



**MESA-FALCON  
FIELD AIRPORT**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

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The Mesa-Falcon Field Airport (FFZ) Master Plan Study Update has been undertaken to evaluate the airport's capabilities and role, to forecast future aviation demand, and to plan for the timely development of new or expanded facilities that may be required to meet that demand. The ultimate goal of the Master Plan is to provide systematic guidelines for the airport's overall maintenance, development, and operation.

The Master Plan is intended to be a proactive document which identifies and then plans for future facility needs well in advance of the actual need for the facilities. This is done to ensure that the City of Mesa can coordinate project approvals, design, financing, and construction to avoid experiencing detrimental effects due to inadequate facilities.

Mesa-Falcon Field Airport is located on the east side of the greater Phoenix metropolitan area and serves as a vital economic asset for the City of Mesa and the region. As such, it should be carefully and thoughtfully planned and subsequently developed in a manner which matches the developmental goals of the community. An important result of this master planning effort will be a comprehensive development plan tailored to meet future facility needs. A comprehensive and proactive development plan protects development areas and ensures they will be readily available when required to meet future needs.

The preparation of this Master Plan is evidence that the City of Mesa recognizes the importance of air transportation to the community, as well as the unique challenges operating an airport presents. The investment in an air-



port yields many benefits to the community and the region. With a sound and realistic Master Plan, Mesa-Falcon Field Airport will remain an important link to the national air transportation system for the community and maintain the existing public and private investments in its facilities.

The City of Mesa initiated this Master Plan to re-evaluate and adjust as necessary the future development plan for Mesa-Falcon Field Airport. The last Master Plan for the airport was completed in October 1992. The City has owned the airport since 1948, and more recently operated the airport since 1965, and is responsible for funding all capital improvements at the airport and obtaining Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) – Aeronautics Division development grants. This Master Plan is intended to provide guidance through an updated capital improvement program to demonstrate the future investments required by the City of Mesa at Mesa-Falcon Field Airport. Many national, regional, and local aviation factors have changed significantly since the completion of the previous Master Plan. The City has undertaken this Master Plan to account for those changes in future planning for the airport.

On a national level, the events of September 11, 2001, and the repercussions to the national aviation system have affected general aviation. One of the most significant effects is the shift of traditional airline passengers to the corporate aircraft market. Inconveniences and time lost due to security

and large airport congestion have made corporate aircraft use more affordable and attractive. For this reason, general aviation airports in large demand centers, such as the City of Mesa and the greater Phoenix metropolitan area as a whole, need to be readied to meet the growing demand.

More recently, the introduction of a new class of business jets, the very light jets (VLJs), may also have a significant impact on general aviation airports across the country. VLJs are currently being introduced to the national fleet and many orders for the aircraft are by companies wishing to provide on-demand air-taxi service. Part of the appeal of these air-taxi companies is the ability to utilize the national network of small general aviation airports and, thus, further save the consumer time.

On a regional level, the Phoenix metropolitan area is one of the fastest growing areas in the United States. This growth in population and employment needs to be considered in the Master Plan update.

On a local level, the City of Mesa supports a diverse and strong economic base. One of the nation's fastest growing cities, Mesa is the third largest city in Arizona. It provides for a very dynamic environment with abundant recreational, educational, and business opportunities. The City is home to the Chicago Cubs Major League Baseball franchise during its spring training season and two new state-of-the-art downtown facilities, the Mesa Arts Center and Mesa Indoor Aquatics Center. Large industry and commercial businesses are also located in the

City. Banner Health, one of the largest non-profit health care systems in the country, providing an array of services ranging from hospital to laboratory services.

The Boeing Company, one of the world's leading aerospace companies and manufacturer of the Apache Longbow helicopter and MD helicopters, a manufacturer of civilian helicopters, play a major role in the local economy. Given the diverse and strong economic base in the City, it is imperative that the airport match the first class facilities that the community provides. This Master Plan will consider not only the facility needs to meet demand, but also methods to ensure that the airport projects a first class image for the City.

