



MEMORANDUM

Date: June 22, 2006

To: Planning Commissioners

From: Donna Decker, Secretary to the Planning Commission

Subject: January 28, 2006, Matters Initiated by Commission Members
Fire Sprinklers for New Residential Construction

Commissioner Blank has requested staff bring forward information related to the provision of requiring fire sprinklers in new residential construction. The Planning Commission also requested information be provided related to the current requirements the City of Pleasanton has and compare that to the requirements of the City of Livermore. Staff has forwarded the question to Eric Carlson, Fire Marshal, who provides the following information for your consideration:

Pleasanton currently has the following:

1. Ruby Hill - Vineyard Ave. All of Ruby Hill is required based on the location at the time construction began about 15 years ago. Based on a development agreement with Livermore at the time the project began, Fire required all buildings to have fire sprinklers as there was no fire station near there. To get Livermore sewer capacity, a condition was also added to the agreement with Livermore to have fire protection too. For all practical purposes this is a zero square foot requirement.
2. The present Pleasanton Building and Fire Code adoption and local amendments require fire sprinklers in all new buildings $\geq 8,000$ square feet in size. This applies to homes, apartments, and commercial buildings. If a project came in that was made up of multiple buildings with an aggregate size of $\geq 8,000$ square feet the entire project would be required to have fire sprinkler protection. If a new building(s) are added to a site with existing structures and the cumulative total is $\geq 8,000$ square feet or more, the new building(s) is required to have fire sprinklers and the existing one(s) to be retrofit with them also.

3. Any building outside a 5 minute response time as measured from the nearest fire station. Includes Happy Valley (portion within City limits), and Dublin Canyon Rd.
4. Any building in a high fire hazard severity zone (Foothill Rd., part of the Vineyard corridor specific plan, Ruby Hill, Lynn property, Bonde Ranch, etc.).
5. City requirements do not apply to any Fire contract area we service (Happy Valley and Castlewood-outside the City limits).

Aside from Ruby Hill with a unique requirement to have the entire project provided with automatic fire sprinkler protection, the balance of Pleasanton's residential development has very few automatic fire sprinkler systems. Most of Hacienda Business Park, the Stoneridge Shopping Center areas, larger retail centers built within the past 15-20 years, etc. are protected with automatic fire sprinkler protection. Larger residential multi-family apartment/condo projects constructed within the past 8 years generally have automatic fire sprinkler protection if $\geq 8,000$ square feet or more. Prior Ordinances were written in a manner that exempted these "select" residential developments. This was pre-Fire Consolidation.

Livermore currently has the following:

Livermore adopted (20 years ago) a requirement that all new construction, no matter the size or use, was required to have automatic fire sprinkler protection. This applied to all new homes, apartments, condo's, townhouses, commercial and industrial buildings. If an existing building was less than 5,000 square feet and was added on to be greater than 5,000 square feet it is required it be retrofit with fire protection. There is one current exemption; a secondary dwelling unit in a residential neighborhood under 1,200 square feet located on a parcel where the existing home does not have fire sprinklers. Otherwise this secondary dwelling unit is required to have automatic fire sprinkler protection.

Livermore also requires retrofit of automatic fire sprinkler protection when a change in use more hazardous than existing use(s) no matter the size of the building, when an existing building is added onto and the total size exceeds 5,000 square feet, any building 5,000 square feet of larger when the tenant improvements exceed 50% of the value of the building (does not include land value) and a couple of other ones that rarely occur.

Costs:

There is a broad range based on the type of construction (tract/production houses vs. custom home), apartments vs. town homes, etc. The going "average" for production homes is between \$1.25 and \$2.00 square foot. Some big custom homes with vaulted ceilings and ornate architectural features will go up to \$5.85 square foot. On the average repeat units such as apartments and condos run in the \$2.05-\$3.00 square foot. The cost average is approximately 1-3% of the total cost of construction.

Fire protection systems can be designed attractively and have proven as a first line of defense for the Fire Department.

The Commission has indicated a desire to direct staff to pursue a code amendment that would require new residential construction to have fire protection systems designed and installed. As previously discussed, this request has been forwarded to the City Manager and the City Council will prioritize this request as with others in determining the allocation of staff resources. The City Council generally prioritizes City projects at the end of the calendar year.