Vertical Flight Infrastructure Ordinance Development Framework

Purpose

The purpose of this framework is to help communities evaluate and implement local policies related to heliports, helistops, vertiports, vertistops, drone facilities, and other vertical flight infrastructure.

This document is intended to complement the Planning and Policy Context and Land Use & Zoning Best Practices sections of the toolkit.

Those documents focus on why communities should consider aviation-related land use issues. This framework focuses on implementation by identifying common ordinance tools, considerations, and decision points that communities may wish to evaluate.

Different communities will have different needs, risks, opportunities, and development pressures. As a result, this framework is intended to function as a menu of options rather than a one-size-fits-all ordinance.

Before Drafting an Ordinance

Before creating new ordinance language, communities should evaluate whether existing tools already address their concerns.

Questions to Consider:

- What issue are we trying to address?
- Is there an existing airport, heliport, or aviation-related ordinance?
- Does an airport overlay district already exist?
- Can the issue be addressed through existing zoning tools?
- Is a new ordinance necessary, or would updates to existing regulations be sufficient?

Potential Existing Tools:

- Airport Overlay Districts
- Existing Heliport Regulations
- Conditional Use Permits
- Site Plan Review
- Development Agreements
- Building Codes
- Fire Codes
- Airport Master Plans

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- Comprehensive Plans

Implementation Note: Communities with existing heliport regulations should begin by reviewing those provisions before creating new vertiport-specific language. Depending on facility type and future FAA guidance, modest updates may be sufficient.

Best Practice 1: Establish Clear Facility Classifications

Why it Matters

Different facility types may create different operational, safety, infrastructure, and compatibility considerations. Clear definitions help applicants, staff, and decision-makers understand what is being proposed and which review requirements apply.

Potential Implementation Tools

□ Definitions section

□ Facility classification table

□ Use-specific review pathways

□ Public-use versus private-use distinctions

□ Temporary-use provisions

□ Emergency-use provisions

Questions for Local Decision Makers

- What facility types are anticipated locally?
- Are existing definitions sufficient?
- Do temporary facilities require separate treatment?
- Should emergency operations be exempt from certain requirements?

Additional Resources

- Terms and Definitions
- FAA Part 157
- FAA EB 105A
- FAA AC 150/5390-2D

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Best Practice 2: Coordinate with FAA and UDOT Early

Why it Matters

Federal and state reviews often occur alongside local review processes. Communities should understand how FAA and UDOT reviews interact with local land-use decisions.

Potential Implementation Tools

□ FAA Form 7480-1 requirement

□ FAA Form 7460-1 requirement

□ FAA determination submission

□ FAA condition disclosure

□ UDOT coordination requirement

□ Airport sponsor coordination

Questions for Local Decision Makers

- Should local approval require completion of FAA review?
- How will FAA conditions be incorporated into local approvals?
- How will objectionable FAA determinations be handled?
- Should airport sponsors be notified of nearby proposals?

Additional Resources

- FAA Form 7460-1
- FAA Form 7480-1
- 14 CFR Part 77
- 14 CFR Part 157
- Utah Code 72-10

Best Practice 3: Address Land Use Compatibility

Why it Matters

The long-term success of aviation facilities depends on compatible surrounding land uses. Communities should consider both protecting aviation infrastructure and protecting nearby land uses from potential impacts.

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Potential Implementation Tools

□ Airport Overlay District

□ Compatibility Review

□ Avigation Easements

□ Disclosure Requirements

□ Sensitive Receptor Review

□ Development Agreements

Questions for Local Decision Makers

- Are nearby residential uses present?
- Are schools, hospitals, or public assembly uses nearby?
- Is airport encroachment already occurring?
- Should compatibility areas be mapped?

Additional Resources

- Land Use & Zoning Best Practices
- Airport Compatibility Planning
- ACRP 206
- ACRP 38

Best Practice 4: Evaluate Site Design and Infrastructure Needs

Why it Matters

Vertical flight infrastructure introduces unique design considerations related to access, safety, utilities, charging systems, and emergency response.

Potential Implementation Tools

□ Site access standards

□ Parking requirements

□ Utility coordination

□ Electrical capacity review

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□ Charging infrastructure review

□ Lighting standards

□ Signage standards

□ Stormwater review

□ Wildlife hazard review

Questions for Local Decision Makers

- Is adequate utility capacity available?
- Are electrical upgrades required?
- Are wildlife attractants present?
- Can emergency vehicles access the site?

Additional Resources

- FAA EB 105A
- FAA AC 150/5390-2D
- NREL Vertiport Infrastructure Study
- NFPA 418

Best Practice 5: Evaluate Noise and Operational Considerations

Why it Matters

Communities may have concerns regarding operating hours, activity levels, noise exposure, and compatibility with nearby land uses.

Potential Implementation Tools

□ Compatibility review

□ Noise disclosure requirements

□ Operational assumptions

□ Hours of operation

□ Temporary event provisions

□ Complaint tracking procedures

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Questions for Local Decision Makers

- Are nearby uses noise-sensitive?
- Can operational conditions be monitored?
- Are assumptions about activity levels reasonable?
- How will future expansion be addressed?

Additional Resources

- Noise and Environmental Mitigation Strategies
- FAA Part 150
- ACRP 261
- FAA Neighborhood Environmental Survey

Best Practice 6: Plan for Emergency Access and Public Safety

Why it Matters

Emergency access, fire response, utility coordination, and incident management should be considered during facility planning and review.

Potential Implementation Tools

□ Emergency access requirements

□ Emergency response planning

□ Fire code review

□ Utility shutoff procedures

□ Hazardous materials review

□ Battery storage review

Questions for Local Decision Makers

- Can emergency responders access the site?
- Are battery hazards adequately addressed?
- Have utility providers been consulted?
- Are emergency operations anticipated?

Additional Resources

- Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Guide

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- NFPA 418
- NFPA 855

Best Practice 7: Establish Monitoring and Enforcement Procedures

Why it Matters

Many ordinances establish conditions that are difficult to verify, monitor, or enforce. Communities should carefully evaluate how compliance will be measured.

Potential Implementation Tools

□ Annual reporting

□ Digital operations logs

□ Complaint tracking

□ Inspection authority

□ Renewal requirements

□ Corrective action procedures

□ Suspension procedures

□ Revocation procedures

Questions for Local Decision Makers

- How will compliance be verified?
- Who is responsible for monitoring?
- Can operational limits be realistically enforced?
- What happens when conditions are violated?

Additional Resources

- Chicago Vertiport and Heliport Provisions
- Los Angeles Heliport Provisions
- FDOT AAM Toolkit

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Example Ordinance Structure

Communities that determine additional ordinance language is necessary may wish to consider organizing local code around the following topics:

1. Purpose and Intent
2. Definitions
3. Applicability
4. Facility Classifications
5. FAA and UDOT Coordination
6. Compatibility Review
7. Site Design Standards
8. Operational Considerations
9. Temporary and Emergency Facilities
10. Monitoring and Enforcement
11. Appeals and Administrative Procedures

The specific content, level of review, and regulatory requirements should be tailored to local conditions, facility types, anticipated activity levels, and community objectives.

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