



*Celebrating 50 years*

*Submitted via email*

August 21, 2013

Mayor Weinberger and Members of the Burlington City Council:

The Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) has a 50 year history of advocating for Vermont's environment, sustainable communities, and a strong economy. It is as advocates for strong communities that we submit this letter opposing the basing of F-35 fighter jets at Burlington International Airport.

Two things are essential for creating the sustainable communities that we, as a state, say we value. The first is housing: ensuring a variety of housing options, for people of all income levels, is essential for a stable community and economy. The second is smart growth: building well-designed, compact communities where people can spend less energy and money by walking or taking transit; be closer to schools, shops, and services; and interact with their neighbors.

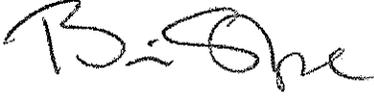
Unfortunately, based on the data presented in the Revised Draft EIS (May 2013), basing F-35 fighter jets at Burlington International Airport undermines sustainable communities. Our comment letter to the US Air Force (attached) outlines this data, but I would like to highlight some key issues for you to consider in your deliberations:

- **Homes near the airport represent an important part of the area's affordable housing supply.** These homes, many of which are owner-occupied, single family dwellings, represent an important part of the affordable housing supply in this area – supply that would diminish if residents had to be relocated due to increased noise or safety concerns.
- **People in Chittenden County need housing they can afford.** Over 30% of homeowners, and well over half of renters, pay more than 30% of their income on housing expenses – making them “housing burdened” according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Compromising the quality of the affected housing by basing the F-35s at Burlington International Airport would exacerbate affordability issues – in the process, impacting those with the least financial room to spare, and fewest choices for relocating.
- **Low income residents would be disproportionately impacted by both basing scenarios.** Under Scenario 1, the scenario with the least impact, the increase in noise would lead to a 45% increase in the number of people affected among the general population – but it would lead to a 130% increase in the number of the area's low income residents affected.

RECEIVED  
2013 AUG 21 10:11 AM  
BURLINGTON VERMONT  
TREASURER'S OFFICE

In sum, housing that people can afford is an essential part of creating the communities we say we want. As the City Council deliberates on this issue, we urge you to take responsibility for your role in creating sustainable communities for all residents of the region. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Shupe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Shupe" clearly distinguishable.

Brian Shupe, AICP  
Executive Director

RECEIVED

2013 AUG 21 P 4 26

BURLINGTON CLERK  
TREASURER'S OFFICE



*Celebrating 50 years*

*Submitted via email*

July 15, 2013

Mr. Nick Germanos  
F-35A EIS Project Manager  
HQ ACC/A7NS, 129 Andrews Street, Suite 332  
Langley Air Force Base, Virginia 23665-2769

BURLINGTON CLERK  
TREASURER'S OFFICE

2013 AUG 21 P 4: 26

RECEIVED

Dear Mr. Germanos,

The Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) is the state's oldest environmental advocacy organization, with a 50-year history of advocating for Vermont's environment, sustainable communities, and a strong economy. We are writing to express our opposition to basing F-35 fighter jets at the Burlington International Airport for the following reasons:

***Impacts from F-35s would undermine the region's supply of affordable housing.***

The Revised Draft EIS (May 2013) states that a significant number of households near to the airport would be affected if the F-35 fighter jets were based at the Burlington International Airport: a total of 2,963 under Scenario 1, and 3,410 under Scenario 2, increasing the number of affected households by 51% and 73%, respectively.<sup>2</sup> These homes, many of which are owner-occupied, single family dwellings, represent an important part of the affordable housing supply in this area – supply that would diminish if residents had to be relocated due to increased noise or safety concerns.

***Chittenden County has a limited supply of affordable housing, and low-income area residents will be disproportionately affected by either basing scenario.***

Affordable housing is essential in Chittenden County, where the median value of owner-occupied housing is 24% higher than in the rest of Vermont.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, over 30% of homeowners, and well over half of renters, pay more than 30% of their income on housing expenses – making them “housing burdened” according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.<sup>4</sup> Compromising the quality of the affected housing by basing the F-35s at Burlington International Airport would exacerbate affordability issues – in the process, impacting those with the least financial room to spare.

Low income residents would be disproportionately impacted by decibel levels exceeding 65 dB DNL in either Scenario 1 or 2; this further underscores the impact on affordable housing. The Revised Draft EIS (May 2013) states that under Scenario 1, there would be a 45% increase in the number of people affected among the general population, but a 130% increase in the number of the area's low income residents affected. Under

Scenario 2, there would be a 68% increase in the general population affected, but over double that – 164% – among the area’s low income population.<sup>4</sup>

***Basing the F-35s near existing neighborhoods runs counter to state goals and policies.***

The state of Vermont has long promoted compact land use, affordable housing, energy efficiency, and the development of strong communities through its goals and policies. (Indeed, the city of Burlington’s model for affordable housing, developed under then-mayor Bernie Sanders, is replicated worldwide.<sup>5</sup>) This is more than tradition: the promotion of Smart Growth is codified in state statute, and reinforced by state investments. The potentially affected areas represent some of the few compact, urban neighborhoods in an otherwise rural state, and basing fighter jets nearby undermines the land use pattern that we, as a state, are trying to promote.

Furthermore, making these neighborhoods unsuitable for residential use runs counter to the state’s transportation, affordable housing and energy goals: neighborhood residents who currently walk, take transit, or whose children walk to school will likely be forced into their cars, leading to more driving, less exercise, and increased carbon emissions.

***Maintaining compact, affordable housing options has environmental benefits.***

A healthy environment and strong communities go hand in hand: compact settlement in the tradition of Vermont’s downtowns and villages reduces residential sprawl into undeveloped areas, ensures lower-carbon transportation options, and allows residents to build equity and financial security through homeownership. It also takes pressure off of natural resource areas, ensuring their continued existence for farming, forestry, and recreation – key elements of Vermont’s economy.

We recognize the importance of jobs in this region, as well as the many positive contributions of the Vermont Air National Guard to our economy, our communities, and our security, but, on balance, oppose the addition of F-35s to the Vermont Air National Guard Base.

We cannot have a strong environment, strong communities or a strong economy unless people have access to decent, affordable housing. Basing F-35 fighter jets at this location risks undermining the region’s supply of affordable housing that is accessible to jobs and transit. Because of this, and for the reasons mentioned above, we oppose the basing of F-35 fighter jets at the Burlington International Airport.

Sincerely,



Brian Shupe, AICP  
Executive Director

RECEIVED  
JUN 21 10 46 21 AM '13  
BURLINGTON AIR NATIONAL GUARD  
OFFICE

<sup>1</sup> Draft EIS (May 2013) – Tables BR3.2-8 and BR3.2-14, “Off Airport Noise Exposure.”

<sup>2</sup> <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/50/50007.html> - Median value of owner-occupied units in Chittenden County: \$263,200. In Vermont: \$213,000.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.housingdata.org/profile/resultsMain.php?county=007000>

<sup>4</sup> Draft EIS (May 2013) – Table BR3.12-4 and Table BR3.12-5, “Total Minority and Low-Income Populations Affected...”

<sup>5</sup> <http://digital.vpr.net/post/stoddard-brenda-torpy-global-vermonter>