## ***MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES***

The primary objective of the Master Plan is to provide the community and its leadership with guidance for operating the airport in a safe and efficient manner while planning for future demand levels. Accomplishing this objective requires a comprehensive evaluation of the existing airport facilities and a determination of what actions should be taken to maintain a safe and reliable airport facility while meeting the aviation needs of the region.

A Master Plan must be developed according to the FAA and ADOT – Aeronautics Division requirements. However, the study can also be developed in a manner which makes it useful as a strategic business plan for the air-

port. FAA and ADOT require specific components within a Master Plan. These components, detailed below, are guidelines which allow for a systematic and technical approach to reach the final development plan.

While the Master Plan is technical in nature, it can also be used by airport administration and city leaders as a tool to actively promote the airport. In a sense, this Airport Master Plan is very similar to a business plan. A business plan is often necessary in order to obtain investor or bank funds for planned capital growth. So too is a Master Plan, which ultimately will enable the City and airport to compete for state and federal grant funds.

This Master Plan will provide a vision for the airport covering the next 20 years and, in some cases, beyond. With this vision, the City of Mesa will have advance notice of potential future airport funding needs so that appropriate steps can be taken to ensure that adequate funds are budgeted and planned.

Specific objectives of the Mesa-Falcon Field Airport Master Plan Update are:

- To preserve and protect public and private investments in existing airport facilities;
- To be reflective of community and regional goals, needs, and plans;
- To establish a schedule of development priorities designed to meet forecast aviation demand;
- To develop an orderly and comprehensive plan that is responsible to

air transportation demands of the City and region as a whole;

- To enhance the safety of aircraft operations;
- To meet FAA and ADOT – Aeronautics Division airport design standards;
- To ensure that future development is environmentally compatible;
- To coordinate this Master Plan with local, regional, state, and federal agencies, and;
- To develop active and productive public involvement throughout the planning process.

The Master Plan will accomplish these objectives by carrying out the following:

- Determining projected needs of airport users through the year 2027;
- Analyzing socioeconomic factors likely to affect air transportation demand in the City of Mesa, including regional factors;
- Identifying potential existing and future land acquisition needs;
- Evaluating future airport facility development alternatives which will optimize undeveloped airport property to promote capacity and aircraft safety;
- Developing a realistic, common-sense plan for the use and expansion of the airport;

- Presenting environmental consideration associated with any recommended development alternatives, and;
- Producing current and accurate airport base maps and Airport Layout Plan (ALP) drawings.

## **BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS**

While the ultimate recommendations of this Master Plan have yet to be determined, a study such as this typically requires several baseline assumptions that will be used throughout this analysis. These baseline assumptions for this study are as follows:

- Mesa-Falcon Field Airport will continue to operate as a publicly owned general aviation reliever airport through the planning period.
- Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport will continue to be a commercial service airport with minimal general aviation activity.
- Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport is planned as a commercial service reliever airport for Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.
- The other regional general aviation airports in Maricopa County will remain open for the foreseeable future.
- Mesa-Falcon Field Airport will continue to serve general aviation and corporate business aviation

based tenants and transient operations.

- The general aviation industry will continue to grow positively through the planning period. Specifics of projected growth in the national general aviation industry are contained in Chapter Two, Aviation Demand Forecasts.
- Population and employment will continue to grow positively through the planning period as forecast by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and the State of Arizona.
- Both a federal program and a state program will be in place through the planning period to assist in funding future capital development needs.

## ***MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS AND PROCESS***

The Mesa-Falcon Field Airport Master Plan Update is being prepared in a systematic fashion following FAA guidelines and industry-accepted principles and practices, as shown in **Exhibit A**. The Master Plan has six chapters and two appendices that are intended to assist in the discovery of future facility needs and provide the supporting rationale for their implementation.

