



2023 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

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A LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

As we reflect on the past year at Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority (GFIAA), we are filled with gratitude for the support of our passengers, partners, team members, and the West Michigan community whose contributions have been instrumental in shaping our achievements and milestones throughout 2023.

We proudly commemorated Gerald R. Ford International Airport's (GFIA) 60th anniversary, marking a significant milestone in our commitment to excellence, innovation, and community engagement. For six decades, GFIA has served as West Michigan's gateway to the world, connecting travelers, businesses, and our community with opportunities beyond our region.

This year, GFIA experienced remarkable growth, serving a record-breaking number of passengers and earning accolades such as Best Small Airport in the Country by USA TODAY.

These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our team and partners in providing world-class service to our guests.

GFIAA embarked on several infrastructure projects to advance safety, efficiency, and sustainability. The groundbreaking of the Consolidated Rental Car Facility and Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Facility marked significant milestones in our ongoing efforts to enhance airport operations and accommodate forecasted growth. Our team unveiled Phase 1 of the Concourse A expansion project, which more than doubled the length and width of the pre-existing concourse and created eight new gates. This newly expanded concourse serves legacy commercial airline partners, including American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and United Airlines. Our low-cost and ultra-low-cost commerical airline partners, including Allegiant Air, Frontier Airlines, and Southwest Airlines, are

located on Concourse B. Cargo carrier FedEx will continue to operate out of its cargo facility located on the east side of the airfield.

We fostered meaningful connections with our community members through various guest experience programs and events, including the addition of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative to support and accommodate travelers with visible and non-visible disabilities. Additionally, we offered new experiences and adventures to West Michigan residents by sponsoring a Spring Training Trip Giveaway in partnership with the West Michigan Whitecaps, hosting multiple Food Trucks at the Viewing Park events to support local vendors, coordinating an airside community celebration event to commemorate GFIA's 60th birthday, and more.

As we look ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that lie before us. With your continued support and partnership, GFIA will continue to thrive as a vital transportation hub and economic engine in the West Michigan region, and, together, we will reach even greater heights of excellence.

Onward and upward,



Im A. No **Tory Richardson**

President & CEO *Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority*



Dan Koorndyk Airport Authority Chairman Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority Board

GFIA SETS NEW PASSENGER RECORD IN 2023

2023 was the most-traveled passenger year for Gerald R. Ford International Airport!

3,794,915 passengers in 2023

In 2023, GFIA served a total of 3,794,915 passengers—a 6% increase from recordbreaking figures in 2019. Notably, October 2023 marked the single busiest month in GFIA's history with 349,987 passengers.

Thanks to the dedication of our GFIAA team and partners in providing world-class service to our guests, GFIA experienced tremendous growth and is currently ranked as one of the fastest-growing airports in the U.S. by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

To accommodate this passenger growth, GFIA is undergoing a \$600 million capital expansion program known as ELEVATE. This initiative, which represents the largest of its kind for an airport of its size in the country, includes six projects aimed at supporting passenger growth and the overall economic health of the region.

Learn more about GFIA's passenger statistics at *grr.org/history*.



GFIA NAMED BEST SMALL AIRPORT IN THE U.S.

The votes are in; *USA TODAY* Reader's Choice named GFIA the best small airport in the country.





GFIA earned the top spot in *USA TODAY*Reader's Choice Awards for Best Small Airport.
GFIA was one of 20 finalists selected by a panel of experts based on its commercial flight offerings, easy access, amenities, and more. The panel consisted of editors from *USA TODAY* and 10Best.com, expert contributors, and industry sources. The public was then invited to cast one vote per person, per day, from September 2023 until October 2023 to decide the top winner.

