

WINGS *Connections*



Wings plans to build five hangars such as this 65' wide x 62' deep x 23'6" high insulated unit. Each unit can hold up to four single-engine planes or three twins or one turboprop or one business jet or other combinations.

Wings will replace its two oldest hangars with modern facilities

On December 28, 2007, Wings Field Preservation Associates, LP, the owner of Wings Field, received a preliminary opinion from the Whippain Zoning Hearing Officer that its plan to rebuild and enlarge two of its hangars complied with applicable ordinances and zoning maps of the Township. However, Wings Concerned Residents, a group of four neighbors who are opposed to Wings Field, appealed the zoning officer's opinion. The Whippain Township Zoning Hearing Board reviewed Wings' plan at a special meeting on Tuesday, April 29, 2008, and unanimously agreed with the zoning officer's preliminary opinion. The neighbors appealed that decision to the Court of Common Pleas. Here is some background on the Wings Hangar Replacement Project.

Wings plans to replace two of its old, crumbling hangar buildings, which were erected 77 years ago, with two slightly larger pre-engineered steel buildings. The goal of Wings Field's Hangar Replacement Project is to:

- Provide safe, secure, high quality, and reasonably-priced hangar storage space for as many of our based aircraft as possible.
- Revitalize the area along Narcissa Road and make it more aesthetically pleasing.
- Improve the quality of life for our neighbors by moving the replacement hangars farther from Narcissa Road and turning them 90° to lessen the impact of perceived noise and fumes

from aircraft operations.

- Conform with zoning requirements.
- Wings officials emphasize that this is a **replacement** project and it will result in no change in the airport's capacity.

The Replacement Plan

Wings plans to demolish existing Hangar #3, Hangar #4, and the small stone office building on Narcissa Road. These were the first structures built at the Blue Bell airport in 1931. The buildings are in a dilapidated state, their roofs leak, the wood is rotting, the masonry walls are crumbling, and the security doors are long gone.

Two rows of replacement buildings,

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New Wings Website

Everything you ever wanted to know about Wings

Earlier this year Wings launched a new website chock full of information for pilots, aircraft owners, people who want to learn how to fly or charter an airplane, neighbors, and customers of businesses located at the airport.

Located at www.WingsField.com, the new website features technical information for pilots, weather reports, educational material on the airport's strict noise abatement procedures, details on services and the businesses that operate at the field, and a special section for neighbors and visitors.

"It's the only airport website I've seen that features real-time Doppler radar views of the surrounding airspace," says Bob Nelson, a local executive who is based at Wings. "I particularly like the videos on Wings' noise control efforts and the convenience of an online source for downloading the airport's noise abatement procedures. No other airport has anything like it."

The website features tabs in the top left corner that link users to a variety of

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1501 Narcissa Rd, Blue Bell, PA 19422 / 215.646.0400 / www.WingsField.com

Issue in Focus

Wings Field's Long-term Plan



A question sometimes heard from Blue Bell residents and local public officials concerns the long-term plans for Wings Field. Some neighbors worry that one day Wings will turn into "another Philadelphia International Airport." Others believe Wings will become a busy corporate jet center like airports in NE Philadelphia, Trenton, or Wilmington. Here's a look at what the owners of Wings Field are planning for its future.

As the owner of Wings Field, we envision that the character of our Blue Bell airport on our 100th anniversary in 2030 will remain largely unchanged from what it is today – we'll still be an efficient general aviation airport used by small airplanes, still used primarily by corporations during weekdays and by pilots for personal and recreational flying during weekends, and still supporting emergency services like medical helicopters. We imagine we will still have, as we have since our earliest days in the 1930s, the following services and



capabilities:

- A single runway for the taking-off and landing of aircraft;
- Taxiways to facilitate the smooth and safe flow of traffic on the ground around the airport;
- Facilities to park and store aircraft;
- Services to maintain, repair, improve and restore aircraft;
- Fuel;
- Businesses to buy, sell, finance, and insure aircraft;
- Schools to train pilots and mechanics;
- Airport and aircraft management services;
- Retail stores to sell pilot supplies and aircraft parts and equipment;
- Air charter and air taxi services.



As we have for 78 years, we will continue providing safe, community-friendly, hassle-free, and financially-viable general aviation facilities and services for businesses and residents in the northern suburbs of Philadelphia. Safe, reliable, convenient transportation is an important component of our local economy and fabric of life.