**Chapter One – Inventory** summarizes the inventory efforts. The inventory efforts are focused on collecting and assembling relevant data pertaining to the airport and the area it

serves. Information is collected on existing airport facilities and operations. Local economic and demographic data is collected to define the local growth trends. Planning studies which may have relevance to the Master Plan are also collected.

**Chapter Two – Aviation Demand Forecasts** examines the potential aviation demand at the airport. The analysis utilizes local socioeconomic information, as well as national air transportation trends, to quantify the levels of aviation activity which can reasonably be expected to occur at Mesa-Falcon Field Airport through the year 2027. The results of this effort are used to determine the types and sizes of facilities which will be required to meet the projected aviation demand at the airport through the planning period.

**Chapter Three – Airport Facility Requirements** comprises the demand capacity and facility requirements analyses. The intent of this analysis is to compare the existing facility capacities to forecast aviation demand and determine where deficiencies in capacities (as well as excess capacities) may exist. Where deficiencies are identified, the size and type of new facilities to accommodate the demand are identified. The airfield analysis focuses on improvements needed to safely serve the type of aircraft expected to operate at the airport in the future, as well as navigational aids to increase the safety and efficiency of operations. This element also examines the general aviation terminal, hangar, apron, and support needs.

**Chapter Four – Airport Development Alternatives** considers a variety of solutions to accommodate the projected facility needs. This element proposes various facility and site plan configurations which can meet the projected facility needs. An analysis is completed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each proposed development alternative, with the intention of determining a single direction for development.

**Chapter Five – Recommended Master Plan Concept** provides both a graphic and narrative description of the recommended plan for the use, development, and operation of the airport.

**Chapter Six – Capital Improvement Program** focuses on the capital needs program which defines the schedules, costs, and funding sources for the recommended development projects.

**Appendix B – Environmental Evaluation** provides a review of the potential environmental impacts associated with proposed airport projects.

**Appendix C – Airport Layout Drawings** includes the official Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and detailed technical drawings depicting related airspace, land use, and property data. These drawings are used by the FAA in determining grant eligibility and funding.

