

DENTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

Strengthening North Texas's aviation presence.

By Rhonda Barnett



Quentin Hix wouldn't change his recently acquired job for anything—and it has nothing to do with the economy's job-lost situation either. He's gone from managing Copper Canyon in Denton County, where he led administration of all the city services and operating departments, to managing the rapidly expanding Denton Municipal Airport (DTO) in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, Metroplex. And in this new position, Hix gladly boasts that he works alongside a motivated team that's eager to attract an even larger aviation community to its area.

"We're coming into a new era of operation here at DTO," says Hix, who fulfilled his two-year contractual term as city manager and then made the leap to airport manager within the last six months.

Hix says the positions are similar in nature: The airport's tenant relations are equivalent to working with local citizens, and both positions require infrastructure management.

"We've consistently provided good service for our private pilots, but now we're actually generating economic development for the city," he adds.

With more than \$25 million in capital investments over the last eight years, DTO is making an effort to upgrade its infrastructure, and also add to the number of onsite businesses to better accommodate its private and student pilots.

DTO has come a long way since its glider-training base days of World War II. Fortunately, its founding

premise lives on, but now the airport's private industry employs more than 300 jobs and sees nearly 15,000 operations monthly.

To better support North Texas's growing aviation community, Hix points out that DTO intends on lengthening its runway from 6,000 feet to 7,000 feet by 150 feet and eventually including a parallel runway within the next 12 to 18 months. Additionally, there's already an extra taxiway in the works so traffic flows smoother.

The airport has no regularly scheduled commercial flights, but there's been talk about backing charter flights, which Hix says makes another runway and taxiway tremendous bonuses.

Because DTO is located 35 miles north of major airports Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) and Dallas Love Field Airport (DAL), it creates an environment with decreased air traffic and more space for businesses to set up shop.

Perhaps this is why one of DTO's larger businesses, Jet Works Air Center, was recognized by Southern Methodist University Cox Caruth Institute for Entrepreneurship over a year ago as the fastest growing business in the Metroplex and has since reached international appeal. Jet Works does maintenance and customizations to privately owned jet interiors. It also supports Italian aircraft manufacturer Piaggio by completing the company's interior customizations and some of its avionics installations.

"I have the best office in town," Hix says. "My office windows overlook our public ramp area, which is directly across from Jet Works, so you never know what type of neat aircraft is on the ramp."

From his window, you can also view some of the 280-based aircraft housed in DTO's 32 hangars, all owned by 32 individual tenants. There are currently 27 businesses operating from DTO: For FBO services, visit Business Air, and for flight training purposes, take lessons at U.S. Aviation, which teaches up-and-coming pilots in the states and from countries such as China and India. And if you're in need of piston and turbine service, DTO is home to Aircraft Precision Maintenance.

"The existing businesses that we have—even with the downturn of the economy—have aggressive growth plans and are acting on them everyday," concludes Hix. "As the economy recovers, this expansion will escalate and bring more aviation activity to DTO and Dallas/Forth Worth." →



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