

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE- September 9, 2023

THE SKY IS THE LIMIT WITH RUNWAY CONSTRUCTION AT GARDNER MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

***Gardner's Airport Sees Renovations To Runway And Administration Building As New Master
Plan For The Facility Begins To Be Drafted***

Gardner, MA – September 9, 2023 – The City of Gardner is once again improving critical transportation infrastructure, though this time they are looking to the skies to do so. The city recently announced a complete reconstruction of the runway at Gardner Municipal Airport, a task not undertaken since the 1970s. This reconstruction project takes place of a larger Airport Revitalization recently a launched by the City's Administration to bring the facility up to its fullest potential. This initiative also includes substantial renovations to the main building at the airport and the creation of a full masterplan for the facility to help guide improvements to be made in the future.

The ambitious project was made possible through nearly \$5 million in federal funding secured through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), with an additional \$500,000 for this initiative was awarded from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. The remaining cost share of the project was approved by the City Council earlier this year.

Speaking on the scope of the project and the airport's importance to the city, **Mayor Mike Nicholson said** "We have done a lot in the last three years to invest in our infrastructure in Gardner, and this continues that work. We want to make sure we're doing everything we can to have all of our facilities, including our airport, operating at maximum efficiency. That means being diligent about its upkeep, proactive in our investments in its future and how we can expand the services we provide to its patrons, and cognizant of opportunities for federal and state funding when they become available."

"The Gardner Airport is a critical part of the North Central Massachusetts economy, and I couldn't be more thrilled to deliver nearly \$5 million in federal funding to support major upgrades to the facility," **said Congresswoman Lori Trahan.** "I'm grateful to Mayor Nicholson for his commitment to leveraging federal funds like this to invest in a wide range of economic development initiatives across Gardner, and I look forward to our continued work together to make The Chair City an even better place to call home."

The project also includes reconstruction of the connecting taxiways at the airport, and will bring the facility into compliance with current FAA Standards. In addition to the reconstructed pavement, the project includes an entirely new drainage system, new Runway and Taxiway edge

lighting systems, new Runway End Identifier Lights (REILs), and a new Airfield Electrical Vault, which will be installed to house all of the airport's electrical equipment.

According to Gale Associates, the engineering consulting firm tasked with planning the work, the improvements will pave the way for the airport to become a viable economic driver for the City of Gardner as well as surrounding towns and cities.

In December of 2021, Mayor Nicholson put forward a proposal that was unanimously approved by the City Council to create an Airport Manager position in order to make sure that the operations performed at the Gardner Municipal Airport were being done in the most efficient and effective way possible. Isabelle Davis was hired to fill this role and working with the City's Airport Commission, has overseen this project at the facility.

"The local Gardner Municipal Airport runway project brings jobs to the area. The renovation of the interior of the airport building that has not been renovated in 50 years will create local jobs too. It will also bring tourism to the area by creating a public space for pilots to stop by, have a coffee, check the weather, and see the local sites" **said Airport Manager of the Gardner Municipal Airport Isabelle Davis.** "It brings the city together by recharging economic activity. It can also generate revenue that the city can use to replenish services and work on infrastructure that improves quality of life."

The long term plan for the facility's main administration building is to make the facility viable enough to house a small coffee shop or breakfast/lunch location for pilots visiting the area or members of the public looking to watch the planes.

City Councilor Judy Mack, who serves as the **Chair of the City Council's Public Welfare Committee** which has oversight over the Airport, also expressed her high hopes for the project, "The newly hired airport manager, Isabelle Davis, along with those that serve on the Airport Commission are committed to maintenance and ongoing updates of the facilities which are long overdue. These efforts I believe will result in the airport being utilized more as the new runway will be able to handle larger planes and bring a higher level of safety to those that use the airport, which continues to be a great asset to the community."

The ambitious undertaking at the airport comes at an inflection point for the City of Gardner. Developers are taking a renewed interest in downtown properties, more than 50 businesses have opened their doors in the last two years, and outside interest has grown exponentially in a short time. Far from resting on its laurels, the City's Administration has doubled down on substantial infrastructure projects, including roads, bike paths, and now the airport. The philosophy reflects a clear awareness on the part of the administration of infrastructure's vital importance to future development, and a dogged pursuit of growth and rejuvenation that shows no signs of waning.

“I’m very excited to see the impact this project has on the City moving forward. I’d like to thank State Representative Jon Zlotnik, Congresswoman Trahan, and the members of the City Council for helping us secure the needed funding for this initiative.” concluded **Mayor Nicholson**.

“Additionally, Isabelle Davis and the Airport Commission have made a concerted effort to make sure the Gardner Airport is a location that plays an active role in the community, rather than just remain a hidden gem that many forget about. We’re lucky in Gardner to have a team willing to work together to get the job done for the long-term benefit of the City.”

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