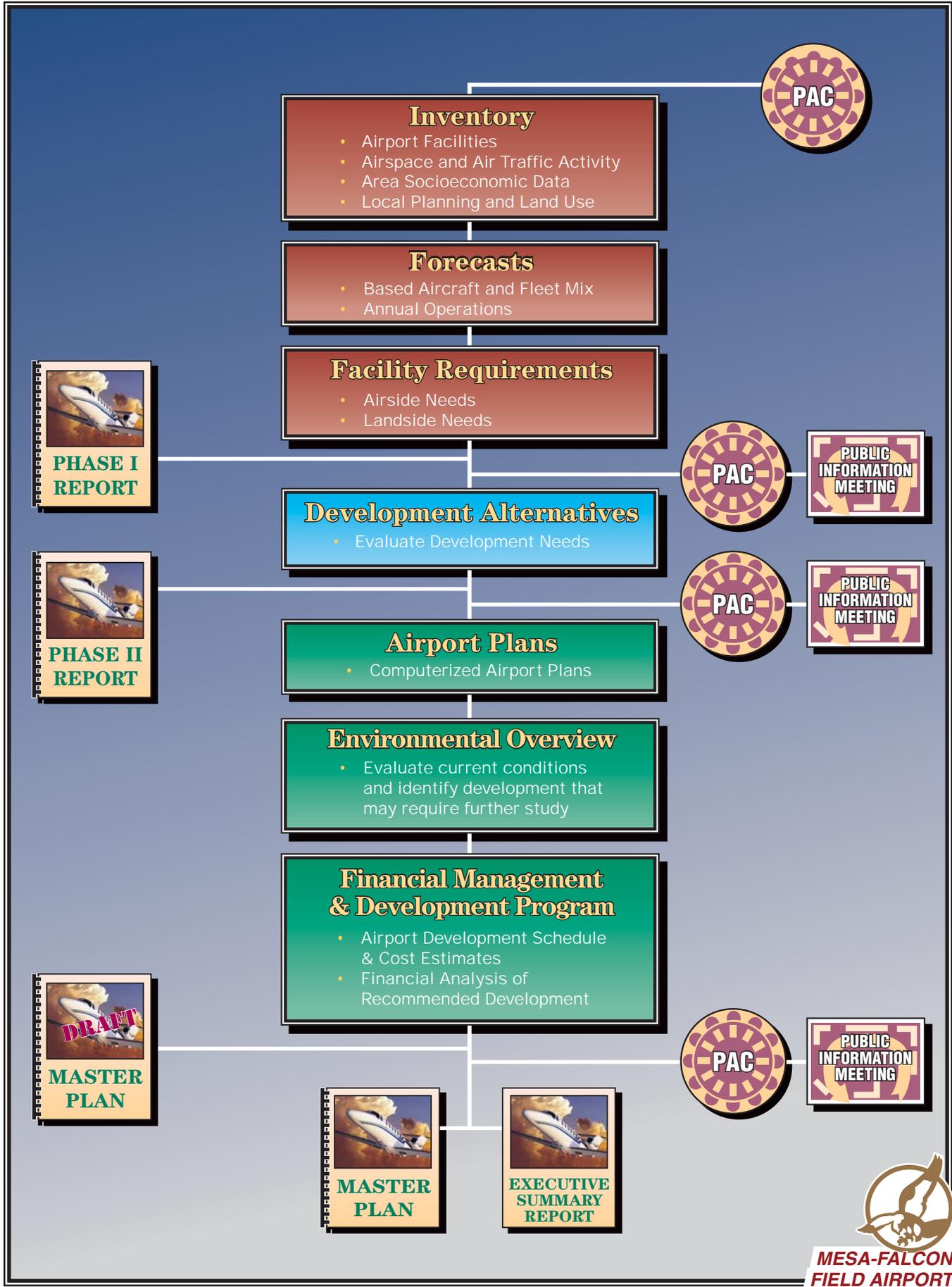
## ***COORDINATION***

The Mesa-Falcon Field Airport Master Plan Update is of interest to many

within the local community. This includes local citizens, community organizations, airport users, airport tenants, area-wide planning agencies, and aviation organizations. As an important component of the regional, state, and national aviation systems, Mesa-Falcon Field Airport is of importance to both state and federal agencies responsible for overseeing air transportation.

To assist in the development of the Master Plan, the City has identified a group of community members and aviation interest groups with a vested interest in Mesa-Falcon Field Airport to act in an advisory role in the development of the Master Plan. Members of this Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) will review phase reports and provide comments throughout the study to help ensure that a realistic, viable plan is developed. Groups represented on the PAC include the FAA, ADOT-Aeronautics, MAG, Arizona Military Airspace Working Group, airport traffic control tower (ATCT) personnel, airport administration from Mesa-Falcon Field Airport, and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, the Boeing Company, MD Helicopters, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, National Business Aircraft Association, Arizona Pilots Association, Falcon Field Tenants and Users Association, Experimental Aircraft Association, City departments, airport businesses, and citizen and neighborhood groups.

To assist in the review process, draft phase reports will be prepared at various milestones in the planning process. The phase report process allows for timely input and review dur-



ing each step within the Master Plan to ensure that all Master Plan issues are fully addressed as the recommended program develops.

At each milestone, the information completed to date will be presented to the public via open-house workshops. The workshops give the public an opportunity to view the working materials, ask questions, and provide feed-

back with the consultant, airport administration, and city officials. Notices of meeting times and locations will be advertised through the media as well as local neighborhood associations. The draft phase reports were also made available to the public on the Mesa-Falcon Field Airport's website ([www.mesaaz.gov/falcon\\_field](http://www.mesaaz.gov/falcon_field)) and Coffman Associates' website ([www.coffmanassociates.com](http://www.coffmanassociates.com)).