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December 12, 2011

The Honorable Wayne McCullen
City Hall
Mayor's Office
700 Second Street
Natchitoches, LA 71457

Dear Mayor McCullen:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 400,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots – including 3,839 of our members in the state of Louisiana. On behalf of our membership, AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a national transportation system.

We are writing to you today to ask you and the City Council to help preserve the future of the Natchitoches Regional Airport. It is our understanding that there is a request before your council to change the zoning on a parcel of land adjacent to the airport in order to allow a multi-family residential complex to be built adjacent to and slightly beyond the future departure end of Runway 17. It is the Association's considered opinion that allowing residential development in that close proximity to the airport is not the best application of public policy. While there may be existing residential development on the parcel directly north and adjacent to the subject property, we cannot correct previous poor land use decisions and must instead focus on a more compatible land use of that property.

Housing in that location will be subject to overflight, noise, dust, fumes and vibration from aircraft engaged in the normal activities of taking off and landing. Further, the repetitive nature of traffic pattern operations at a general aviation airport means that some neighbors can have significant numbers of aircraft operating overhead. Once residential development is allowed so close to an airport, particularly within the traffic pattern, it is only a matter of time before complaints are made concerning normal operations and demands for something to be done to reduce the impact on the residents in that area. It is far better to not allow a residential use than to have to go back and mitigate normal aircraft operational noise.

AOPA strongly urges you and the City Council to not grant the request to change the zoning.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this issue. If we can be of further assistance please contact our staff at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,

John L. Collins
Manager
Airport Policy

cc:

The City Council of Natchitoches, LA
Mr. Larry Cooper, Manager, Natchitoches Regional Airport
Mr. Samuel Parker, AOPA Airport Support Network Volunteer IER