



WESTOVER AIR RESERVE BASE JOINT LAND USE STUDY UPDATE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT'S A JOINT LAND USE STUDY (JLUS)?

Managed by the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), a JLUS is a cooperative land-use planning effort between affected local government and the military installation. The recommendations developed from the JLUS provide the policy framework to support adoption and implementation of compatible development near a military installation. Compatible development will safeguard the military mission and protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. A JLUS operates under the premise that local land-use planning and zoning is one of the most effective tools available to resolve incompatible development issues, short of cost-prohibitive land acquisition strategies.

The objectives of undertaking a JLUS are to:

- explore and verify the land use changes since the previous JLUS study
- continue and expand communication between the airfields and the affected communities
- publicize the positive and negative impacts of the airfields
- update Accident Potential Zone and incorporate noise maps
- create collaborations between communities
- encourage legislative initiatives to promote compatible development.

WHY UNDERTAKE A JLUS UPDATE?

The Westover Air Reserve Base (WARB) and Westover Metropolitan Airport (WMA) have a long and successful economic history in western Massachusetts. However, along with other military installations and airfields in metropolitan areas, they have increasingly felt the pressure of potentially incompatible development surrounding the airfield. The WARB/WMA airfield is unique in that it is located in close proximity to the largest population center in Western Massachusetts, as well as rural areas susceptible to sprawling residential development. Officials at the Department of Defense and the Federal Aviation Administration were concerned that the incompatibilities could affect airfield operations and the local economy should WARB/WMA have to change operations or relocate. This led to the development, in 1995, of the original Westover Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, WARB/WMA and the surrounding communities, which focused on noise delineations and accident potential and impacts on surrounding land uses and developments.

The recommendations of the JLUS encouraged the communities surrounding WARB/WMA to consider adopting regulatory land use reforms that would serve to enhance joint civilian and military operations at this regionally valuable facility and reduce conflicting impacts on the land uses and development within the communities. While the Town of Ludlow did adopt a zoning overlay district that restricts sensitive and high intensity uses in Accident Potential Zones (APZs) and noise zones, the other municipalities, for various reasons including the lack of funding and professional staff, did not.

In 2004 the Department of Defense felt it was necessary to update the original JLUS and another planning effort was undertaken by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, WARB/WMA and the surrounding communities. The effort revisited identifying the potential points of conflict, impacts and incompatibility between the aviation facility and the surrounding land uses and ways to mitigate those impacts.

Thirteen years having passed since that effort, the Department of Defense has determined that it is once again time to assess the increase and changes in the activities at the air base and surrounding communities, and to continue efforts to ensure the continued communication and cooperation between the parties ensuring the compatibility of activities, land uses and development that effect each other.

This most recent JLUS Update process also serves to remind local residents and municipal officials of the importance of the joint use facility to the employment and economic well-being of the region. Land use analysis, physical mapping, regulatory evolution, and ultimately, consensus building among those affected communities and organizations impacted by WARB will all contribute to an improved and enhanced environment for future aviation operations at Westover.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The JLUS is a highly public participatory effort and offers, encourages and provides opportunities, through community surveys and public meetings, for all parties to offer their input in identifying the issues and suggesting measures to provide for an enhanced relationship between the air base and surrounding communities which is mutually beneficial to all.

The links to the survey and the notification of the public meetings are available elsewhere on this site.