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### NIAR Finalizes Plans to Expand into Former Kansas Coliseum

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**Additional information:** See this news story on the Wichita State News web page: <http://www.wichita.edu/thisis/stories/story.asp?si=1729> (Accessed April 22, 2016.)



## Wichita State News



Photo: Wichita State University

WSU's National Institute for Aviation Research is expanding into the former Kansas Coliseum.

# NIAR finalizes plans to expand into former Kansas Coliseum

Friday, March 16, 2012



Wichita State University's National Institute for Aviation Research will be testing aircraft components in the former Britt Brown Arena at the Kansas Coliseum by year end.

Earlier this week, WSU officials and developer Johnny Stevens signed a 10-year lease agreement that will allow NIAR to remodel the arena, which formerly seated 10,000 spectators for events including concerts, professional wrestling, college basketball and professional hockey. The lease includes three five-year options.



"Securing the Britt Brown Arena for NIAR is a tremendous opportunity for Wichita State and our community," said interim provost and professor Keith Pickus. "Not only will NIAR be able to enhance its research and testing capacities, but WSU's presence in the former Coliseum ensures the continued viability of an important community investment."

The newly remodeled facility will house NIAR's Aircraft Structural Testing and Evaluation Center, most of which is located at Hawker Beechcraft's

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Keith Pickus

Plant 1. The move will allow the rapidly growing laboratories the space to expand and take on more work.

When remodeling work is complete, the former arena will include approximately 100,000 square feet of laboratory space and 30,000 square feet of office space on two levels with client observation and work areas and a 30-by-70 foot hangar door on the south end.

“NIAR anticipates full occupancy by the year end, with limited occupancy prior to that,” said NIAR executive director John Tomblin. “We will more than double the amount of current full-scale structural testing space that exists now and greatly expand the ability to test larger aircraft.”

The facility has a clearance height of 48 feet and clear span of more than 240 feet. This will allow testing and research on aircraft including unmanned aerial vehicles, business jets, commercial aircraft and military aircraft.

NIAR’s Full-Scale Structural Test Lab tests full-size aircraft parts such as fuselage sections, cockpits, wings and stabilizers before they go into production to ensure they will be able to withstand the forces they will experience during flight. This type of testing also helps to determine the optimum lifespan of aircraft.

This testing will occur on the former arena floor, where Garth Brooks once sold out shows. Offices for the Full-Scale Structural Test Lab will be located in areas that once housed concessions and walkways for spectators.

The former arena will also house additional laboratories that are located at Hawker Beechcraft (HBC), including the Aging Aircraft Lab and the Metrology Lab. NIAR’s Environmental Test Labs are also located at HBC, but there are no plans to relocate those facilities at this time.

The Aging Aircraft Lab will share some of the arena floor space and will also occupy the former Thunder Hockey dressing rooms with nondestructive testing and paint removal equipment. Its offices will exist on the second floor in areas that formerly housed concessions, walkways and second-tier seating.

The Aging Aircraft Lab performs structural teardown, failure analysis and nondestructive inspection, including ultrasonic inspection of retired military and commercial aircraft. Programs on the lab’s schedule include continuing with the KC-135 tanker analysis program and additional programs including the C-130, Boeing 707, Boeing E-6 and programs for the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Metrology Lab will occupy space on the first floor where storage and workshop space currently exists. This lab is responsible for ensuring that the laboratory equipment used at NIAR is reliable and accurate. The lab also performs this type of work for outside clients to calibrate equipment such as power supplies, timing devices, thermometers, ovens, environmental chambers, scales, accelerometers, PSI gauges and altimeters.

A portion of NIAR’s Composite and Advanced Materials Lab will also be housed at the former arena. It will perform testing similar to that of the Full-Scale Structural Test Lab, but on a smaller scale.

Because of ITAR-restricted and proprietary client testing, the facility will be restricted to clients and scheduled guests only. The facility parking areas will also be secured and separate from those of the Kansas Pavilions. The pavilions will not lose parking spaces as a result of the agreement. When the remodel is complete, the public will be invited to an open house to see the transformation.

#### **About NIAR**

The National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) at Wichita State University supports the

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aviation industry by providing research, development, testing and certification services to manufacturers, government agencies and education entities. NIAR laboratories include: Advanced Coatings, Advanced Joining & Processing, Aging Aircraft, CAD/CAM, Composites & Advanced Materials, Computational Mechanics, Crash Dynamics, Environmental Test, Full-Scale Structural Test, Mechanical Test, Metrology, Nondestructive Test, Research Machine Shop, Virtual Reality and the Walter H. Beech Wind Tunnel. NIAR operates on a nonprofit budget that has steadily increased to more than \$49 million in fiscal year 2011. NIAR is the largest university aviation R&D institution in the United States. With its location in Wichita, Kan., the Air Capital of the World, NIAR is able to integrate business, government and university entities in cooperative efforts to advance aviation technology. NIAR operates more than 250,000 square feet of laboratory and office space and employs 350. Clients include Boeing, Bombardier Learjet, Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft and Spirit AeroSystems.

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**This story has been tagged [NIAR](#), [Aviation](#). [See all RSS feeds here](#)**

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Created on Friday, March 16, 2012; Last modified on Wednesday, March 28, 2012

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