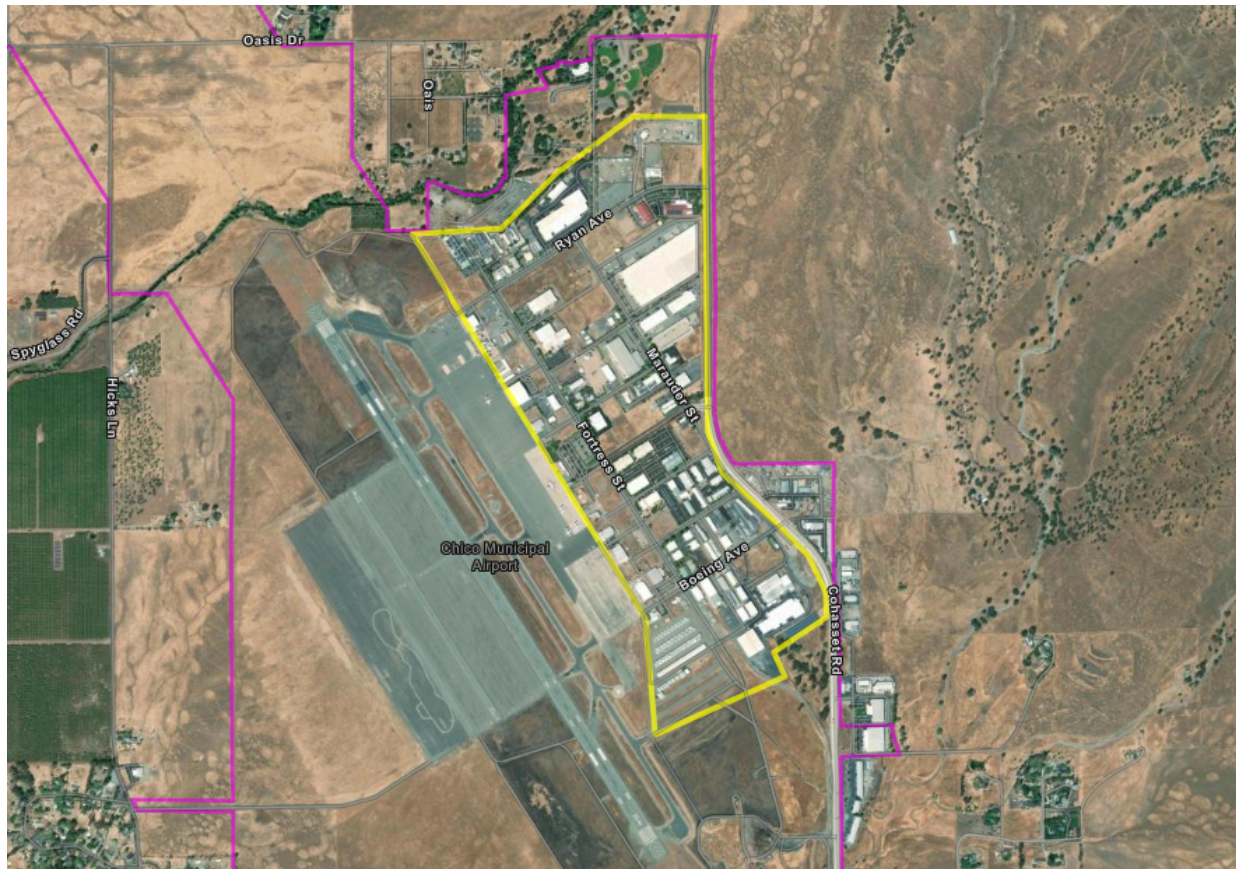


PLACE DEVELOPMENT REPORT:

Chico Regional Airport

AVIATION & ECONOMIC CENTER

Can Chico leverage the Airport as both an aviation asset and a place for business & industry growth?



CHICO ECONOMIC CENTERS STORYMAP

Chico Regional Airport is one of Chico's primary economic centers. Explore the Airport and Chico's other economic centers through the interactive StoryMap.

[View StoryMap → https://tinyurl.com/chico-centers](https://tinyurl.com/chico-centers)

The Chico Regional Airport's aviation services and diverse businesses located in the Airport Business Park form an economic center. With key assets, existing buildings, and industrial land, the Airport has potential to support additional aviation activity, business investment, and industry growth.

