



Chapter 5 Falcon Field Employment Center

5-1 Profile

The Falcon Field Employment Center (FFEC) is a nearly 5,100-acre area that serves as one of the eight employment centers in the City of Mesa. The FFEC boundary is similar to the Falcon Field Sub-Area study boundary, with the exception of the western-most portion along the Red Mountain Freeway. Employment in this area during July 2005 was estimated at 10,313 people (source: Claritas BusinessPoint 2005), with the majority being employed by aerospace and aviation industry cluster companies. These employees worked for 339 business establishments. During 2004, more than 5 percent of all aerospace and aviation establishments and more than 11 percent of employment in the aerospace cluster in Maricopa County are concentrated with the Falcon Field Employment Center, according to the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG).

Land availability for development is a clear strength of the Falcon Field Employment Center with nearly 1,000 acres of major improved business and industrial parks in 2005. Well over 600 acres were undeveloped. The FFEC and its developable property are ideally located on or near Falcon Field Airport. A majority of the available property located in the study area are fully improved, planned, and zoned for commercial and industrial uses today.

The extension of the Red Mountain Freeway (Loop 202) to Power Road in 2005 has generated high interest in the area and tremendously increased accessibility to the rest of the Phoenix Metro area. Travel to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport is now less than 30 minutes. The Red Mountain Freeway (Loop 202) provides access to a growing population of more than 1.2 million residents within a 30-minute drive.

Falcon Field Airport is the economic engine at the center of the FFEC. The FFEC is comprised of a remarkable group of major employers representing the aerospace/aviation, high-tech, manufacturing and software industry clusters. According to company representatives, Boeing employs more than 4,700 people (2006) at its facility where they build the Apache

Helicopters, and are located directly north of Falcon Field Airport. MD Helicopters is located on the north side of Falcon Field Airport. It builds custom helicopters for private companies and individuals. MD restructured its organization in 2005 and is now poised to advance its company to the next level with new investors involved with the company. Other major companies in the area include, but are certainly not limited to, SemFlex, GST, Marsh Aviation, Transmatic, and Talley Defense Systems.

Mesa's Falcon Field Airport ranked among the nation's "top 10" general aviation airports in terms of based aircraft and handles more than 270,000 flight operations annually (Falcon Field Employment Center Strategy Plan). Falcon Field Airport is ranked third in terms of economic impact in the state of Arizona behind Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and Tucson International Airport. The economic impact of Falcon Field Airport exceeds \$2 billion in sales and \$700 million in payroll with the multipliers applied by the Arizona Department of Transportation Study conducted in 2002.

Infrastructure serving this area is fairly well established. However, a highly beneficial addition to the infrastructure mix relates to telecommunications. The City of Mesa has constructed parts of a 36-mile fiber optic conduit loop, which when completed will connect its key employment centers. The City of Mesa has established strategic partnerships in constructing the infrastructure in conjunction with telecommunication providers. The FFEC portion of the conduit loop was completed. This includes the Falcon Field portion of the conduit which runs north along Greenfield Road, east on McDowell Road and south on Power Road along with the conduit running along Falcon Drive through the airport.

Telecommunication providers can easily install their own fiber optic lines with the city's conduit without tearing up the city streets, which will save tax dollars in the long run. Advanced telecommunications infrastructure is a key site location requirement for many companies and strengthens the position of the Falcon Field Employment Center as the perfect area for companies to locate.

The Falcon Field Employment Center is the perfect place for companies to locate and prosper due to: A thriving airport; convenient freeway access; existing aerospace and technology companies; surrounding





executive and affordable housing communities; and the availability of land and buildings.

5-2 Aviation and Non-Aviation Businesses

Aviation businesses serve to anchor and build synergy with the airport. However, business linkages are also necessary with non-aviation businesses, and non-aviation businesses often provide essential services and entertainment to area employees and residents alike. A proper balance of aviation and non-aviation businesses is key to the long-term prosperity of the Falcon Field Sub-Area.

As of July 2005 (source: Claritas BusinessPoint 2005), aviation-related businesses provide nearly half of the Sub-Area employment, with 4,308 employees on the airport property, and 316 employees in the rest of the Sub-Area. These employees work for 22 establishments on the airport and 3 establishments in the rest of the sub-area. The majority of these employees are concentrated in the largest aviation-related business, Boeing, accounting for nearly 86% (4,000 employees) of all aviation-related employment in the Sub-Area. With this kind of employment concentration, diversification of aviation-related business through growth will need to be an important focus.

Non-aviation-related businesses account for 902 employees on the airport property, and 4,747 employees in the rest of the Sub-Area. These employees work for 101 establishments on the airport and 213 establishments in the remainder of the Sub-Area. Only a small fraction of this employment is in retail or service related establishments.

5-3 Falcon Field Employment Center Strategy Plan

In September of 2004, the Falcon Field Employment Center Strategy Plan was published. The purpose of this study is to “identify the unique attributes and issues facing the Falcon Field Employment Center in order to identify the most appropriate ...industry to target (recruit) for the area.” A summary of key recommendations relevant to this plan includes the following:

- Focus recruitment efforts on the industry clusters of aerospace, advanced business services, and education.
- Encourage business support amenities, such as a business hotel and business services.
- Enhance the appearance of Falcon Field Airport.
- Create a Falcon Field Sub-Area Plan.

5-4 Summary of Issues and Opportunities

- Vacant land on and near the airport needs to be primarily reserved for aviation related businesses.
- Within the aviation business clusters, concentration of employment is limited to very few companies. Diversification needs to occur through growth.
- Regional transportation facilities such as freeways can be leveraged to promote economic growth.
- The accessibility of this area to other major employment centers and a large number of rooftops is an asset that makes the area ideal for business relocations.
- The airport is an economic engine that may be leveraged to strengthen and grow the entire sub-area.
- There is a need for secondary services such as retail, dining, lodging, and recreation to serve area employees and visitors.
- The Falcon Field Employment Center Strategy is complementary to this effort.

