

Rerouting traffic near old Highland Park  
would let airport finally ...

# Put land to use



By Bill Luster, The Courier-Journal

For many who lost homes,  
action is long overdue

By Charlie White  
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Nearly two decades after expansion of Louisville's airport forced hundreds of residents and businesses out of the old Highland Park neighborhood, officials are finalizing a \$30 million road plan that could put 100 long-vacant acres there to use again.

In part, the plan calls for connecting the land to Louisville International Airport and its runways by closing part of Crittenden Drive south of the Watterson Expressway and moving Crittenden traffic west, to a rebuilt Louisville Avenue and Strawberry Lane — roads that run along either side of CSX railroad tracks.

That would greatly improve access between the airport and the Airport Industrial Center — the former Louisville Naval Ordnance Station that houses defense contractors that rely on UPS to ship and receive goods.

The idea pleases former Highland Park residents like Delois True Goosey, who said she and former neighbors have wondered why the land has remained vacant for so long.

"I'm glad the airport is going to use the land rather

## \$30 million road plan for airport area

The Regional Airport Authority plans to reroute Crittenden Drive so it can close two sections of the road for a runway expansion.



By Joanne Meshew, The C-J

▲ Vehicles travel on Crittenden Drive last week in a view looking north near the Watterson Expressway interchange. An airport plan would close parts of Crittenden.

*"I'm glad the airport is going to use the land rather than letting it sit empty."*

DELOIS TRUE  
GOOSEY, former  
Highland Park resident



By Bill Luster, The Courier-Journal

A locked gate prevents access to the old Highland Park, land that's been vacant since residents were relocated.

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than letting it sit empty," she said.

It's long overdue, said Highland Park historian Diana Moore, who has a Web site, highlandparkky.com.

"They talked before how it was a blighted community, but now it's a mess," she said. "They destroyed a neighborhood there with good people, hard-working people."

The Regional Airport Authority, which owns the land, hopes to begin the work next year. It has only \$2 million of the \$30 million in hand but airport officials believe they will get other state or federal money to complete the work.

Airport board chairman J.D. Nichols said the project would make the former Highland Park area a likely site for airplane maintenance facilities, hangars and other airport-related uses.

"From an economic development standpoint, it will open up a substantial number of acres for airport use," Nichols said.



## Economic benefit

Louisville metro economic development director Bruce Traughber agreed, saying improving access will make the old Highland Park site and the Airport Industrial Center more attractive to prospective business tenants.

"The airport is a crucial part of our economic development engine," Traughber said.

The road plan has been in the works since 2005, when the airport started to upgrade its west runway to handle the super-sized Airbus A380 planes that UPS planned to buy. UPS has since decided not to buy those planes, but the airport is finishing the upgrade so it can handle larger planes.

To do that, the airport needs to close two sections of Crittenden Drive. More than half of the taxiway — the southern portion — has been built at a cost of \$20.3 million, airport authority executive director Skip Miller said.

The airport has received another \$9.5 million from the Federal Aviation Administration to continue the taxiway, but that work cannot continue until Crittenden is moved.

A FedEx truck lot located between the runway and Crittenden also would have to be moved. It will go on a section of the Highland Park property, possibly by next spring, said airport spokeswoman Trish Burke, adding that the rest of the FedEx package-handling facility will remain at its current location near the west runway.

## Study needed

The next step for the road project is a federally required environmental study of the area, said Burt Deutsch, president of the airport project's engineering firm, The Corradino Group. He said airport officials hope to have it and the road design work completed by spring so they can advertise for bids.

The work would start just west of the railroad tracks on Strawberry Lane at the Airport Industrial Center, he said. A new overpass or roadway would then cross the tracks and connect to the existing southern section of Crittenden,

greatly reducing the distance that trucks must travel between the industrial center and UPS Worldport.

Currently, trucks from companies in the industrial center, such as defense contractors Raytheon and BAE Systems, take longer, circuitous routes to the airport — Southside Drive to National Turnpike to Outer Loop to Grade Lane or Strawberry Lane to Almond Avenue to Woodlawn Avenue to Crittenden Drive to Grade Lane.

The plan "just opens it up completely," said John McLaren, senior property manager of the 147-acre Airport Industrial Center, which has space available for development.

Deutsch said existing state rights-of-way on Strawberry Lane and Louisville Avenue will be utilized, and some airport land along Louisville Avenue also will be needed.

He described Louisville Avenue as a "very narrow, very poorly maintained" road. It would be widened to four lanes, which he said would require moving or eliminating a large berm the airport erected along the east side of the street.

The Woodlawn Avenue overpass would be revamped to carry traffic between Strawberry Lane and Louisville Avenue.

The portion of Crittenden that leads to the post office just south of the Watterson Expressway would remain open to traffic. But to reach Louisville Avenue from Crittenden, drivers would have to go a block north of the Watterson and turn west.

## Neighborhoods lost

To expand the airport in the late 1980s, Louisville and Jefferson County governments acquired three adjoining neighborhoods — Highland Park, Prestonia and Standiford. Residents fought to stay, going to court and eventually winning a lawsuit that said it was illegal for the city and county to use urban renewal powers to take the land. The city then agreed to settle a federal lawsuit by paying an additional \$6.2 million that was split among about 900 homeowners.

Standiford, which was east of the airport, is being used primarily for the Kentucky Air National Guard hangar, taxiways and private aircraft hangars. Prestonia, off Phillips Lane north of the airport, is dedicated for future expansion of the Kentucky Exposition Center. But much of Highland Park, south of the Watterson and west of Crittenden, remains undeveloped.

"There aren't that many airport-use opportunities that arise," Deutsch said, adding, "We're waiting for the right use, not just any use."

Mary Rose Evans, a member of the Regional Airport Authority's board of directors and the Airport Neighbors Alliance, said she has discussed the new road plan with alliance members from the Beechmont, Wilder Park, Iroquois and Oakdale neighborhoods.

"I think a lot of people from Highland Park who have been frustrated over the years that the land has sat empty would be glad that there's a plan to use some of it," Evans said.

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