

About Airport Cities
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Airports in the 21st century are experiencing a new and distinct evolutionary stage --- the airport city. What started out in the early 1990s with a handful of European and U.S. gateways substantially notching up their duty-free and traditional terminal retail and eateries, has become a world-wide phenomenon of airport commercial expansion and diversification. In the process, gateway airports have assumed roles few before anticipated.

They serve as regional multimodal surface transportation nodes and magnets for business location, commercial transactions, information exchange and leisure activities. Along with their terminals transforming into shopping malls and artistic venues, airports are spawning aviation-linked clusters of hotels, convention, trade and exhibition facilities, corporate offices and retail complexes along with culture, entertainment and recreation centers around them.

Busy executives can fly into airports to conduct business in passenger lounges, conference rooms, and terminal-linked hotels, then fly out, often avoiding the cost of an overnight stay. Other fly-in visitors can eat, sleep, meet, shop and be entertained without going more than 15 minutes from the terminal.

Air gateways, in short, have become as much places of destination as places of departure. They have, in fact, become urban realms in their own right, driving and shaping the very fabric of new cities they are creating.

The airport city is far more expansive and important for employment growth, business competitiveness and urban form than prior transit center-oriented developments such as that around downtown train stations. An increasing number of airports employ over 50,000 daily workers, which would make them metropolitan central cities by the U.S. census definition.

Beyond their fences, airports are generating corridors and clusters of aviation-linked businesses ranging from health and wellness facilities to large entertainment and leisure complexes. The annual economic impact of airport cities is thus often in the tens of billions of U.S. dollars.

The evolution of city airports into airport cities requires not only a new business model but also a new planning model. The business model must be based on private-sector

strategies and non-aeronautical revenue generation. The planning model should integrate airport planning, urban planning, and business site planning. These new models are essential if airport cities are to be economically efficient, aesthetically pleasing, and environmentally sustainable, as well as serve passengers and their surrounding communities in the most positive manner possible.

Yet, in the rush to the airport city model, sight must not be lost that, first and foremost, a successful airport city requires a successful airport. Without passenger and cargo traffic increases based on efficient aeronautical infrastructure operation, the engine that drives the airport city will sputter.