Our focus will remain on serving the needs of aircraft that weigh less than 12,500 lbs. and that are suitable for our 3700 foot runway. We have long recognized that our airport's 3700 foot runway is adequate to safely meet the air transport needs of the businesses and individuals in the market we serve. As a result, we see no need to extend the length of the runway. Everyone in



aviation recognizes that a runway with Wings' dimensions is not suitable for commercial airliners, regional jets, most fixed wing military aircraft, and most medium- to large-sized business jets.

Furthermore, we have no plans to turn Wings Field into an airport that can accommodate scheduled airline service.

In other ways, though, we do not envision Wings Field standing still. To be responsive to the needs of our aviation customers and the demands of the community that surrounds us, we need to renew and revitalize the infrastructure of our aging facilities. We envision several important changes.

First, we envision replacing our old, dilapidated hangars with modern aircraft storage facilities and then adding new hangars as substitutes for many of the fully-exposed and less secure outdoor tie-down spots. More specifically, we envision demolishing Hangars 3 and 4, the two oldest of our seven hangar buildings, and replacing them during 2009. After that, as demand permits, we envision replacing our other hangars and building new hangars in the area closest to the intersection of Stenton Avenue and Narcissa Road. As part of that effort, we envision no significant change in the overall capacity of the airport beyond the 162 noted by a Commonwealth Court judge in a 1988 decision approving Wings' development plan. However, we expect to make sig-

Visitor Aircraft Parking Apron

It would take about 15 seconds (versus 75 seconds currently) to taxi from the runway to the proposed aircraft parking area.

Parking for visiting turbine-powered aircraft would move from the terminal area to the proposed Visitor Aircraft Parking Apron which will be located next to the runway and taxiway, 135 yards farther away from neighbors' homes on Huntsman Lane.

Tie-downs for flight school and base customers would move to areas near the ramp and terminal areas.

nificant changes to the storage mix for aircraft based at the field. Currently, two-thirds of our customers have to store their aircraft in "tie-down" spaces that are outside in a big field fully-exposed to the elements. We envision reversing the storage mix. Our plan is to increase significantly the number of aircraft stored securely in locked hangars while decreasing proportionately the number stored in outside tie-down spaces.

Second, we plan to develop an innovative mix of individual and shared hangars that can accommodate a wide variety of aircraft, user requirements, and financial arrangements. Most general aviation airports have this type of flexible hangar space. We envision building only a limited number of hangars that could house aircraft like KingAir turboprops and small business jets. Although federal law prohibits us from restricting operations by aircraft over certain sizes or that produce high noise levels, we do not envision providing services – i.e., mechanics, maintenance, aircraft support – that would attract larger or noisier aircraft than those that currently use the airport. We envision that our aircraft support services will continue to focus on single- and multi-engine, propeller-driven, general aviation airplanes and the new ultra-quiet very light jets (VLJ). These small, jet-powered airplanes are the size of a Ford Explorer SUV, are quieter

than most of the propeller airplanes that are currently at the airport, and can easily and safely operate on our 3700 foot runway.

Third, as part of our infrastructure improvement efforts, we envision projects to rehabilitate the asphalt on our existing taxiways and terminal area, reroute taxiways to the proposed hangars near the Five Points intersection, add security enhancements, and construct a building to store the airport's snow removal equipment.

Fourth, recognizing that residential and commercial developments now encircle an airfield that for its first 50 years was surrounded by farmland and open space, we envision that we will continue to incorporate procedures to manage the impact of our operations on the community. An essential project to reduce noise is building a parking lot for visitor aircraft, called a "transient parking apron," down the hill from the Driscoll Terminal Building in an area adjacent to the runway. This parking area, approved by the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors, will lessen the impact of noise and fumes from visiting turbine-powered aircraft on our neighbors on Huntsman Lane and in Blue Bell Woods. The repositioning of our replacement hangars will offer additional sound buffering benefits.

To further control noise and fumes, we will continue our already aggressive environmental management procedures and adopt the following new measures.

- We will continue our higher than standard traffic pattern altitude, continue to use even higher pattern altitudes for jets and multi-engine aircraft, and continue to operate special traffic patterns and procedures for helicopters.
- We will institute a voluntary curfew for aircraft operations between the hours of 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Emergency service and government aircraft are specifically exempt from the voluntary curfew provisions. A helicopter taking off in the middle of the night brings care and compassion to people who are hurt and in desperate need for help.

