

FACE-TO-FACE WITH:



John D. Kasarda, Ph.D., ACE 2016 Conference Chairman
Director, Centre for Air Commerce, University of North Carolina (USA) and President, Aerotropolis Institute, Zhengzhou

Professor Kasarda is the leading developer of the aerotropolis concept defining the roles of aviation and airports in shaping 21st Century business location, economic development, and urban growth. He directs the Center for Air Commerce at the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School and is President of the Aerotropolis Institute in Zhengzhou.

Dr Kasarda is also the author of over 150 articles and 11 books. He regularly consults with airports and governments around the world on airport city and aerotropolis development and is currently the Chief Adviser to the Zhengzhou Airport Economy Zone and Chief Scientist at Zhengzhou University of Aeronautics.

In your opinion, what are the essential skill sets in planning and managing aerotropolis development?

General skill sets include an understanding of airport planning, urban and regional planning, transportation planning, and business site planning. These skill sets must be complemented by an aerotropolis management team that possesses in-depth knowledge and experience in market analysis, commercial real estate development, infrastructure financing, marketing, and project management. The aerotropolis management team should be led by a highly respected champion who has the ability to engage and align the diverse groups of investors, stakeholders, and government officials who will ultimately determine whether the aerotropolis moves forward.

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Do you think it is crucial to develop a sustainable airport city? Why and what are the challenges?

Sustainability is no longer an option; it is a necessity for successful airport city development. As with most large transit-oriented commercial developments, environmental challenges arise with respect to noise, congestion, carbon emissions and other pollutants, and waste management that must be addressed. A range of human and commercial elements must also be addressed to make the airport city welcoming, vibrant, and socially sustainable. Otherwise, the airport city will not achieve its potential to improve the passenger experience, attract business tenants, and boost airport revenues.

What do you feel are the most likely scenarios or changes that the airport city or aerotropolis will experience in the next 5-10 years?

Most airport city and aerotropolis development until the last 10-years or so occurred in an organic manner with limited overarching planning. This has resulted in the mess we see at and around many airports today that detract from the airport and the region it serves. In the next 5-10 years, there will be much more comprehensive planning of airport cities and their extended aerotropolises, making them more economically efficient, attractive, and sustainable. They will also transform, like many city downtowns have over the past 50 years, from primarily transit hubs and goods handling centers to centers of information processing and advanced business services. More 4 and 5-star business-oriented hotels will develop attached to or adjacent to air passenger terminals. These hotels will increasingly function as virtual corporate headquarters for dispersed executives who will fly in for short-term client contacts, sales meetings, board meetings and other high-level face-to-face decision-making, without the need to commute downtown or have an overnight hotel stay. Greater numbers of office buildings will similarly locate in the airport vicinity so that air travel-intensive executives and professionals can efficiently fly to distant customer sites or bring in their clients by air for single-day meetings. As more administrative and information-based industries are drawn to the aerotropolis, lifestyle functions will be increasingly emphasized in planning and developing the aerotropolis to make it appealing to highly educated workers as a place to live, shop, dine, and be entertained.

What do you think is the role of UBM Airport Cities (ACE) and how does this benefit the industry?

ACE brings together in a one-stop-shop venue leading airport executives and airport city and aerotropolis planners, developers, consultants, and government officials who share their knowledge and experiences with conference delegates. Through the conference sessions and networking events with these leaders and specialists, attendees obtain an immense amount of valuable information and a deeper understanding of what actions they will need to take in their own region to bring about successful airport city and aerotropolis development.

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What do you hope to see in the future series of UBM Airport Cities (ACE)?

Not all airport city and aerotropolis projects have been successful. In the future, I would like to see panels on “mistakes made and lessons learned”. There is at least as much information to be gained from dissecting failures and their reasons as there is in describing positive project outcomes. I would also hope for more audience interaction with the speakers. This will require not only limiting the number of speakers per panel to perhaps three, but in some instances, extending the time for panels. The challenge is to cover the full range of essential topics for airport city and aerotropolis planning and development within two regular conference days. This is the conference length (along with pre-conference day tours, master classes, speaker orientations, and the welcome reception) that leaders in the airport city and aerotropolis fields are generally willing to remain active at ACE.

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