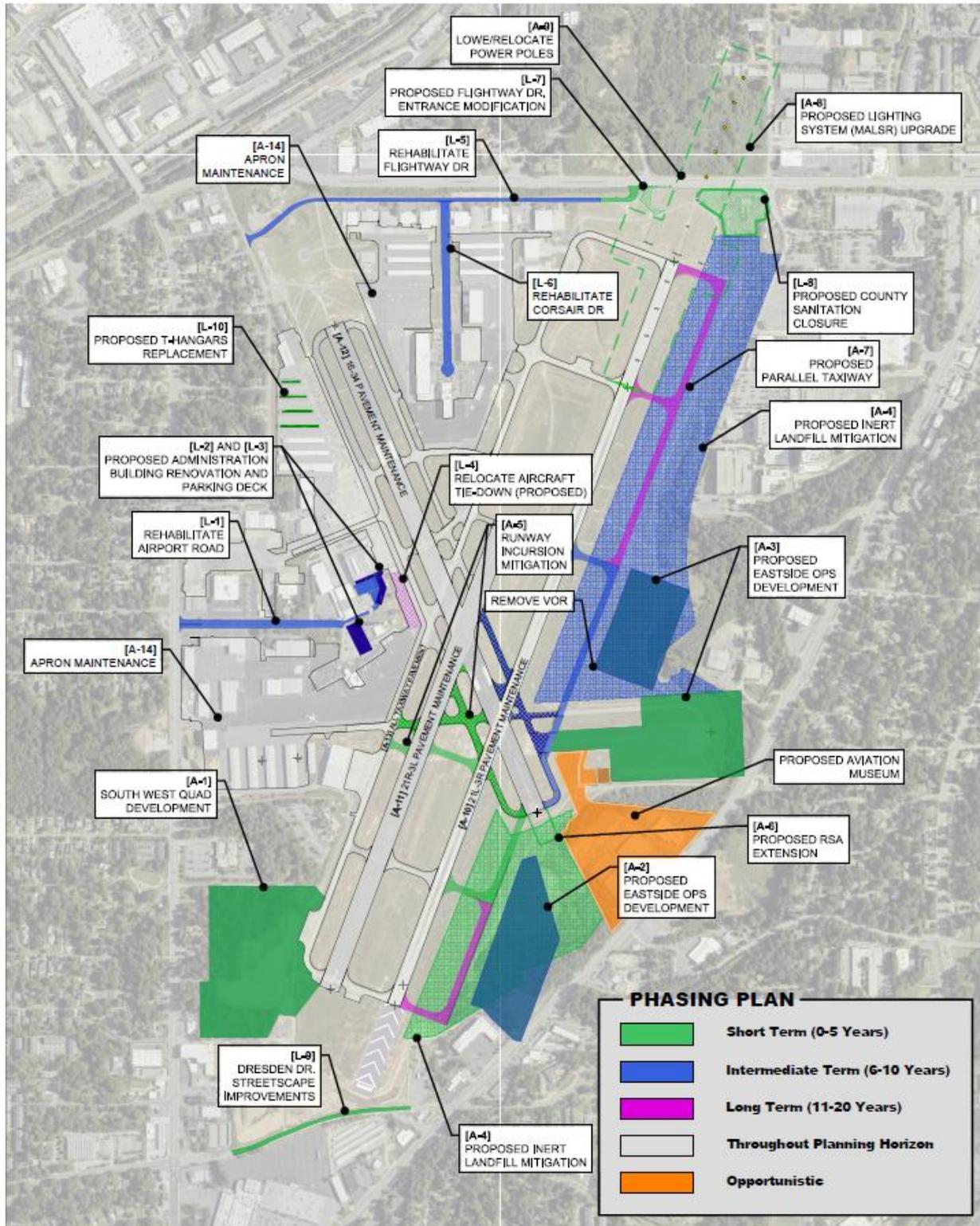


Table 1-4: Master Plan Project Summary

Project ID	Project Description
[A-1]	Southwest Quadrant Development: 8 additional corporate size hangars and new exclusive PDK Aircraft Rescue Firefighting ARFF Station
[A-2]	Proposed Eastside (second phase) – Proposed Aeronautical Development
[A-3]	Proposed Eastside Ops – Proposed Aeronautical Development.
[A-4]	Proposed Inert Landfill Removal: Remove landfill and replace with developable compliant fill.
[A-5]	Runway Incursion Mitigation: Reconfigure and improve aircraft circulation on airfield to mitigate pilot confusion and improve overall safety.
[A-6]	Runway 34 RSA: Correct incompliant Runway Safety Area (RSA) grading and design standard for Runway 34
[A-7]	Proposed Parallel Taxiway (Eastside): Establish parallel taxiway to serve Runway 21L-3R and the proposed East Ops Development.
[A-8]	Proposed MALSR Upgrade: Enhance approach lighting system.
[A-9]	Obstruction Removal: Relocate Chamblee Tucker street lighting poles.
[A-10]	21L-3R Pavement Maintenance: Preserve and maintain airfield runway pavement.
[A-11]	21R-3L Pavement Maintenance: Preserve and maintain airfield runway pavement.
[A-12]	16-34 Pavement Maintenance: Preserve and maintain airfield runway pavement.
[A-13]	Taxiway Maintenance: Preserve and maintain airfield taxiway pavement.
[A-14]	Apron Maintenance: Preserve and maintain airfield apron pavement.
[L-1]	Rehabilitate Airport Road: Preserve and maintain Airport Road.
[L-2]	Admin Building Renovation: Upgrade Airport Administration Building.
[L-3]	Admin Parking Deck: Build parking deck for Airport users and visitors.
[L-4]	Remove Tiedowns (Park Area): Relocate Tiedowns.
[L-5]	Relocate Flightway Drive Entrance: Relocate Flightway Drive entrance out of Runway 21L-3R Object Free Area (OFA).
[L-6]	Rehabilitate Corsair Drive: Preserve and maintain Corsair Drive
[L-7]	Rehabilitate Flightway Drive: Preserve and maintain Flightway Drive.
[L-8]	Remove County Sanitation: Relocate County Sanitation out of Runway 21L-3R Object Free Area (OFA).
[L-9]	Dresden Drive Streetscape: Beautify the portion of Dresden Drive fronting PDK Airport.
[L-10]	Proposed NW T-Hangar Replacement: Replace T-Hangar with new T-Hangars.

Source: Michael Baker International, 2020.

Figure 1-3: Airport Improvement



Source: Michael Baker International, 2021.