BACKGROUND – General Plan & Place-based Economic Development Asset

The Chico General Plan establishes the Airport as an important economic asset. It identifies the Chico Regional Airport and surrounding industrial park as one of the City's significant assets and supports continued aviation use, passenger-service capability and development of industrial and employment uses in the Airport area.

The Airport economic center as a place-based economic-development asset includes:

- *Airport Infrastructure:* Runways, taxiways, hangars, aviation facilities, and other assets supporting flight operations.
- *Existing Business & Employment:* Aviation and non-aviation businesses already operating within and around the Airport area.
- *Building & Facilities:* Existing private and City-controlled buildings that may support current businesses, expansion, or future business attraction.
- *Land for Business Development:* Industrial/employment land that provides potential capacity for additional investment.
- *City-Controlled Assets:* Property and facilities that give the City an unusually direct ability to influence how portions of this economic center develop.

These assets make the Airport different from a conventional business park. The City controls an operating airport and portions of the surrounding development platform, creating an opportunity to manage the Airport beyond a commercial aviation service but as an economic-development asset.

The City is actively working to **restore commercial passenger air service**. Chico currently has no scheduled commercial passenger service but is in active discussions with several airlines and has developed a community-supported incentive effort to help secure service. This important initiative is already underway and is not the primary focus of this paper.

NOTE: Securing commercial air service is a top priority of Chico State to provide students, parents, and others ease of transport/access to Chico.

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE — A Diverse Business & Aviation Center

The Airport supports a diverse base of aviation, manufacturing, service, and public-sector economic activity. The Chico Regional Airport is a fully certified FAA Part 139 airport capable of accommodating heavy aircraft maintenance, air cargo, passenger flights, corporate aviation, and general aviation.

Existing operations include aircraft maintenance and repair, aircraft charter and rental, flight training, aircraft sales, air cargo, aerospace manufacturing, aerial firefighting, air traffic control, and general aviation services. The CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire Chico Air Attack Base is also located at the Airport.

Existing businesses already represent several parts of the aviation value chain:

EXISTING ACTIVITY	AIRPORT BUSINESS BASE
Aircraft Operations & Services	FBO, fueling, maintenance, charter, aircraft rental, flight instruction, and aircraft sales
Maintenance & Repair	Fixed-wing and helicopter maintenance; FAA-certified repair capabilities
Aerospace Manufacturing	Aerospace manufacturing and aircraft-related production
Aerial Firefighting	Private aerial-firefighting businesses and the CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire Air Attack Base
Air Cargo	Existing air-cargo operators
Public Aviation Infrastructure	FAA Part 139 airport and federally contracted air traffic control tower

Recent investment examples include the location of Aero-Flite to the Airport to occupy the 77 Piper Avenue facility.

The airport is not a major sales tax generator like other commercial/retail centers, but it does have some sales tax generators. The airport itself drives revenue through airport operations and airport leases. The major economic impact of this center is with mid-market traded sector companies producing goods and services exported from Chico.

Sample List of Businesses

- Aero-Flite Aerial Fire Fighting
- Carraige, LLC
- Digital Path, Inc
- Sel-Tech
- Driverge Vehicle Innovations
- Transfer Flow
- Firestorm Wildland Fire Suppression Inc.
- Rescue 42 Inc.
- Mtech Inc.
- TriCounties Bank
- Mooney Farms



Source: <https://tinyurl.com/chico-centers>



The Airport has an aviation and aerospace business cluster and a diverse base of other manufacturers and technology-led businesses. The economic development opportunity is to build from this existing base.