The top ten winners in the Best Small Airport category were:

- 1. Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GRR)
- 2. Huntsville International Airport (HSV)
- 3. Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport (ICT)
- 4. Myrtle Beach International Airport (MYR)
- 5. Long Island MacArthur Airport (ISP)
- 6. Manchester-Boston Regional Airport (MHT)
- 7. Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport (PVD)
- 8. Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport (BTV)
- 9. Pensacola International Airport (PNS)
- 10. Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport (ROC)

We're incredibly thankful to everyone who took the time to share their vote for GFIA and to our entire team and partners who are critical in creating an engaging and comfortable guest experience.





AWARDS

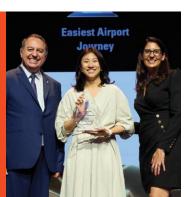
Proudly representing West Michigan on the national stage.

2022 Airport Service Quality Awards – Airports Council International World:

Airport with the Most Dedicated Staff in North America

2022 Airport Service Quality Awards – Airports Council International World:

Best Airport of 2 to 5 Million Passengers in North America



2022 Airport Service Quality Awards – Airports Council International World:

> **Cleanest Airport in** North America



2022 Airport Service Quality Awards – Airports Council International World:

Easiest Airport Journey in North America



Government Finance Officers Association: **Excellence in**

Financial Reporting

Excellence in Airport Marketing, Communications, & Customer Experience Award - Airports Council International - North America:

Best Annual Report

Small Airports Division – Airport Experience® News Director of the Year: **Tory Richardson**



USA TODAY Best10 Readers' Choice 2023:

Best Small Airport in the U.S.









COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

GFIAA Conducts Full-Scale Emergency Response Exercise

In a commitment to safety and emergency preparedness, GFIAA hosted a two-day training exercise designed to simulate an emergency event, providing a crucial evaluation of the airport's emergency response plans. During the exercise, participants engaged in various scenarios, including extinguishing fires, supporting volunteers simulating injuries, directing responders, and more.

Mandated every three years by the FAA, the Full-Scale Exercise is a comprehensive effort that involves the participation of various agencies and a large presence of first responders and emergency vehicles from nearby areas.

A total of 19 local agencies participated in the exercise, including GFIAA Administration, GFIAA Communications, GFIAA Fire Department, GFIAA Maintenance, GFIAA Operations, GFIAA Police Department, American Red Cross, AMR Ambulance, Caledonia Fire Department, Cascade Fire Department, Dutton Fire Department, FAA Traffic Tower Control Tower, Kent County Dispatch, Kent County Emergency Management, Kent County Emergency Medical Services, Kent County Emergency Services Team (KCEST), Kent County Sheriff's Department, Kentwood Fire Department, Kentwood Police Department, Life EMS, Medical Reserve Corp, Michigan State Police, Rockford Ambulance, and Southwest Airlines.

Consumers Energy Recognized GFIAA as Leading Clean Energy Partner

Consumers Energy celebrated Earth Month in April by honoring GFIAA as a prominent clean energy partner. The airport received a \$150,000 rebate check from Consumers Energy for significant energy efficiency enhancements, showcasing GFIAA's commitment to sustainability. Consumers Energy is a key player in the state's clean energy transition, and their partnership with the airport supports our team in achieving clean energy objectives for a brighter future in Michigan.

Going, Going, and Gone to the Detroit **Tigers' Spring Training Games**

GFIAA sponsored the Spring Training Trip Giveaway in collaboration with the West Michigan Whitecaps and Witte Travel & Tours. The contest awarded one lucky winner and three guests a trip to Lakeland, Florida to attend two Detroit Tigers spring training games. The grand prize also included roundtrip airfare, ground transportation, hotel accommodations, and a \$500 Visa gift card. This is one of the many ways the airport's collaboration with community partners helps provide new experiences and adventures for West Michigan residents.





GFIA Joins Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program

This global initiative is dedicated to assisting travelers with hidden and visible disabilities. GFIA is now one of 230 airports worldwide that provides this program to enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of the travel experience for all passengers.

