

Proposed residential development near Springbank airport draws flak

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FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, JULY 02, 2012 05:19 PM MDT | UPDATED: MONDAY, JULY 02, 2012 05:27 PM MDT



FILE PHOTO

Opponents of a proposed development near Calgary want to halt takeoff of the mixed-use community.

The County of Rocky View Tuesday is expected to consider subdivision approval for the first stage of Harmony, a 711-hectare development adjacent to the Springbank Airport just west of Calgary.

To be built over 15 years, Harmony would eventually have 3,500 homes plus a lake, golf course, cafes, shops and pathways.

But the Springbank Airport Business & Pilots Association (SABPA), says noise complaints and safety concerns could have serious implications for airport operations.

“It just does not make sense,” said Colin MacLeod, who sits on SABPA’s board.

He said Springbank is considered the 11th busiest airport in Canada — there were nearly 12,900 movements in May — and includes an aircraft training circuit.

“Here’s this resident of Harmony sitting out on his deck on a Sunday afternoon and he’s going to have an airplane going around his head every 60-90 seconds on a busy afternoon,” he said.

“Our second major concern is safety.”

MacLeod said data shows in the last 10 years Springbank Airport has had 19 accidents that were either fatal, caused injury or resulted in damage to aircraft, and more than 300 incidents, defined as occurrences outside of accidents that affect or could affect the safety of operations.

Research out of California shows 70% of accidents happen within about 6.4 km of an airport, he added.

But Birol Fisecki, president and CEO of Harmony’s managing partner, Bordeaux Properties, said concerns were

addressed in the planning stages.

Property buyers will have an airport disclaimer in their paperwork, he said, adding the airport will be celebrated in the community through art and aviation history made accessible to residents.

“There’s no interest in hiding the airport,” he said.

“We want to embrace the airport.”

In planning, developers went above and beyond Transport Canada’s standards for how far houses must be built from noise, said Fisecki.

There would also be a 150-metre belt along the north and west boundaries of the community where the training circuit is that won’t be developed.

An independent study found the community and airport would be compatible, said Fisecki.

Harmony would have positive financial and social impacts in the area, adding new amenities plus housing for those who work at or fly out of the airport, he said.

Developers are hoping to begin work in the fall.

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