

The Port of Kennewick: A Bold Vision for Redeveloping Vista Field

For years Vista Field, located in the heart of the Quad-Cities, has been an fiscally-anemic, space-restricted, non-commercial airport. Not being eligible for FAA funding, Vista Field had struggled to remain viable with only a handful of users, and little impact on the local economy. Indeed, the airport has been a major financial drain costing Port district taxpayers nearly \$400,000 per year in operation subsidies.

After a recent study showed that making the airport viable would require a major tax increase, Port commissioners unanimously voted for a different alternative. Commissioners embraced a bold, long-term vision to close the airport and redevelop its 112 acres to create a vibrant new town center that would help transform the Quad-Cities into a magnet for tourism while powering the regional economy to new heights.

A Formative Decision

Redeveloping the airport land will result in the creation of a bustling new regional destination with a chain of open spaces, parks, plazas, water features, and other civic improvements. **Redevelopment creates the potential to build more than one million square feet of new retail, commercial office and industrial space, as well as 1,400 condominiums.** It is a compelling vision that is slated to create thousands of jobs over the next two decades while adding sustained value to the local economy. Redevelopment will not require additional taxes.

Turning a Loss into a Profit

Rather than continue to have an airport juggernaut which lost money year after year, a recent study has shown that **redevelopment of Vista Field would turn a nearly \$2 million loss into a \$3.7 million profit** for the Port. This new development has the **potential to generate more than 3,300 jobs, \$460 million in private sector investment, \$51 million in new infrastructure, and \$408 million in new (taxable) buildings.** The positive impact of these investments on the economy of the Quad-Cities will be enormous.

Designed with Substantial Public Input

The vision laid out by Port commissioners is of **an inclusive, phased redevelopment process over two decades, guided by an advisory committee of citizens and stakeholders.** The process will include substantial opportunities for public meetings and input to shape the details of the redevelopment to maximize quality of life improvements. **Possible development ideas include the creation of a “Canal Walk” to connect the new community to the Columbia Center Mall and adding connections to the Entertainment District as well.** Port officials are committed to seeking extensive public input before adopting a redevelopment plan.