

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

FEDERAL FACILITIES RESTORATION AND REUSE OFFICE *WITH*
REGION 6 FEDERAL FACILITIES SECTION

Reuse at Air Force Base Maintains Prior Employment Levels; Strengthens Community

England Air Force Base



Memorial to former use as an air force base

After more than 50 years in military operation, the England Air Force Base in Alexandria, Louisiana has been reinvented as a major community attraction and employer. Through collaboration between a dedicated community and federal, state, and local agencies, much of the former base was declared Ready for Reuse and now supports a medical center, residential areas, golf course, and the Alexandria International Airport.

History

The England Industrial Airpark and Community (England Airpark) has had many names over its 70-year lifespan. Located five miles northwest of the City of Alexandria, Louisiana, this 2,604-acre facility has played a vital role in ensuring prosperity to the surrounding community. In 1939, it began as a simple emergency airstrip for Esler Field, the regional airport serving the Central Louisiana area. As the threat of World War II approached, the Army Air Corps leased the facility from the City of Alexandria. The facility



The Goose Bay Band at England Air Force Base in 1954

became the Alexandria Army Air Base. After the end of the war, the base was placed in a standby status. In 1950, the base was reactivated in response to the outbreak of hostilities in Korea and assigned to the Tactical Air Command. In 1955, the name of the base was changed to England Air Force Base, to honor a former squadron commander.

Closure and Cleanup

The base was closed on December 15, 1992 as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure process. England AFB was an integral part of the community's economy - employing 3,000 military and 681 civilian personnel. The base brought in about \$100 million annually to the local economy. The closure of the base posed an economic challenge for the region.

In 1993, a Baseline Realignment and Closure Team (BCT) was created to oversee the investigations and corrective actions that were a part of remediation activities at the facility to make it ready for reuse. The BCT was a three-person team that included Project Managers from the State of Louisiana, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Air Force. They held monthly meetings to discuss the results of past and current actions, as well as potential future actions. The BCT worked closely with the redevelopment authority to coordinate activities.



Aerial view of runways at England Air Force Base



Environmental cleanup activities at England Air Force Base



Sign at construction site

Initial environmental studies conducted in the decade leading up to the base's closure identified over 330 potential areas of concern. These areas included landfills, above- and below-ground storage tanks, fire training areas, oil-water separators, a sewage treatment pond, a low-level radiological disposal site, and a suspected chemical warfare training material burial site. In preparation for issuing a permit for storing hazardous wastes at the base, EPA prepared a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Facility Assessment (RFA), which identified 59 solid waste management units (SWMUs) and five areas of concern. A Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendment (HSWA) corrective action permit issued in 1995 included 33 SWMUs and all five areas of concern identified by the RFA.

EPA took an active role in the cleanup and remediation process at England Airpark; two particular examples highlight this involvement. In the first, EPA collected and analyzed the DNA of bacteria found in groundwater contaminated by chlorinated

solvents. The analysis showed that the bacteria were breaking down the solvent, providing natural attenuation of contaminants. The second example is EPA brought in a team of scientists from New Jersey to check for vapor intrusion at a hospital on site. Using advanced detection technology, it was demonstrated that the hospital facility and nearby school were safe for use.

Reuse

The former England Air Force Base has survived as a vibrant and essential part of the Central Louisiana economy. The facility is now a mixed use development centered around the regional airport, with a golf course, residential and commercial space, manufacturing, and transportation. The base is now known as the England Airpark and Community. Development has been overseen by the England Economic and Industrial Development District (England Authority or EEIDD), an independent political subdivision of the State of Louisiana. The EEIDD was formed by business leaders and elected officials. The elected officials on the EEIDD board served as the local communities' link to and voice in the redevelopment process.

The England Airpark now houses the Alexandria International Airport (AEX) which offers a flight school, four major commercial air service providers, a fixed base operator (FBO), and an ISO 9000 calibration laboratory. AEX has made public its *Draft 2009 Master Plan*, which outlines targeted industries and areas of development that can continue to fuel the reuse of the facility. The Master Plan recommends that England Airpark target the following industries: Aviation, Corporate Training and Shared Services, a Rail Car-Related Cluster, Plastics Manufacturing, Regional Distribution, and Homeland Security and National Defense.



Control tower at the Alexandria International Airport



Oak Wing Golf Club

Although closed as a military base, AEX continues to serve the military as a loading and unloading station supporting nearby Ft. Polk through a commercial lease with the military. This arrangement has resulted in approximately \$60 million being invested in the airfield's facilities. England Airpark and AEX proved their value as a disaster relief staging and support area in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav.

As the regional airport serving central Louisiana, AEX serves over 250,000 passengers with over 50,000 air operations per year through commercial and private airlines. England Airpark continues to be successful at drawing investment to the park and the surrounding community. According to the Louisiana Economic Quarterly, England Airpark has leveraged \$502.8 million in direct private investment and employs more than 2,000 people. Direct sales revenue has been reported as \$2.8 billion.

The eight-parish region surrounding the EEIDD – referred to as the Central Louisiana Region (CENLA) – has been positively impacted by the reuse at England Airpark. From 1992 through 2007 total investment and operational revenue at EEIDD generated over \$7.3 billion in additional business sales within the CENLA economy. This investment has contributed to producing over \$1.8 billion in additional household earnings for residents within the CENLA region. By 2007, EEIDD-associated entities supported about 7,437 permanent and temporary jobs with average annual earnings of about \$36,457. Over the 15 years up to 2007 that the England Authority has overseen the development of the former military base, parish sales tax collections increased by a total of \$36.94 million.



Residential units on the former England Air Force Base

On June 4, 2004, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 declared a large portion of the former England Air Force Base “Ready for Reuse.” The declaration was commemorated by the opening of the 220-acre OakWing Golf Club, a public 18-hole course located along the scenic banks of Bayou Rapides and Bayou Le Tig. The England Airpark also offers residential and service facilities. The Louisiana State University Medical Center at Alexandria is also using the former base hospital to serve the needs of the local community. Currently, about 300 housing units are occupied, and a daycare facility, a restaurant, and a hotel have been completed.

**For more information, call or write:
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