Passengers seeking to discreetly indicate a disability, visible or non-visible, and who may require additional assistance, understanding, and more time can request a complimentary Sunflower lanyard, pin, wristband, or retractable Sunflower ID card at the airport's Visitor Information Desk or security screening checkpoint.

GFIAA staff and partners have undergone training to recognize the Sunflower symbol and offer assistance and accommodations accordingly to ensure all guests can navigate the airport with independence and ease.



Take Off to Flavor Town: GFIAA's Food **Truck Events Spotlight Local Vendors**

GFIAA's annual Food Trucks at the Viewing Park event occurred every other week from May through September and offered visitors the opportunity to enjoy delicious food from a variety of local food trucks while watching airplanes take off and land. The airport hosted a total of 10 events in 2023 and featured more than a dozen food truck vendors.

In 2024, the Food Trucks at the Viewing Park will occur every Wednesday from June through August. More information can be found on the airport's Facebook page @FlyGRFord.





Passenger Appreciation Day

GFIAA kicked off spring break travel with our annual Passenger Appreciation Day event! This festive occasion featured a live band, costumed characters roaming the concourses and spreading cheer, a visit from our furry friends at West Michigan Therapy Dogs, seasonal beverages from our concessionaire partners, and more. With more than 130,000 travelers arriving at and departing from the airport that week, we made sure to make it a memorable experience for everyone.

Women's Aviation Career Symposium

GFIAA was honored to volunteer at the Women's Aviation Career Symposium (WACS), where we spoke about the various roles in the aviation industry and handed out airportbranded swag. Since WACS' inception in 2018, it has awarded \$41,500 in scholarships to 23 women, provided invaluable networking opportunities, and supported the next generation of aviation professionals.

It was a fantastic opportunity to inspire and empower women interested in pursuing careers in aviation, and we were thrilled to be part of such an impactful event.



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CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Breaking New Ground

Michigan's First Consolidated Rental Car Facility

GFIAA celebrated the groundbreaking of its \$156 million Consolidated Rental Car Facility (CONRAC), marking a significant milestone in ground transportation services to further enhance the passenger experience. The CONRAC aims to streamline rental car services and reduce roadway traffic and emissions, accommodating forecasted passenger growth.

This project is part of the broader ELEVATE capital expansion program, which includes infrastructure improvements such as a federal inspection station, relocation of the air traffic control tower, expansion of Concourse A, and additional parking capacity. With support from partners at Kent County, the project is financed through municipal bonds and a combination of federal and state grants and user fees.





90% **CAR RENTAL OPERATIONS** REMOVED FROM CONGESTED ROADWAYS

\$14.5 Million Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Facility

GFIAA broke ground on its new \$14.5 million Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) facility to further enhance passenger safety and aviation operations. Spanning 25,000 square feet, the stateof-the-art facility will house advanced firefighting vehicles, specialized equipment, and expanded training spaces for ARFF personnel. Anticipated to be completed by 2025, two-thirds of the project is funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the remaining is funded by federal and state grants, municipal bonds, and user fees—with no local taxpayer dollars involved.









New Developments and Milestones

Unveiled Phase 1 of Newly Expanded Concourse A

In summer 2023, GFIAA completed Phase 1 of its newly expanded Concourse A project. This milestone included the addition of eight new gates, bringing its total to 14, as well as expanded gate space areas to accommodate larger aircraft. New concession and retail concepts were also introduced, along with a greater variety of seating options from Haworth, MillerKnoll, and Steelcase.

The airport then transitioned to Phase 2 of the project, which involved closing the gates of the existing portion of Concourse A for widening and renovations, the addition of a second-level executive lounge, and additional amenities for passengers. The existing portion of Concourse A and new amenities opened in spring 2024, with the executive lounge planned to be unveiled in 2025.