CHALLENGES:

- 1) **Commercial air services.** Several major businesses, including Chico State, identified commercial air service as critical to their operations. Some indicated certain operations requiring frequent air travel are more difficult to expand or locate in Chico, requiring those operations to be in more urban areas vs. Chico, resulting in lost opportunity.
- 2) **Development-ready land and buildings.** Although there are existing industrial land and buildings the next step would be to identify and document readiness for occupancy, availability, or investment required. Ownership and lease status, allowable uses, site conditions, infrastructure, and Airport operating requirements affect what businesses can locate or expand and need to be documented.
- 3) **Infrastructure and redundancy.** Local employers expressed that limitations in redundant power and communications have affected the ability to operate technology-dependent facilities in the Airport area. Infrastructure capacity should be documented as to capacity and gaps that may be needed by existing and compatible businesses, along with recommending changes or upgrades, and provided to EDA District Planning as potential capital improvement projects. This could be reviewed when evaluating available land and buildings development readiness.

OPPORTUNITIES:

The strongest business development opportunities are likely to be those that build from 1) existing Airport capabilities, assets and businesses, 2) require or benefit from aviation access, or 3) can take advantage of the Airport Business Park's industrial location.

OPPORTUNITY AREA	BUSINESS / INDUSTRY FIT	WHY CHICO / AIRPORT AS A LOCATION FIT
AIRPORT-DEPENDENT & AVIATION INDUSTRIES		
Aircraft Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO)¹ & Retrofit	▪ Aircraft maintenance & repair ▪ Retrofit/modification ▪ Avionics ▪ Component repair ▪ Helicopter maintenance ▪ Specialty aircraft systems	Existing aircraft/helicopter maintenance, FAA repair capability, and Aero-Flite operations. Airport can accommodate heavy aircraft maintenance. (Chico, CA) Potential partnership in aviation maintenance training.
Fire Aviation	▪ Fire-aircraft maintenance & retrofit ▪ Aircraft systems/equipment ▪ Parts & suppliers ▪ Aviation support ▪ Technical training	CAL FIRE Air Attack Base plus private aerial-firefighting operations create an existing specialization. (Chico, CA) Existing companies in this cluster.
Aerospace Manufacturing	▪ Aircraft components ▪ Precision parts ▪ Structural components ▪ Specialty fabrication ▪ Aircraft systems ▪ Aerospace suppliers	Sel-Tech is an aerospace manufacturer, FAA Repair Station, and approved Boeing/Lockheed supplier; Aero-Flite adds manufacturing capability.

¹ MAINTENANCE, REPAIR & OVERHAUL : Maintenance, Repairs & Operations

OPPORTUNITY AREA	BUSINESS / INDUSTRY FIT	WHY CHICO / AIRPORT AS A LOCATION FIT
UAS & Aviation Technology	▪ Drones/UAS ▪ Autonomous aircraft systems ▪ Sensors ▪ Remote sensing ▪ Navigation/control systems ▪ Aerial imaging & data systems	Airport provides aviation environment; Chico State adds mechatronics, engineering, and UAS research capabilities, Butte College adds direct training and work-based learning.
Specialized Air Cargo	▪ Time-sensitive freight ▪ Specialized cargo ▪ Parts distribution ▪ Regional aviation logistics	Existing Ameriflight and Westair cargo operations provide a base to evaluate additional demand. (Chico, CA)
AIRPORT BUSINESS PARK — INDUSTRIAL, MANUFACTURING & TECHNOLOGY		
Advanced Manufacturing & Automation	▪ Robotics & automation ▪ Industrial equipment ▪ Automated systems ▪ Precision machining/CNC ▪ Controls & instrumentation specialized machinery	Direct alignment with Chico State's advanced manufacturing, robotics, mechatronics and engineering talent and labs, Butte College's industrial and manufacturing focus, and North Valley Manufacturing Council goals.
Specialized Materials & Components	▪ Polymer/plastics products ▪ Fabricated metal components ▪ Engineered materials ▪ Specialty components ▪ Additive manufacturing	Chico State capabilities include polymers processing, materials, metal casting/joining, CNC and advanced manufacturing.
FireTech & Resilience Technology	▪ Wildfire detection/sensors ▪ Remote monitoring ▪ Communications equipment ▪ UAS systems ▪ Mapping/data hardware ▪ Fire/resilience equipment	Connects Airport fire-aviation activity with Chico State and Butte College's broader wildfire, research, technology assets, and engineering/UAS capabilities.
AgTech & Natural-Resource Technology	▪ Precision-ag equipment ▪ Sensors ▪ Irrigation/water technology ▪ Autonomous equipment ▪ Remote sensing ▪ Environmental monitoring systems	Chico State's Mechatronics Center specifically identifies UAS applications in agriculture, environmental monitoring, and resource conservation.
Industrial Technology & Equipment	▪ Pumps/flow systems ▪ Controls ▪ Electrical equipment ▪ Energy systems ▪ Environmental equipment ▪ Specialized industrial products	Fits mechanical, electrical, mechatronic, and manufacturing capabilities and training and does not depend upon direct airport access.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

The objective is to progressively convert the assets and opportunities identified into actual investment projects.

