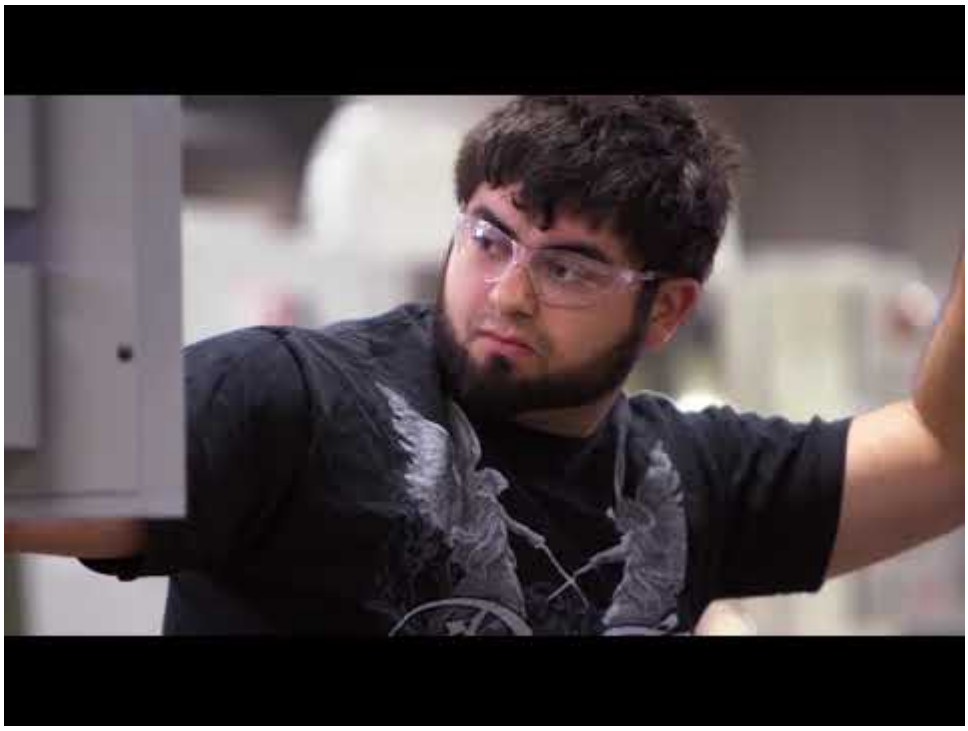
WELCOME TO THE AIR CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Aerospace

For over a century, the greater Wichita region has been at the forefront of aviation, driving innovation and earning the title of the Air Capital of the World. As home to some of the industry's most renowned aerospace manufacturers—including Textron Aviation (Cessna and Beechcraft), Bell Flight, Bombardier Learjet, Spirit AeroSystems, and Airbus—along with a network of more than 350 world-class suppliers in the region and over 450 across the state, Wichita stands as a global leader in general, commercial, space and defense aviation manufacturing.



Air Capital Aviation

#1
MANUFACTURING METRO IN THE U.S.

35%
OF ALL GENERAL AVIATION PLANES BUILT IN THE U.S. DELIVERED FROM KANSAS

450+
WORLD-CLASS SUPPLIERS

See the full list of data points, rankings, and sources

Building on a Pioneering Spirit

Flight is a significant part of the Greater Wichita region's heritage and fuels a drive for entrepreneurism, advancement, and endless opportunities. Aerospace manufacturing began in earnest in Wichita in 1916 when Clyde Cessna moved his factory from a farm to the city. In the century that followed, hundreds more companies joined Cessna, establishing Wichita as one of five major aerospace clusters in the world.

Industry-specific business advantages for aviation manufacturing include exemption of commercial aircraft and components from all sales taxes (including wet leases), liberal fly-away exemption, and no excise tax on jet fuel and aviation gas.

Robust Supplier Network

Decades of aircraft production has built a comprehensive network of over 450 precision machine shops, tool and die shops, and other aerospace subcontract manufacturers. Eighteen Boeing-certified gold and silver suppliers exist within a 200-mile radius. These local companies feed the global aviation and manufacturing supply chain around the world.