- We will continue our strict noise abatement program and improve it wherever practical. As part of this effort, we will continue our strong pilot education program that trains and encourages pilots to operate their aircraft in ways that minimize disturbances to the community. We will use our website, brochures, seminars, flight school, and one-on-one meetings to educate Wings-based pilots and visiting pilots alike about our noise abatement procedures. In addition, we will include provisions in the lease agreements with pilots based at Wings that require their compliance with our noise abatement procedures.
- We will not permit aircraft in the ramp, transient parking, and hangar areas to stand idle with their engines running for more than five minutes. Also, we will continue our practice of limiting, to ten minutes, the time aircraft can operate Auxiliary Power Units (APU) and Ground Power Units (GPU) in the ramp area.
- Because we want to minimize the operations of heavier aircraft, we will ask operators of aircraft weighing more than 12,500 lbs. to request "prior permission" to operate their



aircraft into our airport. In addition, we will see to it that aviation-related publications include a notice that our runway has a design strength of 12,500 lbs. for aircraft with single-wheel type landing gear.

- As new technology is developed, we envision using any reasonable method to reduce fumes released by fueling.
- Except for emergency service and government aircraft operating on emergency missions, we will not provide “hot fueling” service -- i.e., pumping fuel while an engine is running, a seldom used procedure.
- The flight school on the field will continue to prohibit “touch and go” operations by their students, aircraft renters, and flight instructors.
- To be accountable to the concerns of the community, we will improve our web- and telephone-based system for handling neighbors’ complaints and promptly follow-up on any problems.
- Our planning efforts will continue to have the lifestyle of our neighbors, and their concerns about noise, fumes, and disruptions to their quality of life, as a paramount focus.

We have always envisioned preserving the open space that surrounds the airport in its natural state and continuing to use a portion of our property for agricultural purposes. We will work diligently to maintain a balanced approach between the preservation of the surrounding land, wildlife and indigenous vegetation and the safety of our staff, our neighbors and the travelers who use the airport.

In recognition of our historical heritage, we envision opening an aviation museum at Wings Field. Our aim would be to preserve the historic aircraft, technology, and memories of Pennsylvania aviators and to provide an education resource for the Blue Bell community.

For the future, our goal is an even

A word about how this long-term plan came about



This aerial view depicts how Wings Field might appear in the future after the infrastructure improvement projects envisioned by the airport are completed. The plan envisions an increase in the number of aircraft stored in locked hangars, a proportional decrease in the number stored in outside tie-down spaces, with no significant change in the overall capacity of the airport.

Public input on the Wings Plan has come through two community advisory committees, many open house workshops, a year of meetings with elected public officials, and a recent round of discussions between airport opponents and the owners of Wings Field. Wings officials collaborated with these groups, sought their input, and integrated the public’s comments and concerns into the development of this plan.

The meetings with public officials and the recent discussions focused on Wings Field’s long-term vision and produced a “to do list” of items sought by airport opponents. Wings had already implemented many of

them. Two items, long supported by Wings because they are designed to improve the quality of life of neighbors, were delayed by litigation from a few anti-Wings neighbors. Others are being adopted by Wings. A few – capacity limitations, restrictions on types of aircraft that can use the airport, mandatory night curfews, written guarantees – are impossible because they would require Wings to violate federal laws on discrimination and grant assurances made as a result of government funding. Wings owners and Whitpain Township officials are working to accomplish the intent of these last few items without violating the law.

safer, cleaner, healthier environment for our pilots, passengers, and neighbors -- using technology and training to put safer airplanes and pilots in our skies; using our land, trees, crops, and open space as a buffer; and using responsible renewal to revitalize our facility and services. We envision that our airport

will be right-sized for the businesses and individuals who use us and for the neighbors who live next to us. We envision a mutually productive long-term relationship with our Blue Bell neighbors in which we coexist in a constructive way with the community that has grown up around us.

Wings to replace hangars

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Original hangars were built perpendicular to Narcissa Road. This configuration, used for 50 years before there were any homes across the street, funnels noise towards neighbors across Narcissa Road.

made up of five individual hangar units, will replace Hangars #3 and #4. There will be two insulated units in one building and three units in the other. Each hangar unit will be 65' wide x 62' deep x 23'6" high and have a 60' wide x 18' high bifold electric door. While the current buildings can hold 17 airplanes, the replacements will be able to hold between five and 20 aircraft. The number varies by the types and sizes of aircraft stored in each unit. For example, each unit could store:

- Up to four small, single-engine, propeller airplanes – like Cessna 172, Cirrus SR22, Beech Bonanza – side-by-side in a common space;
- Up to three multi-engine airplanes – like the Piper Navajo, Beech Baron, or Eclipse 500 very light jet;



Replacement hangars will be rotated 90 degrees so they are parallel to Narcissa Road. This configuration will reduce noise perceived by the neighbors.

- One small- to medium-sized business jet or turbo-prop – like the Citation Bravo or KingAir.