1. START WITH THE BUSINESSES AND ASSETS ALREADY HERE

Conduct one-on-one interviews (or hold an Airport Business Meeting) with every business and major operation in the Airport economic center to understand current operations, expansion plans, and barriers to growth.

- Verify infrastructure, power, communications, workforce, permitting, and facility needs.
- Identify businesses considering expansion or additional investment.
- Ask existing businesses what suppliers, customers or complementary companies would benefit from locating nearby.
- Confirm a prioritized list of business types that fit this location.
- Identify opportunities for local sourcing, supplier development, and business-to-business connections.
- Establish ongoing Airport business retention and expansion relationships.

Purpose: Use the businesses already operating at the Airport to help define both the problems that need to be resolved, and the companies Chico should pursue.

2. MAKE THE AIRPORT BUSINESS PARK INVESTMENT-READY

Complete a detailed inventory of available land, buildings and City-controlled property and determine what is required to move each viable opportunity toward tenant-ready or shovel-ready status. For priority properties:

- Confirm ownership, availability, lease terms, and allowable uses.
- Document building size, condition, and expansion capability.
- Verify utilities, power capacity/redundancy, broadband/communications, water, sewer, and access.
- Identify environmental, FAA, land-use, permitting, and other development requirements.
- Determine what can be pre-planned, pre-approved or resolved in advance to shorten the development timeline.
- Identify infrastructure improvements and responsible parties.
- Assemble potential financing, grants, infrastructure funding, and business incentives that could support qualifying projects.

Purpose: Know exactly what Chico has to offer and remove as many unknowns as possible.

3. CREATE A DISTINCTIVE AIRPORT VALUE PROPOSITION

Position Chico Regional Airport and the Airport Business Park around the assets and capabilities that distinguish it from a conventional industrial park.

Build two complementary propositions:

1) AVIATION / AIRPORT-DEPENDENT

Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) • fire aviation • aerospace manufacturing • UAS/aviation technology • specialized air cargo

2) INDUSTRIAL / MANUFACTURING / TECHNOLOGY

Advanced manufacturing & automation • specialized materials/components • FireTech &

resilience technology • AgTech/natural-resource technology • industrial technology & equipment

4. ENHANCE CHICO STATE, BUTTE COLLEGE CONNECTION

Bring the City/Airport, Chico State, Butte College, and selected Airport businesses together around opportunity areas where there is strong alignment. The immediate purpose would be to identify:

- Relevant engineering, mechatronics, manufacturing, and technology capabilities
- Faculty/research expertise
- Student projects, internships, and workforce pipelines
- Laboratories, equipment and applied-research capabilities
- UAS, wildfire, natural-resource and other relevant research
- Opportunities for aviation maintenance program/partnership or pilot training
- Capabilities that strengthen Chico's proposition to prospective companies

5. MOVE FROM INDUSTRY CATEGORIES TO NAMED PROSPECTS

For each validated opportunity area, identify **specific companies and projects** that fit Chico's assets. Start close to the existing business base using Aero-Flite, Sel-Tech, CAL FIRE, and the other Airport businesses as sources for market intelligence:

- Existing business
- Suppliers
- Customers
- Competitors/complementary firms
- Industry network
- Named prospects

The initial target list should be a short, qualified list of companies with a reason to consider Chico.

6. BUILD THE PROJECT RESPONSE PACKAGE

Prepare a response package or process including:

- Site/building
- Development pathway
- Infrastructure
- Workforce/Chico State & Butte College connection
- Financing/incentives
- City point of contact + timeline

Where appropriate, develop a pre-negotiated framework or standard development/lease approach for City-controlled Airport property so basic terms and requirements do not have to be invented for each project.