



CHICAGO MIDWAY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT RETAIL CONCESSIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Company profile

- Established in 1989, as Unison Consulting Group
- Became UNISON-MAXIMUS, a wholly owned subsidiary of Maximus 1999
- Acquired in 2008 by UCG Associates now doing business as Unison Consulting
- More than 100 airport clients have benefited from our firm's consultant expertise
- Experienced senior staff with more than 150 years of industry experience
- Firm's senior staff have held management positions with airports, airlines, the FAA, government consulting firms and other national aviation consulting firms
- Professional consultants are experts in economics, finance, retail concessions, airport planning, information technology, and airport management

Challenge

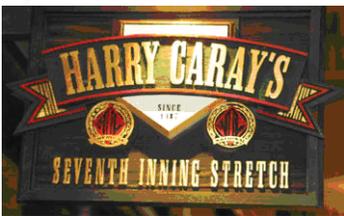
In addition to managing the concession program at Midway, the City of Chicago retained Unison Consulting (Unison), formerly UNISON-MAXIMUS, to assist the Department of Aviation in the development of a comprehensive retail plan for food and beverage; news, gift and specialty retail; and services at the New Midway Airport. Project goals included introducing competition among operators and incorporating popular local restaurants and shops into the merchandise mix.

Solution

With the strong Southwest Airline passenger base at Midway, Unison was particularly concerned with passenger flow and the tendency for these passengers to be "gate-huggers." Therefore, space planning focused on creating a distinctive centralized concession area that would catch passenger attention and interest before they moved out to the gates and adequate concession space on the concourse to serve passengers who are more comfortable staying within the vicinity of the departure gates.

Space planning was also guided by a comprehensive passenger survey designed to better understand how passengers use the airport and product and service preferences. The information was used to finalize the merchandise mix and develop a leasing strategy to achieve a strong mix of operators and products.

New Midway program has more than 75% local DBE participation.



Passengers have noted the improved merchandise variety and quality, fair prices, enhanced store designs that celebrate Chicago neighborhoods, and excellent customer service.



Unison developed a hybrid leasing structuring, which utilized both prime concessionaires and direct leases with local operators to meet the client's goals. Specific locations with excellent exposure in the central retail triangle were targeted for local operators to increase the project's viability and improve financial performance for local entrepreneurs. Concourse locations were packaged to increase competition within each concourse yet also retain economic feasibility for concessionaires.

Unison, in cooperation with the City, conducted an expansive outreach program, which resulted in an exceptional local and national response to the RFPs. As a result of our efforts, the program opened with over 75% local DBE participation – well exceeding the City's goals.

To ensure the best quality facilities and service at the Airport, Unison developed a lease document and Tenant Design Criteria that reflect the industry's best practices, as well as those found in traditional retail leases. Perhaps more importantly, we developed and implemented an ongoing monitoring and compliance program that provides staff with the tools to work with concessionaires to provide the best customer service, quality products and inviting stores. This program focuses on operational reviews, price surveys, customer feedback, tenant relations and similar activities that focus on developing a partnership with the operators and an incentive to enhance service.

Results

The New Midway has been a resounding success. The program truly creates a "sense of place" for Chicago with more than a dozen local brands operated by local businesses. More importantly, sales and revenues exceed original expectations and remain among industry leaders.

Industry Awards:

- 2003 *Airport Revenue News* Best Redeveloped Concessions Program (medium airport category)
- 2008 *Airport Revenue News* Best Concessions Program (medium airport category)