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## Stadiums, growth spur activity at Glendale Airport

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by [Mike Sunnucks](#)

The Business Journal

The Glendale Municipal Airport is fast becoming an economic engine for the West Valley and eventually could rival its more well-known and developed sister in Scottsdale.

The city of Glendale currently is considering an expansion plan for the airport that would include extending the facility's runway and taxiways and expanding its hangar space from 589,000 square feet to more than 1.3 million. The city is expected to finalize the airport's new master plan and expansion in 2007.

The city-owned Glendale Airport is across Loop 101 highway from the new University of Phoenix Stadium and Jobing.com Arena. The once-sleepy airfield is becoming the preferred landing spot for rock stars, corporate executives, professional athletes and their agents, and other jet-setters attending events or performing at the venues.

City and airport officials note that the Glendale Airport has seen more corporate and personal jets landing and taking off around Arizona Cardinals football games, concerts and other events. It is expected to get plenty of use during the upcoming college football bowl season because Glendale is host to the BCS National Championship game between Ohio State University and the University of Florida and the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl.

The Glendale Airport has seen growth in recent years and much more is expected, particularly as the stadiums host prime-time national sporting events and concerts and surrounding western suburbs continue to grow.

The city of Glendale will finalize expansion plans at the general aviation airport early next year with the goal of becoming a newer version of Scottsdale Airport and the Scottsdale Airpark area, which is a major employment center.

"We're headed that way," said Jamsheed Mehta, Glendale's transportation director, referring to plans to grow the city airport into something akin to Scottsdale.

More than 50,000 workers are employed in the area near the Scottsdale Airport. There now are just more than 500 workers in and around the Glendale Airport. There also is available land to the east and the west of the airport off of Glendale Avenue that could be developed into office and industrial parks and other aviation-related businesses. That's what has occurred in Scottsdale over the years near its municipal airport.

"There's a lot of inquiries for growth. There's a lot of potential," Mehta said.

There also is little current development around the airport except for an industrial/office park to the north and some sand and gravel pits and a Morton Salt distribution center down Glendale Avenue to the west.

The construction of the new stadiums and the Westgate City Center as well as the continued population and increased business activity in the western suburbs gives the airport prime potential as a job center and economic hub. The airfield is near Luke Air Force Base and not too far from the planned Loop 303 freeway.

"Corporate air traffic in and out of the airport has increased significantly in the past few years, and it is utilized by the entertainers and events associated with the stadium and arena," said Don Rinehart, president and chief executive of the Glendale Chamber of Commerce.

Growth projections call for the annual aircraft operations (takeoffs and landings) and planes based at the Glendale Airport to increase substantially. In 2004, the airport had 118,000 airport landings and takeoffs compared to 150,000 in 2006. That number is expected to increase to 215,000 landings and takeoffs by 2020. There are no plans, however, to have commercial service in and out of the suburban airfield.

"There are significant pockets of development springing up along the whole 101 corridor, and that will continue for some time. The airport will, in some cases, be a main catalyst for some of that development. In a few years, I suspect that its usage will rival the Scottsdale Airpark, and that its role will be similar in scope, if not more important to the area," Rinehart said.

The Glendale city government is finalizing master-plan changes to the airport area as well as growth measures. The Glendale City Council is expected to consider those changes early next year.

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Glendale Municipal Airport: [www.glendaleaz.gov/airport](http://www.glendaleaz.gov/airport)

FAST FACTS

Glendale Municipal Airport has:

- 150,000 takeoffs and landings in 2006
- 589,000 square feet of hangar space expected to grow to 1.3 million square feet during the next few years
- \$20 million economic impact annually
- 516 employees
- \$15.4 million annual payroll

**Glendale Municipal Airport expansion plans include:**

- More airport hangars to house private planes, jets and helicopters at the northwest corner
- 215,000 annual takeoffs and landings by 2020
- Runway extensions
- More taxiways
- Possible business, aviation and industrial parks to the east and west

Source: City of Glendale, [www.ci.glendale.az.us/airport/plansforthefuture.cfm](http://www.ci.glendale.az.us/airport/plansforthefuture.cfm)

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