New Companion Care Restroom with Adult Changing Table

As part of the Concourse A expansion, GFIAA worked closely with partners at Disability Advocates of Kent County to identify the opportunity of adding a companion care restroom near gate A8. This facility includes an adult changing table that is heightadjustable and provides ample space to accommodate everyone comfortably, ensuring all guests feel supported during their journey through the airport. In addition to the companion care restroom, GFIA offers family restrooms, nursing rooms, and pre- and postsecurity animal relief restrooms.



Runway Renovations

GFIAA completed significant upgrades to the airfield lighting system, pavement sensors, and signage on the airport's primary east-west runway, Runway 8R/26L. During this construction period, all commercial air traffic utilized the north-south runway, Runway 17/35. These developments further enhanced nighttime and weather safety conditions, ensuring the utmost safety for all passengers and aircraft.



Explore and Enjoy New Concessions and Stores



ALETITUDE

Located in Concourse A, a full-service beer garden and restaurant featuring local craft brews, as well as breakfast, lunch, and dinner options.



GRR LIFE MARKET & CAFE

Located pre-security in the Grand Hall,



THORNAPPLE ESSENTIALS

Located in Concourse A, offers snacks, clothes, toiletries, and more.



BLUE BRIDGE MARKET

Located in Concourse A, includes local favorites MadCap Coffee and Nantucket Bakery, along with self-serve meal options.



INK BY HUDSON

Located post-security in the Marketplace, a contemporary bookstore that includes a self-serve wine tasting wall.

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BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

Congrats to new and reappointed members of our board of directors.



DAN BURRILL **Appointed to GFIAA's Board of Directors**

In winter 2023, Kent County Commissioner Dan Burrill was appointed to GFIAA's board of directors for a three-year term. Burrill brings a robust background in economic and community development, along with experience in business management, real estate, and public policy, to bolster the airport's operations and contribute to its growth as an economic driver in West Michigan.



DOUG SMALL Named Vice Chair of GFIAA's Board of Directors

Doug Small was reappointed to GFIAA's seven-member board of directors and selected by board colleagues to serve as vice chair. With three years of experience on the board and four decades of expertise in hospitality, tourism, and destination marketing, Small's expertise is vital as the airport invests more than \$600 million in infrastructure improvement projects and aims to have a \$10 billion economic impact by 2030.

As president and CEO of Experience Grand Rapids since 2008, Small has played a key role in elevating West Michigan's tourism industry, making him a valuable asset in enhancing the airport's connectivity and reputation as a premier destination for travelers.



We cultivated relationships with advocates of our mission.



SENATOR GARY PETERS

Senator Gary Peters secured \$10 million in federal funds to support the Concourse A expansion project, resulting in the creation of 125 construction jobs and 300 permanent jobs, further bolstering the growth of the West Michigan economy. Additionally, Senator Peters allocated funding in the FY23 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) budget to advance GFIAA's efforts to relocate the air traffic control tower. This funding facilitated progress with the FAA Facilities and Engineering Services team to move the tower project into the design and procurement stage.



CONGRESSWOMAN HILLARY SCHOLTEN

Congresswoman Hillary Scholten has played a pivotal role in efforts to relocate the airport's federally owned and operated air traffic control tower. At 60 years old, GFIA's tower is the oldest among the top 75 busiest airports in the country and poses challenges to planned infrastructure improvement projects due to its location. Congresswoman Scholten has highlighted the critical need for this project during key hearings and actively collaborates with GFIAA staff to explore how the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2023 could further support the tower relocation efforts.



PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

The creativity of amazing local artists is now on display at the airport.

Throughout 2023, GFIAA's robust public art program added 10 commissioned art pieces to the newly expanded Concourse A. The selected local artists created pieces that elevate the traveler experience and showcase the beauty and vibrancy of the West Michigan region. Each unique piece incorporated key elements symbolic to each artist and their individual experience as a member of our community.

Thanks to support from the Frey Foundation, GFIAA will continue its commitment to showcasing local artists through its public art program.



GEORGE EBERHARDT III

Terrazzo Artist

Inspired by aspects of Katsushika Hokusai's "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," George referenced Lake Michigan and its water elements in his design that measures a diameter of 15 feet.



