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Devoping the Airpark:
Part Three

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Developing the Airpark: Part Three



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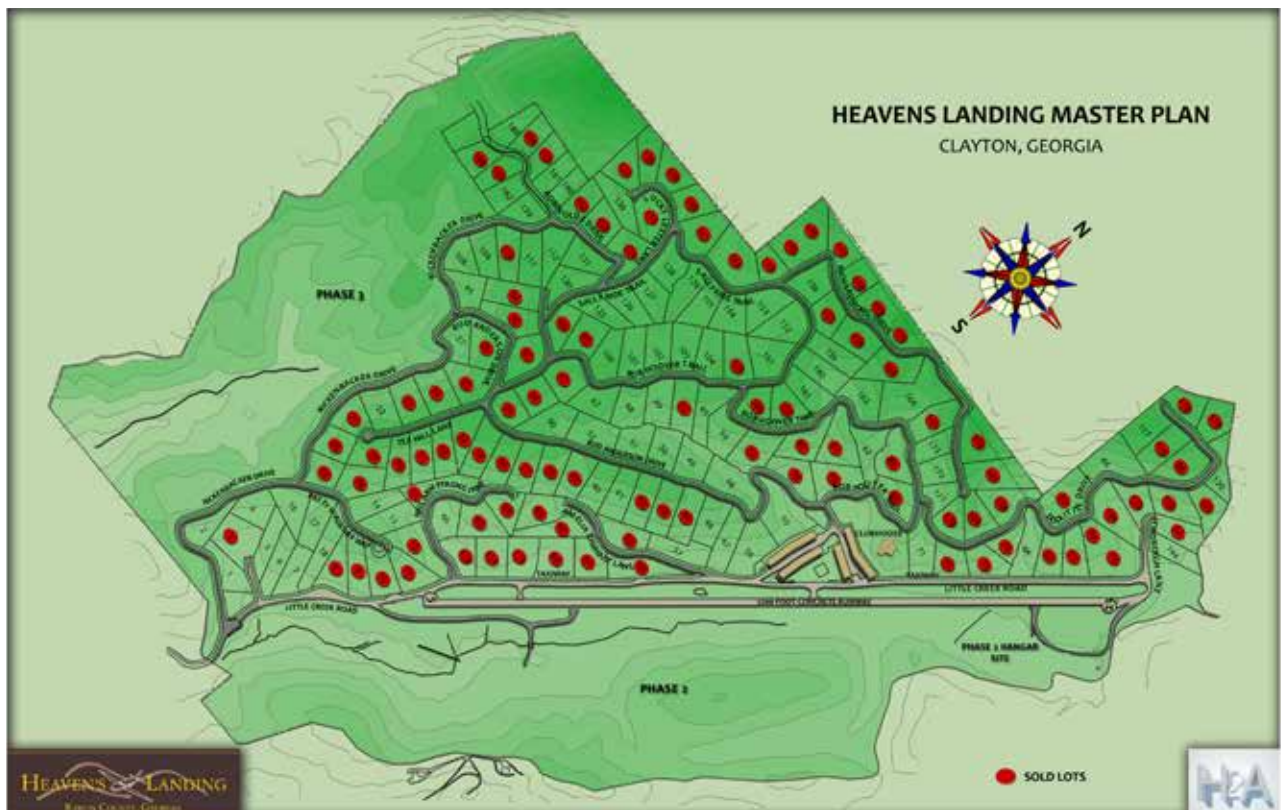
In the third and final installment, the airpark concept and its future is looked at in further depth, both through firsthand discussions with owners and the author’s additional research. This is a relatively newer and novel style of living arrangement, with airparks’ structure, size, and locations expected to

evolve for many years to come.

Not only will existing communities grow and change as they add new amenities and homes (refer to the previous article’s advice on “always have something under construction”) new ones will begin to pop-up. Speaking only of areas that I have lived and or

frequent, there are ample opportunities for new airparks, that is only to those that heed the previous articles’ advice and cautions.

That being said, I feel the Midwest (not to exclude other regions of the country) is primed for airpark development and expansion. For instance, the





Sullivan's
HARBOR SPRINGS
AIRPARK

Proposed Site Development

Kansas City and St. Louis metro areas do not have any airparks similar to that of Sullivan's Harbor Springs or Heaven's Landings, i.e. ones with paved, lighted runways suited towards a multitude of aircraft operations and having higher end homes on acre-plus lots.

Rudimentary, top-of-mind market research would find that there is a possible market for these types of homes in the area, due to the number of aircraft owners in the towns, as well as existing backfilled housing developments.

Whether or not someone takes up any developments in either of the noted areas is up to time and the future of Heaven's Landing and Sullivan's Harbor Springs Airpark are a little clearer at the present moment, although there is still something to be said about all developments in general.

Mike Ciochetti, the owner of Heaven's Landing, notes the following, as it pertains to the overall development future and his airpark, "The biggest challenges these days are escalating development costs. We are fortunate that most of our financial heavy lifting is complete. We have built our 5,200' concrete runway and our multi-million-dollar community clubhouse, roads, gates, guard house, etc. Starting from scratch in today's construction environment would be risky and expensive. Location, location, location are the first three things to consider, and by this, I mean that it better be in a place where

Mama wants to be! In my opinion, too many airparks are in ridiculously remote places that don't have nearby grocery stores, hospitals and related healthcare, schools, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, good weather, recreational options, boating, fishing, waterskiing, golf, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, zip-lining, mountain climbing, etc. These are all the things that Mama and the family want nearby, and far too many airpark entrepreneurs don't get this. They think that the runway is the big draw, and I can tell you that it most definitely is not the case! Heaven's Landing is a success because we have all of the aforementioned within 4 miles, and that in and of itself is unprecedented."

I too have noticed that some developers take the aircraft's inherent ability to go places where other machines have trouble getting to and put a runway and a handful of homes in just those locations. Both of the noted, successful developments are within a stone's throw of civilization, yet still retain the feel of remoteness and freedom desired by many builders.

These desires are varied and ever changing, with Joe Wortman, the owner of Sullivan's Harbor Springs Airpark, noting that they had developed homes on the airpark "too nicely, too quickly," as they learned that buyers were comfortable taking a house with fewer finishes, in place of a large hangar capable of storing their boat, plane, motor

home, etc. Concurrent with this, he noticed that many owners also did not utilize their home as a primary residence and rather a vacation home, thereby opening possible future opportunities to provide varying living arrangements at the airfield.

Just like aviation in general, the airpark concept will continue to evolve over the years and for those determined enough to make their own mark, the ground is ready to be broken. For those though that find the airpark development concept too daunting (no shame, there is a lot to deal with) and prefer flying to building, there are fortunately hundreds of places to break ground in a smaller scale. Whether it be up in Michigan or down in Georgia, the two airparks followed throughout the series are two of my top three personal favorite airparks and I know that there are few owners out there as hospitable as Wortman and Ciochetti. If neither of those locales are for you, please consider any of the communities listed in Aviators Properties; we are your source for aviation-related real estate and products and love to hear your thoughts about all things airparks. ■

for more information:
www.mgn-airpark.com
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