High Concentration of Engineers

Aerospace industry leadership in the region is also supported by a high number of engineers and engineering technicians, making it the third largest engineering hub in the nation according to a study by Engineering Daily. In addition to the nearly 11,000 engineering-related employees within manufacturing companies and suppliers, Wichita is also home to Airbus Americas Engineering Center, the international company's largest North American engineering facility.

Wichita Aviation Talent Pipeline

Research and Talent Development

The region proudly boasts the number-one skilled workforce in the United States, giving companies direct access to an abundance of dedicated, hard-working employees from a ten-county region of almost 800,000. Paired with world-class education and research facilities, the Greater Wichita region's aerospace ecosystem delivers impressive intellectual infrastructure for thriving aviation enterprises.

- Wichita State University's Innovation Campus, started in 2015, it was recognized with the 2023 Emerging Research Park Award by the Association of University Research Parks. Today it is one of the country's fastest-growing university technology parks and has seen over $250 million in development. Companies moving on campus include: Spirit AeroSystems, Textron Aviation, Airbus, Dassault Systemes, NetApp, and many more in the pipeline.
- National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) is the largest aerospace research and development academic institution in the nation with 650 employees and over $96 million total in yearly research and development. NIAR's vast operations span six locations in more than one million square feet and include advanced research and testing labs, which include additive manufacturing, advanced coatings, aging aircraft, composites and advanced materials, crash dynamics, full-scale structural testing, reverse engineering and sub-sonic wind tunnel. The NIAR Aircraft Structural Test & Evaluation Center (ASTEC) facility comprises of a full-scale structural lab, an engineering craft lab and a mechanical test lab and allows clients to commission tests on all manner of commercial and military aircraft. Beyond testing, NIAR offers advanced, hands on training courses that develop new materials and techniques in the lab, then rapidly train workers on how to use the skills on the factory floor.

- National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT) at WSU Tech offers world-class applied learning with several programs of study including aerospace manufacturing technology, aviation maintenance technology — airframe and powerplant, composite technology and nondestructive testing. Technical training is employer-driven to flexibly adapt to industry needs. NCAT's facilities include the latest equipment in aviation and advanced manufacturing, including a composites materials lab and an autoclave for heat-curing aviation plastics. Between NCAT's aviation and manufacturing buildings, an entire business jet could be made from design to finish.

Prime Aviation Real Estate and Infrastructure

In addition to a variety of sites and buildings throughout the region, the Greater Wichita region offers development opportunities on two airports with more than 750 acres available, on and off runway, in uncongested airspace.

- Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport, is Kansas' largest airport and home to more than 60 aviation-related businesses, including Textron Aviation's headquarters and service center — the world's largest general aviation MRO facility — and Bombardier Learjet headquarters. The airport itself features a newly built state-of-the-art terminal is ranked as the third best small airport in America by USA Today and is served by seven airlines with 13 nonstop destinations.
- Colonel James Jabara Airport is a general aviation reliever airport for the Greater Wichita region located near manufacturing companies, distributors and corporate headquarters including Koch Industries, Lee Aerospace, and Mid-Continent Instruments. Jabara Airport features the Embraer Business Jet Service Center and Midwest Corporate Aviation, a full-service fixed-base operator with a Cessna Service Center. The airport is adjacent to the National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT) at WSU Tech. The airport offers 365 acres of available development space.

Insights

Key information for site selectors and businesses:

- NIAR has been appointed a lead institution of the Center of Excellence in Composites and Advanced Materials (CECAM), designated by NASA and the FAA to develop national standards for aircraft composites.
- Wichita State University ranks as the top university in the country for industry-funded aeronautical R&D with a total of $39 million in fiscal year 2018.
- Read more about the region's aerospace advantages in an article from Site Selection Magazine's special Kansas report.

Connect With Us

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The Greater Wichita Partnership is your primary resource for connecting with aerospace innovators and opportunities. Get in touch with our team to discover how you can be part of the future of flight.

Contact Andrew