MICHAEL PFLEGHAAR

Terrazzo Artist

Michael aimed to replicate West Michigan's natural forestry and agriculture.



MAUREEN NOLLETTE

Terrazzo Artist

Inspired by a photograph she took of a Sand Cherry shrub on a roadside beach in Michigan, Maureen created designs to showcase the vastness of the Lake Michigan dunes and the region's native flora.



KIM NGUYEN

Terrazzo Artist

Referencing the cities and towns of Grand Rapids and surrounding West Michigan areas, Kim includes representations of Grand Rapids' agricultural, medical, and manufacturing industries in her terrazzo floor design.



DEVIN DUMOND

Mural Artist

"Twilight on the Rapids" is inspired by their hometown of Grand Rapids and the variety of architecture found within the city.



MADDISON CHAFER

Mural Artist

"Manitou Passage" is intended to share in the appreciation for the landscape's history and inspire travelers to help preserve Michigan's native ecosystems.



JIMMY COBB

AK BUENO

Mural Artist

Mural Artist

"Hauling in the Sail" was inspired by Zoltan Sepeshy, a Hungarian painter who resided and taught in Michigan, and is intended to bring the vision and energy of the great coastlines to life.

"Welcome to West Michigan" focuses on

abstractedly depicting key architectural

elements from the region.



JILL EGGERS

Mural Artist

"Returning to Earth" is based on the dense and lyrical woods of Michigan and focuses on connecting travelers to the beauty and peace of the forest.



JEFFREY AUGUSTINE SONGCO

Aerial Artist

"Facets" consists of three large-scale, site-specific suspended sculptures, composed of hundreds of strands of colorful, multi-sided shapes.

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60TH ANNIVERSARY COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

August 19, 2023





CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

we embarked on a journey to commemorate gateway to the world.

terminal building, including a limited-edition Hill and special 60th anniversary apparel at Hudson's travel stores.

Anniversary Community Celebration held on welcomed the West Michigan community to our airfield for a day filled with food trucks, live music, aircraft displays, and family fun.

opportunities, and discover the vital role our This event also featured 16 community partners, including airport tenants, museum partners, that has been instrumental in our growth and

As we reflect on the past 60 years, we are grateful to the West Michigan community for their unwavering support and partnership.

Together, we will continue to soar to even creating opportunities for our region. Thank you



Check out our 60th anniversary online storefront!













FLITE: PIONEERING INNOVATION IN AVIATION

GFIAA, in collaboration with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Seamless Ventures, Southwest Airlines, and the West Michigan Aviation Academy, has developed the Ford Launchpad for Innovative Technologies and Entrepreneurship, or FLITE. This platform supports the development of new technologies in the aviation industry through pilot tests in a live airport environment.

In spring 2023, FLITE launched its third round of funding, awarding \$171,000 to five companies, including Cyberworks Robotics, Deaf Al, Renu Robotics, Solartonic, and UV Angel, to pilot test their cutting-edge solutions.

Continuing with this momentum, FLITE's fourth round in fall 2023 awarded over \$100,000 to five companies, including Dataspeed Inc., DD DANNAR, Numina, Signapse, and Volair Technologies Inc.

"The aviation industry has a significant gap in pilot studies and soft landings for innovation, making it difficult for early-stage startups to present their innovations to airport authorities," said Mehdi Masoumi, founder and CEO of Deaf Al, an artificial intelligence venture that trains

machines to use sign language to improve the travel experience of those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

"FLITE singularly built a bridge to address this gap by providing resources for early-stage startups. FLITE is a window of opportunity to test innovation and reach out to other airports, including airports on the advisory boards of the FLITE program."

With a total of 16 companies supported and over \$550,000 in grant funds awarded across four rounds, FLITE is playing a pivotal role in driving transformative change in the aviation industry, welcoming innovative ideas to shape the future of the passenger experience and airport operations. To learn more about FLITE, visit grr.org/FLITE.





