



Dayton History



Erin Bartlett

Dayton Aviation Heritage needs more than \$500,000 in repairs, including fixing the Paul Laurence Dunbar House's front porch.

Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park

Ohio

Overview

In 1903, two brothers from Dayton, Ohio, made their mark on American history by launching the first airplane into a sustained flight in North Carolina. The Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park shares the stories of Orville and Wilbur Wright and another native son, Paul Laurence Dunbar, who drew international acclaim for his poetry, novels, and plays on civil rights and other themes.

The park, founded in 1992, needs over half a million dollars in deferred maintenance, mostly for historic structures. Funding these repairs not only would preserve the legacy of important American figures but also would help to stimulate the local economy. With five national historic landmarks, Dayton Aviation Heritage hopes to promote its recreational and educational opportunities with local, state, and federal governments. It has already worked with the city of Dayton to revitalize an urban neighborhood.

Maintenance challenges

The National Park Service (NPS) works with many partners to manage the aviation heritage area, including Aviation Trail Inc., Dayton History, National Aviation Heritage Alliance, Ohio History Connection, and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. These affiliations have enabled NPS to share a lot of the costs associated with protecting the park's historic assets and creating unique visitor experiences.

Even with these partnerships, however, NPS faces a maintenance backlog exceeding \$500,000. Most of the needed repairs are to buildings, including the Wright Cycle Co. building—home to a bicycle business the brothers ran, several administrative offices, and the Wright-Dunbar Interpretive Center. The center, formerly a print shop operated by the Wrights, is co-managed by NPS and Aviation Trail Inc., a nonprofit. NPS' portion of repairs includes \$341,000 to replace the alarm system, update the audio and visual systems, and fix the roof and chimney. The Cycle Co. building requires many of the same repairs, and the porch decking also needs to be replaced.

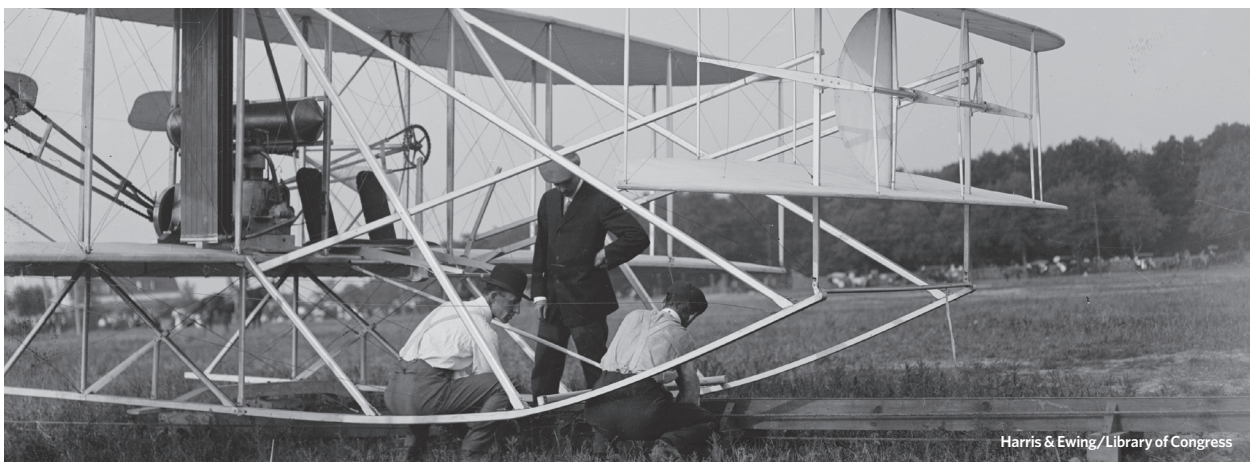
“ Since its inception, the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park site has been a catalyst to inspire the continuing revitalization of the historic Wright-Dunbar neighborhood in West Dayton. With more than \$100 million leveraged and invested in this neighborhood since 2001, the national park has helped to bring new residents and businesses into this once-forgotten neighborhood.”

Shelley Dickstein, Dayton city manager

Recommendations

To address the deferred maintenance needs at Dayton Aviation Heritage and other NPS sites in Ohio and across the country, Congress should:

- Ensure that infrastructure initiatives include provisions to address park maintenance.
- Provide dedicated annual federal funding for national park repairs.
- Enact innovative policy reforms to ensure that deferred maintenance does not escalate.
- Provide more highway funding for NPS maintenance needs.
- Create more opportunities for public-private collaboration and donations to help restore park infrastructure.



Wilbur and Orville Wright prepare to launch a plane into flight at Fort Myer in Virginia in 1909.

Table 1

Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park Facts 2016

Visits	95,334
Visitor spending	\$5.7 million
Jobs created by visitor spending	104
Economic output	\$8.9 million
Labor income	\$3.2 million
Deferred maintenance (fiscal year 2015)	\$565,274

Sources: National Park Service, "Annual Visitation Report by Years: 2006 to 2016," accessed June 14, 2017, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20\(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)); National Park Service, "Visitor Spending Effects," accessed June 14, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>; National Park Service, "NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports," accessed Aug. 19, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>.

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Figure 1

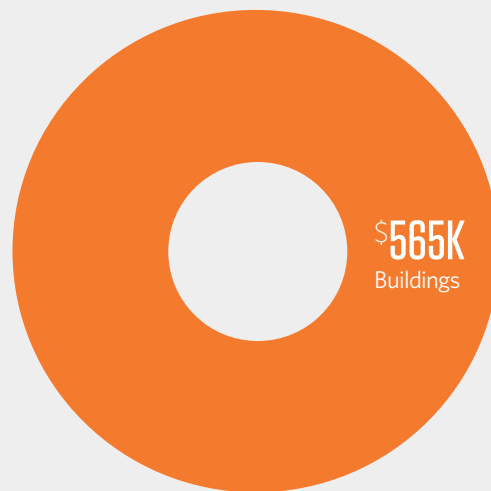
Dayton Aviation
Heritage National
Historical Park
Needs More
Than Half a
Million Dollars
for Infrastructure
Repairs

Key deferred
maintenance

Note: Buildings constitute the
park's only deferred maintenance.

Source: Pew analysis of National
Park Service data

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