

# Innovation Park to revive former airport terminal location

*Plans begin this year to build at site used as airport base in 1970s*

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**MT. VERNON** — There's a bit of history behind the future Innovation Park at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

The southwest area of the airport property that is currently under construction has been a project anticipated by the Airport Authority over the past few years, but the original idea for the project dates back further than that.

The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport terminal is currently in its third location since the airport was first

constructed in the 1930s. At the time, it was built off of Airport Road in Summersville. Then, in the 1950s, in part due to the new Illinois Highway 15, the airport relocated its grounds to a location closer to the highway. At that point, it had two larger hangars and two T-hangars. But in the 1970s, it moved to its present location on the eastern portion of the runway, and the former location near Illinois Highway 15 is where Innovation Park is being mapped out.

Airport Manager Chris Collins said the airport relocated the terminal the third time due in part to the movement into using larger planes. Moving the airport facilitated to the change of the industry in the jet age. Thus, the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport decided to move

its operation to a location where larger planes could come in.

At the location formally located at the projected Innovation Park, more building setback from the runway was needed in order to meet the Federal Aviation Administration's changing requirements for larger plane and jet service.

Also, the main building at the location was used to house most of the airport facilities, such as the fixed base operator and the administrative offices.

Thus, the airport leaders decided to make the move, and as a part of that moved all of the hangars and left only a maintenance building.

"The teamwork that was required to do such a large expan-

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**INNOVATION PARK** — The grounds of Innovation Park set at the southwestern portion of the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport property. The location was formally where the airport's terminal and hangars set until it relocated to its present-day location in the late 1970s. The Airport Authority has worked over the past year to initiate plans to renovate the former airport location with a new hangar and ramp, in hopes of further growth in future years.

## Innovation:

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sion in the mid 1970s in the jet age was amazing," Collins said.

Mt. Vernon was chosen as one of nine airports in the state to have the infrastructure necessary for pure jet service, Collins said. Everything from the airport was taken apart, moved, and reassembled.

### MOVING FORWARD

Today, the original location of the airport is now located near at Mt. Vernon Fire Station off of Airport Road, and the southwestern location dubbed as Innovation Park houses two mainte-

nance buildings, and concrete that shows signs of where buildings formerly set.

The plans to construct facilities at the vacant location began in the 1990s, Collins said, but actual approval of plans for construction had not begun until this year.

Although the airport is in the middle of a bond cycle and thus was unable to use bond funding to renovate the location, it received a loan from a bank in order to pay for the new hangar at Innovation Park and has moved forward with plans. Collins said the airport must construct a building at a location in order to receive state and federal funding to move forward with a project.

The Airport Authority has decided to begin construct-

ing a building with local funds, and then funding the ramp and runway with state and federal funding. A road formerly used for the older airport location will also be reopened at the southwest location.

The building that is currently being constructed will be leased out, and the development is being created in hopes of constructing further buildings near the highway-area of the property, with professional airplane-related services prospectively leasing property to construct facilities where they can conduct business near the airport hub.

Over the past year the Airport Authority has made decisions to move forward with the project, including enlisting Brian Edmison as the architect and Lipps Con-

struction Co. as the contractor. The Authority, approved an engineering agreement with Hanson Professional Services for design of the ramp portion of the park project.

The total project cost of the hangar in Innovation Park is \$420,000, which will be funded by the airport for an 80-foot by 80-foot hangar with a 25-foot by 25-foot office extension and ramp.

The \$585,000 ramp project will be financed through state and federal funds, with the local share amounting to approximately \$29,250.

The area, Collins said, would serve as the "front door" to the airport, as it would welcome travelers on the highway, as well as would create opportunity for growth.

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