HIGHLIGHTING **EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE**

Ensuring exceptional guest experiences is a top priority at GFIA. Through the airport-wide Employee Recognition Program, guests can publicly acknowledge outstanding work by airport employees. To be nominated for the employee recognition award, employees must exemplify GFIA's core values of Service, Our People, Achievement through Accountability, and Respect (SOAR). These values guide interactions with team members, partners, and guests, emphasizing exceptional service, integrity, accountability, and inclusivity.

Employees are recognized quarterly, with one of the quarterly recipients chosen for the annual employee spotlight. This year's annual

employee spotlight recipients were GFIAA's Dan Heydenburk and Joe Leiter. Heydenburk and Leiter assisted a guest whose electric wheelchair malfunctioned. Their quick response and troubleshooting skills ensured the guest could continue their journey without further delay. Their act of kindness embodied GFIA's SOAR values and demonstrated a commitment to providing outstanding service to passengers.

If you recognize or receive outstanding service from a GFIA employee, you can nominate them for the employee recognition program at grr.org/employee-recognition-program.

Dan Heydenburk and Joe Leiter



CHARTING FUTURE HORIZONS: A PREVIEW OF THE YEAR AHEAD

Sun Country Airlines Announces Service

GFIA will welcome its seventh airline partner this year as Sun Country Airlines begins service in June 2024. The low-cost airline will operate seasonal flights to Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport from June to September 2024. Flights will be available biweekly on Sundays and Thursdays in the afternoons and evenings. Guests departing from Minneapolis will have access to more than 90 destinations.

FLITE Showcased at SXSW®

FLITE was showcased on a global stage at the SXSW® conference in Austin, Texas. As air travel continues to undergo rapid innovation, airports, airlines, and technology companies are discovering new avenues for collaboration to create a more efficient, sustainable, and passenger-friendly experience. GFIAA's President and CEO, Tory Richardson, along with partners, presented on how FLITE is leading innovation in the aviation industry and anticipated trends for companies developing solutions in the air travel and mobility space.

GFIAA to Unveil Sustainability Management Plan

GFIAA continues its commitment to environmental stewardship as we plan to unveil our comprehensive sustainability management plan this year. Stay tuned for more details on our path to a greener future.

Groundbreaking of the Terminal Enhancement Project

Included under the ELEVATE capital expansion program, the Terminal Enhancement Project broke ground in spring 2024. This \$136 million investment will expand the terminal building by over 175,000 square feet, increasing GFIA's capacity to better accommodate the growing demand for air service connectivity in the West Michigan region. The project includes expanding the terminal to the west with a full checked baggage inspection system (CBIS) on the lower level, relocating the ticket counters from the east to the west end of the terminal, and expanding baggage claim.

GFIAA to Host Aviation Leaders at ACI-NA Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, MI

As the host airport for this year's Airports Council International-North America's (ACI-NA) Annual Conference, GFIAA will welcome leaders from the aviation industry to West Michigan. The conference will be a hub for knowledge exchange, networking, and collaboration. It is a unique opportunity to engage with industry peers, connect with esteemed vendors, and explore the latest innovations in the airport and aviation sector. We hope that the discussions and connections forged during this event will contribute to the continued success and advancement of our industry and are honored to host this prestigious event in our community.





FACTS AND FIGURES

78,251,724 total pounds of cargo 3,794,915 total passengers

76,567 total flight operations

total airline partners

CONCOURSE A EXPANSION PROJECT

new gates

155,000

square feet of new space

300 permanent jobs

2,770 construction jobs

SAVE THE DATES

Upcoming community events.

June - August: Food Trucks at the Viewing Park

October 12: Fire Prevention Day

November 27: Thanksgiving Operation Handshake

December 2-6: Holiday Music Festival

December 23: Holiday Operation Handshake