Aircraft owners want secure, high quality, reasonably priced “garages” for their aircraft. This design approach gives Wings more flexibility in the way it provides garage space for based customers. Wings needs the flexibility this type of configuration provides so that it can get as many aircraft as possible stored under locked cover.

The hangar project will be funded 100% by Wings. There will be no government money. The proposed project meets all Whippain Township setback, impervious surface, height, and expansion limitations.

Replacement hangars offer better security, flexibility, and service for customers

Detailed building plans for replacement Hangars #3 and #4 have yet to be finalized. However, what is certain is that the building closest to Narcissa Road, new Hangar #4, will be set back

from Narcissa Road the required minimum 105' building setback in accordance with township zoning requirements. The second building, Hangar #3, will be built about 92 feet away and parallel to Hangar #4.

Wings plans to turn the replacement buildings 90° so they are parallel to Narcissa Road. This configuration should help shield the homes on Huntsman Lane from some of the perceived noise and fumes generated by aircraft operations.

The replacement buildings will also enhance the look of the neighborhood and rejuvenate and revitalize the airport's side of Narcissa Road.

The height of the replacement buildings will be well below the Township's maximum height for buildings or structures.

Even though they will be turned 90°, the replacement buildings will be constructed on generally the same pavement and foundations areas -- i.e., impervious surface -- as the original hangars that were built in 1931.

View from the ramp at Wings Field



Hangars #3 and #4, shown behind the parked airplane, will be demolished. Notice how these hangars are perpendicular to Narcissa Road in the background. The positioning of the old hangars, built more than 50 years before there were any houses on Huntsman Lane, funnels noise towards the Huntsman Lane neighborhood. By using the replacement buildings to attenuate sound, the quality of life for the neighbors should improve.



Here's a look at how the hangar complex might look after the two replacement hangars are built. Both buildings will be moved farther from Narcissa Road and turned 90 degrees to provide a physical barrier for sound attenuation. It is expected that this configuration will help block noise and fumes from aircraft operations.

Check out new Wings website

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topics, including:

- Airport Information
- Services
- Learn How to Fly
- Charter An Airplane
- Good Neighbor
- News
- Local Attractions
- GA Serving America
- Quick Links

The “Good Neighbor” section features a special educational area for pilots that details Wings Field’s Fly Quiet Program. Here pilots can download brochures on Wings’ noise abatement procedures, including procedures for propeller airplanes, jets, and helicopters. There are also maps showing noise sensitive areas they should avoid.

Neighbors can use the “Good Neighbor” section to learn more about airports, how they operate, and what Wings has done to be a better neighbor. Two videos on noise issues are available, including one that shows how the new visitor parking apron will work to reduce noise. There is also an online form that neighbors can use to submit a noise complaint.

Revolutionary Eclipse VLJ arrives at Wings Field

It seats four passengers and two pilots, cruises at 430 mph, can make it to Detroit in two hours, weighs the same as a SUV, and is smaller than Piper Navajo and KingAir twin-engine propeller airplanes that have been using Wings for decades.

It is quieter than virtually all of the twin-engine and most of the single-engine airplanes that use Wings Field. Operating costs are about the same as a modern high-performance twin-engine propeller plane.

The first of two Eclipse 500 very light jets (VLJ) to be based at Wings, operated by Blue Bell Air, LLC, landed on Runway 24 in the early afternoon on July 12, 2008. Piloted by Blue Bell Air president Jim Costello, the Eclipse 500 made the 1,540 mile flight to Wings, with a refueling stop in St. Louis, from the manufacturing plant in Albuquerque



The Eclipse 500, shown in the middle foreground, is slightly larger than the single-engine propeller airplanes parked to the left and right.

in about four hours.

“It’s a joy to fly,” says Costello. “Its small size lets us use over 5,000 small airports like Wings across the USA. This gets our clients much closer to their destinations than airline service.”

Blue Bell Air will operate its Eclipse 500 VLJs under fractional ownership agreements and its charter certificate.

In the News

Check the “News” tab of our website at www.WingsField.com for the latest news about Wings, including:

- Whitpain Zoning Hearing Board’s favorable decision regarding hangars.
- Decision by Common Pleas Court judge -- and dismissal of case by Commonwealth Court judge -- to affirm Whitpain Township’s vote to approve the transient parking apron.
- Ambler Gazette October 1, 2008 article about status of parking apron and hangar replacement project.
- Ambler Gazette May 2008 article about Whitpain Zoning Hearing Board’s decision regarding hangars.
- Scorecard showing how Wings has responded to list of demands from airport opponent.
- Scorecard showing how Wings has cooperated on issue list discussed by public officials, neighbors, and Wings.