



Agenda Item No. _____

File Code No. 520.03

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: April 14, 2009

TO: Mayor and City Councilmembers

FROM: Fire Prevention Bureau, Fire Department

SUBJECT: Introduction Of Ordinance For Amendments To The 2007 Fire Code

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council introduce, and subsequently adopt, by reading of title only, An Ordinance of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Amending Subsection E of Section 8.04.020 and Subsections C and D of Section 22.04.020 of the Santa Barbara Municipal Code Concerning Local Requirements for the Installation of Automatic Fire Sprinklers.

BACKGROUND:

On December 4, 2007 the Council adopted Ordinance 5439, which adopted and amended the 2007 California Fire Code. The adoption process included local amendments with findings based on local needs. The California Fire Code and the adopting ordinance both went into effect on January 1, 2008.

At the time of the code adoption, staff at the Fire Prevention Bureau prepared sections amending the Fire Code that would require fire sprinklers in all new residential and commercial construction. The drafted requirements also called for fire sprinklers when certain square footage thresholds were reached in remodels and additions. The new proposed sprinkler sections were removed from the 2007 Fire Code adoption process due to time constraints and the desire to provide a greater opportunity for input from stakeholders. Examples of stakeholders include members of the development community, property owners, architects, general contractors and home builder associations, homeowners and sprinkler contractors.

DISCUSSION:

In November 2008, the proposed fire sprinkler amendments were published in the Land Development Team Bulletin. Staff began to receive comments by phone and email and incorporated some of the suggestions into the first public meeting discussion. The meeting was conducted at the David Gebhard Room on December 4, 2008. During and following that meeting, fire prevention staff continued to receive input from stakeholders

that resulted in making adjustments in the proposed code sections. A second Land Development Team bulletin was published in January and a second public meeting was then conducted on January 22, 2009. Additional suggestions were received and the proposal was refined accordingly. On February 26, 2009, staff presented the proposed fire code sections to the Fire and Police Commission in their regularly scheduled meeting. The current proposal requires that automatic fire sprinklers be installed:

1. In all new buildings, residential and commercial, regardless of square footage. This includes all new single family homes. There is an exception for small utility buildings.
2. In any commercial building undergoing an addition.
3. In all commercial structures undergoing a remodel, if the remodel involves 50% or more of the building.
4. In any residential structure where an addition or a remodel exceeds 1000 square feet or 50% of the floor area.
5. In any building undergoing a change of use to a more hazardous use.

Fire sprinklers save lives and property. Residential fire sprinklers are strongly supported by the United States Fire Administration (USFA), a Division of the United States Department of Homeland Security. In a position paper dated March 28, 2008 the USFA called for both smoke detectors and fire sprinklers in residential units. They cited research by the Center for Fire Research at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, indicating that the time available to escape a burning home has decreased dramatically over the past decade. One of the reasons is the increasing volatility of home furnishings, which are often manufactured from synthetic materials. Their research indicates that when a smoke detector is installed in a residence, a reduced fatality rate of 63% is expected. When smoke detectors are used in combination with automatic sprinklers, the risk of dying in a structure fire is reduced by 82%. We have experienced the effectiveness of residential sprinklers in Santa Barbara, with several activations in 2008, one of which saved the life of an unconscious fire victim. On September 22, 2008, the International Code Council adopted the residential sprinkler standard for inclusion into the 2011 Residential Code.

Cost. The National Fire Protection Association conducted a national study and found that the cost of installing sprinklers in single family residences to average \$1.61 per square foot. At the request of stakeholders we attempted to determine local costs, due to the higher overall construction costs in this area. Although it was not possible to determine an exact square footage cost, we contacted local sprinkler contractors and learned that the approximate cost for this area is approximately \$2.50 to \$3.00 per square foot. Residential insurance premium offsets vary, typically between a 5% to 20% reduction in the fire insurance portion of the policy depending on the carrier.

On March 24, 2009 the amendments were presented to the Ordinance Committee, which voted unanimously to forward the ordinance to the full Council for introduction

and adoption. If approved by the Council, the Ordinance amendments will be presented for formal adoption on April 21, 2009. The new sections would be incorporated into the Fire Code and would be effective as of July 1, 2009. Consistent with other City efforts to expedite construction and to minimize costs associated with Tea Fire rebuilds, the Fire Prevention Bureau has proposed an exemption for Tea Fire rebuilds as long as the ownership of the property has not changed since the fire. However, the Fire Prevention Bureau is convinced that automatic sprinkler systems save lives and property and highly recommends that property owners consider the inclusion of automatic sprinkler systems in their Tea Fire rebuild projects, even if they are not required.

PREPARED BY: Joseph Poiré, Fire Marshal

SUBMITTED BY: Ronald Prince, Fire Chief

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office