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# Public-use heliports like the one pondered in Boston are rare nationally

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MONICA ALMEIDA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**A helicopter pad on top of a Los Angeles skyscraper.**

**By Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF JANUARY 22, 2016

The news that GE will move its headquarters to Boston has reignited talk of building a public-use

heliport in the city, particularly somewhere downtown, which has gone without one for more than 15 years.

Such facilities are rare nationwide, according to Federal Aviation Administration records. And Massachusetts doesn't have any at all.

The records list 135 stand-alone, private-use heliports around Massachusetts. No public-use heliports are listed.

Pilots who fly into public-use facilities must follow certain rules, including that they communicate with heliport officials as well as with other nearby pilots and any air traffic control officials in the area, experts and federal aviation regulators said.

The types and sizes of aircraft must also match those authorized for the heliport. Otherwise, public-use heliports do not turn away any pilots.



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# Public-use heliports like the one pondered in Boston are rare



## GE lands. Will a helipad take off?

To attract GE, city and state officials agreed to help facilitate the construction of a helipad in Boston.

Public-use heliports are eligible for, and typically receive federal funding.

However, “there are not a lot of public-use heliports across the country,” said Chris Dancy, a spokesman for the Virginia-based Helicopter Association International.

Out of 5,664 heliports nationwide, just 66, or about 1.2 percent, are designated as being for public use, according to FAA records.

In New England, there are just three public-use heliports, all of them in Connecticut. (The heliport GE has at its current headquarters in Fairfield, Conn., is designated for private use, records show.)

At private-use heliports, the owners and operators can restrict who can take off and land, officials said. Private-use facilities are not eligible for federal funding.

So what’s a helicopter pilot supposed to do? Just circle forever?

Not quite. Pilots may get permission to take advantage of private-use heliports.

Choppers can also flit to and from public-use airports that do not have officially-designated heliports.

For example, Logan International Airport in Boston, a public-use airport, is not officially listed as a heliport, but it does allow helicopters to take off and land, typically from the ends of its runways, spokesman Matthew Brellis said.

On average, there are about three or four helicopter departures and arrivals per day at Logan, he said.

Dancy said many airports do not have official heliports, but will allow helicopters to land because they have enough space. If there’s room for planes to land and take off, there’s room for helicopter operations.



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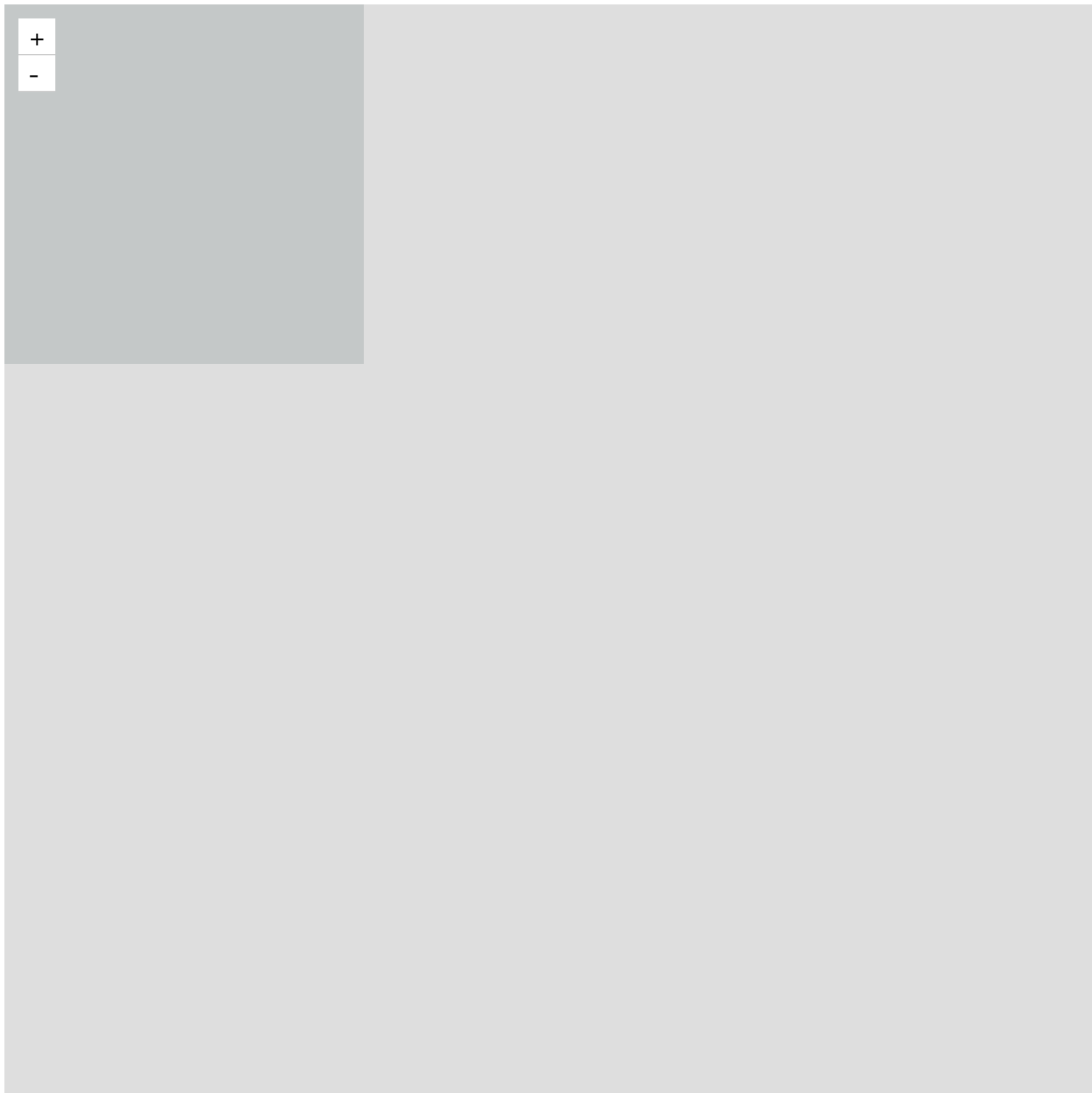
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## Public-use heliports like the one pondered in Boston are rare

**Officials also said private-use restrictions become moot if a situation arises where a pilot must make an emergency landing.**

## Heliports in Massachusetts

Each of the 135 heliports statewide are designated as being for private use, according to FAA records.



**DATA: Federal Aviation Administration**

MATT ROCHELEAU/GLOBE STAFF

*Globe Correspondent Amanda Burke contributed to this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)*

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