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### Real Estate & Development

# Reading Airport industrial park gets \$2.5 million state grant, could create up to 600 jobs

By **Wendy Solomon**, September 19, 2016 at 11:11 AM

BCIDA Airport Site



The property outlined in orange, next to one of the runways at Reading Regional Airport, is the site of the proposed industrial park. (Photo courtesy of Berks County Industrial Development Authority)

The proposed industrial park next to the Reading Regional Airport received a \$2.5 million state grant to help pay for infrastructure improvements needed on Aviation Road before the redevelopment of the 155-acre brownfield site can begin.

Gov. Tom Wolf, who was joined by state and local officials, made the announcement Friday at the site in Bern Township where the Berks County Industrial Development Authority has proposed redeveloping an 807,700-square-foot industrial park for primarily small manufacturers.

The industrial park could also attract businesses involved in assembly, warehousing, services and research and development, but before work can begin, the site's electrical grid needs to be upgraded, officials have said. It was not clear whether the grant from the state Redevelopment Capital Assistance Program would be used toward upgrading the electrical grid along Route 183 or for other uses.

About \$7 million worth of infrastructure improvements is needed on the \$13.3 million project.

Rebecca Wingenroth, a vice chairman on the Berks County Industrial Development Authority's board, said improvements also are needed on the UGI gas line and on the design of Aviation Road and Route 183.

Wingenroth said the authority is considering infrastructure improvements to coordinate with a company adjacent to the site that would create an efficient heat and power plant.

Thomas C. McKeon, executive director of the BCIDA, said state and local officials "put this project on overdrive. ... They've given us the missing piece we've needed to turn an unproductive brownfield site into a place that will create significant jobs and tax base for our community and the commonwealth."

The industrial park is expected to create between 500 and 600 new full-time jobs, about 220 indirect jobs by support and supplier industries and 750 nonpermanent direct jobs during construction, according to Wolf's office.

"In today's highly competitive economy, businesses are looking for shovel-ready sites when evaluating where to locate," state Sen. Judy Schwank (Berks County) said in a statement.

"This project provides Berks County with a much-needed ready-to-go location, which will be very attractive to businesses and will result in more jobs coming to our area," Schwank said.

Wingenroth said, "We think this is one of the best examples of how everyone can work together for the right thing. It's so important for our community."