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Paradise *times*

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VALPARAISO
RESIDENTS

*Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) Recommendations
Threaten Valparaiso's Existence*

Valparaiso - Paradise No More

How can a city help give birth to an Air Force Base end up its victim? Valparaiso is the home to Eglin with approximately 87% of land in the city owned by Eglin. No taxes are paid on this land. Our city has always taken pride in being the home to Eglin and supporting the base and its personnel. So far this has been good for our community. Now Eglin has a new mission and Valparaiso is in its way.

In order for their new F-35 training mission to succeed with take-offs and landings one every 90 seconds on the existing North-South runway, the Air Force recommends that the land in the Clear Zone and Accident Poten-

tial Zone (APZ) become non-residential. The remaining land in the city will experience high noise and safety threats.

Department of Defense funded studies are underway to accommodate the new mission and the initial recommendations foretell the demise of Valparaiso. All costs to implement the recommendations are to be borne by the city and its residents. Valparaiso officials have reviewed these studies and strongly oppose the recommendations; our opposition has been officially documented in writing to the proper officials.



SPECIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VALPARAISO RESIDENTS

Background Information

In 2005, the BRAC decision was made to locate the Joint Strike Fighter or F-35 at Eglin AFB and Field 3 for training purposes. This new mission will bring the world's noisiest aircraft into the area and a promise of economic prosperity for Okaloosa County, which does not include any development in our city. Most of the new military pilots coming into this area will be students. They are transitional and will not be invested in our community.

The Department of Defense is required to prepare a report called the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) that informs the communities about the noise levels generated from the airplanes. In 2006, Eglin prepared an AICUZ based on existing F-15 airplanes not the new F-35 airplanes (data not available at the time). The purpose of the report is to inform the citizens about the noise and to give the city information to incorporate into its planning for future development.

The Department of Defense is also required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) per the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). This report describes the mission, how it will be implemented and the impacts on Valparaiso and surrounding areas. The draft EIS has been prepared with the final report scheduled for September, 2008. The city has commented extensively on the draft report on 9 May 2008.

In recognition of how BRAC decisions can affect local communities, the Department of Defense through its Office of Economic Affairs has a grant program called the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS). The purpose of this study is for local communities and the adjacent military installation to work together to find solutions to minimize the impacts. Development close to the military installation affects their mission and the military's mission affects the property owners and residents.

Okaloosa County received a JLUS grant to include communities in Okaloosa, Walton and Santa Rosa Counties affected by Eglin AFB. Valparaiso agreed to collaborate in this study with the understanding that Eglin would also participate.

Impacts to Valparaiso from the F-35

Noise from aircraft is measured in decibels as an average over 24 hours. Negative impacts begin to appear at the 65 dB level. In the draft EIS, the noise generated from the F-35 will be at 65 to 85 dB for the city of Valparaiso.

These high noise levels will significantly and negatively affect residents and property owners. Your homes will need new windows, doors and additional insulation. You will not be able to enjoy the outdoors and there may be structural damage to your homes due to noise vibrations. Most importantly, VA and FHA may not provide financing for your homes under these noise levels so selling may be impossible. Your property will be devalued and your nest egg gone.



The F-35 also threatens the safety of Valparaiso residents. These planes only seat one person. The pilots flying these planes are students. They will initially

train on a simulator and then fly solo over Valparaiso in the F-35. As part of the pilot's training, they will be required to carry live ordnance in some of their flights, which will occur over the populated area in Valparaiso. According to Eglin AFB the expected F-35 accident rate for a Class A mishap is 1 per year. The existing rate for the F-15 currently flown at Eglin is 1 per every 8 years.

A Class A mishap includes loss of life or property exceeding \$1 million. Valparaiso officials believe that the mishap rate for the first 5 years will be much higher. Based on Air Force data, we estimate the mishap rate at 1 every 3 months.

Due to the projected high noise, limited sources of loans for homes and the safety issue, property values will significantly decline as well as the quality of life.

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VALPARAISO RESIDENTS

City Officials Response and Position on the Impacts

The city has responded in writing many letters to elected officials and the appropriate military officials concerning these issues.

The City has taken the position that these impacts place too much burden on the residents and the proposed use of the North-South runway for F-35 aircraft is unacceptable. The city has requested that Eglin AFB find solutions that will remove the noise and safety issues off of Valparaiso. No reply from the military has been received to date.

The city has also responded to the draft JLUS as totally unacceptable. The draft JLUS recommends Valparaiso taking on the responsibility of buying and demolishing homes, insulating homes and creating a redevelopment area in Plat 1 (area east of John Sims Parkway) that will destroy our way of life. The JLUS plan is totally lacking in recommendations for Eglin to accept responsibility for the burdens they are placing on Valparaiso.

The draft JLUS report is available on the County's website at <http://www.co.okaloosa.fl.us>. Chapter 12 addresses Valparaiso. The consultant's contract requires them to address mitigation strategies for Eglin in reducing the impacts to adjacent communities. This is not addressed in the draft JLUS. The contract also calls for the military and local government to discuss mitigation strategies. At no time has there been a meeting or opportunity for Valparaiso officials to meet with Eglin officials to discuss mitigation strategies.

JLUS Recommendations

The JLUS consultant's draft recommendations, which will cause the demise of our city, are listed below. All proposed recommendations are to be at the city and residents expense.

1. Create new building codes to include noise insulation for new construction – this will result in higher building costs for everyone.
2. Retrofit existing public buildings to reduce the noise level. The public buildings include city hall, library, police department and both public schools – more costs to the taxpayer.
3. Develop and implement an assistance program

for private property owners to reduce the noise level inside their homes – more costs to the homeowners and taxpayers.

4. Require property owners to disclose high noise levels when they sell their homes – less money in your pocket when you sell.
5. Implement a land acquisition program to purchase properties in the clear zone and then tear them down. Also acquire other properties for conservation – taxpayers foot the bill and property owners will get less money for their property since it has been devalued.
6. Develop a letter of special use agreement with Eglin AFB – this agreement would be developed after the planes arrive – kind of like negotiating with the fox after he is in the henhouse.
7. Create a redevelopment plan. This will remove homes from the APZ areas and increase the ability for developers to buy your home in Plat 1, tear it down and build businesses and high-rise apartments.
8. Limit heights of buildings – Federal government telling us how to zone our property.
9. Limit outdoor lighting – more Federal government interfering in our zoning.
10. Educate developers and builders on radio frequencies interference – the city does not have the expertise on this subject – will need to hire consultants to advise the city.
11. Implement public awareness measures – in other words, the city will be responsible for telling the public what the Air Force is doing to them.
12. Implement a military influence area ordinance that changes the Future Land Use Map and zoning – so much for local control over the land use in our city, the Air Force knows what's best for us and our city.





Town Hall Meeting

Valparaiso officials will hold a town hall meeting on Tuesday, August 12th at 6:30 pm in the City Commission Chambers to discuss in detail the impacts of the F-35 – and what you can do to turn things around. Residents will have an opportunity to

voice their concerns and ask questions. The City adheres to the ADA. If you need special assistance to attend the meeting, please call city hall at 729-5402 prior to the meeting.

