FIRE PROTECTION RISK REDUCTION OF OFF-CAMPUS STUDENT HOUSING IN COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

LEADING COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The problem was that students living in off-campus housing demonstrated little apparent understanding of fire protection and life safety fundamentals.

The purpose of this research project was to determine if a risk reduction plan would be an appropriate tool to improve fire protection and life safety in off-campus student housing.

Descriptive and evaluative research methodology were used to answer the following questions:

1. What fire prevention code requirements are currently in effect for off-campus student housing in College Park, Maryland; and are these codes and ordinances being maintained at the College Park Towers Condominiums?
2. What are the best alternatives for fire protection enhancements for off-campus student housing?
3. What critical community risk-reduction factors could be used to enhance fire protection in off-campus student housing?

The procedures used included a literature review, verbal testimony from public hearings, information from public safety officials, and personal interviews. These procedures were used to formulate data of fire risk-reduction.

The research produced the following data:

1. College Park has adopted the BOCA, Fire Prevention Code 1999 edition, and the NFPA Life Safety Code 101, 2000 edition. The City inspects these properties annually. However, the fire department finds many code
violations when responding to emergencies.

2. The most reliable alternative for fire protection in off-campus housing includes automatic fire sprinklers and smoke detectors.

3. All seven steps of the Community Risk Reduction Model should be incorporated into College Park’s fire prevention plan.

Recommendations indicated that the City conduct more frequent inspections of student housing, and cite all code violations. Also that College Park along with all stakeholders begin to utilize the Risk Reduction Model and work to incorporate fire sprinklers in existing mid-rise apartment buildings. Finally, that College Park work with off-campus fraternities and sororities to reduce any negative impact of the new sprinkler ordinance.
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INTRODUCTION

Fatal fires at colleges and universities are tragedies that strike at the bright future of our children. Parents send them to college, trusting that their physical safety is addressed. However, as fires at Chapel Hill, Seton Hall, Bloomsburg, Millikin and other college communities have shown us, we are slow to heed the lessons that time is giving us about fire safety (Comeau, 2002).

Three Seton Hall University freshmen died in a dormitory fire where there had been 18 false fire alarms this school year. Students said they had learned to sleep through false alarms, and one said that the fire could have been extinguished by students if equipment had been in place (Seymour, 2001).

The University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) is the flagship campus of the University System of Maryland. According to the Department of Resident Life, UMCP boasts a top-quartile university enrollment of 34,801 students with over 12,000 full and part-time faculty and staff. The University of Maryland, University College is also headquartered at the College Park location and hosts an additional 5,000 students, faculty and staff on site. This produces a university community of more than 50,000 people in College Park.

UMCP provides approximately 8,074 resident hall dormitory rooms on campus and an additional 1,953 student apartments on campus, for a total of 10,027 beds. This is less than one-third of the daytime undergraduate enrollment and underscores the need for local, off-campus student housing.

The current fire safety educational activities in off-campus student housing appears to be generally limited to the practice of evacuation drills at best. The
educational activities should be extended to orientation sessions with appropriate visual aids relative to fire ignition and fire/smoke propagation variables affecting life safety for the residents (Mowrer, 1999).

Fire safety in student housing is literally a matter of life and death, and a responsibility that ought to be shared by the college, the local or state enforcement agency, and the organization owning or operating a residence. Each should make certain that its segment of responsibility has been properly carried out. (Isner, 1996).

According to Garry Briese, executive director of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, parents and students should check for the following:

- Are there two exits in either direction from the dorm room?
- Are there smoke detectors and fire alarms?
- Is there an automatic sprinkler system with sprinkler heads in hallways, common areas and in each dorm room?
- Is the residence monitored from a central station? (Briese, 2003).

This applied research project utilized both descriptive and evaluative research methodology. The research questions were:

1. What fire prevention code requirements are currently in effect for off-campus student housing in College Park, Maryland; and are these codes and ordinances being maintained at the College Park Towers Condominiums?
2. What are the best alternatives for fire protection for off-campus student housing?
3. What critical community risk-reduction factors could be used to enhance fire protection in off-campus student housing?
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

A high level of awareness and sensitivity with regard to off-campus fire safety on the part of the officers of the College Park Volunteer Fire Department (CPVFD) was due in part to the repetitive Box Alarms being transmitted for maliciously discharged dry chemical fire extinguishers in the College Park Towers Condominiums. This behavior commonly occurred late at night, typically after the local bars closed, and was dangerous and disruptive to the responders to the occupants.

It also diminished the fire protection within the buildings and undermined the credibility of the fire alarm system in the buildings as occupants have learned to ignore, sleep through and study through the many false alarms.

In many college communities, off-campus student housing is not under the control of the institution. This is also true for College Park, Maryland. These off-campus facilities are not as regulated as the campus housing facilities, which means the risk to the students living in them is probably greater. (FEMA, 1999).

In some instances, building owners and occupants see fire as something that will never happen to them, and as a risk they will tolerate because fire prevention measures can be costly (FEMA, 1989).

The following are a few examples of dormitory fires:

In April 2000, a student was killed in a fire in her dorm room. Her death was ruled a suicide after authorities concluded she had set her clothing on fire.

In October 1998, a student was killed in his dorm room after a suspected hazing incident. Seven students were charged with multiple charges, including capital murder, assault, arson, conspiracy to commit arson, and complicity to commit murder.

In January 2000, three students were killed in a fire that began in a sofa in one of the dorm’s common spaces. Nearly 60 other students were injured, five critically, in the early morning fire. Many students initially disregarded the fire alarms because of frequent false alarms in the dorm (Comeau, 2003).

In the wake of a fire at Seton Hall University in January 2000, members of the fire service and various legislative bodies have lobbied for more stringent fire protection regulations for dormitories. In particular, many would like to see laws requiring sprinklers in all dormitories, with older buildings required to be retrofit with sprinkler systems over the next several years.

The following factors contribute to fire safety problems that are associated with off-campus student housing.

Construction - The construction of many of the older buildings can contribute to fire and smoke spread. The occupancy classification of these facilities, which in many cases (based on fire and building code requirements) is associated with the size and construction of the building, varies to include dormitory, rooming, apartment and single family.

Inadequate fire protection systems - Due in part to the lack of inspections and code enforcement, as was the case at the University of Maryland, College Park before the early 1970's, there may be inadequate fire alarm, sprinkler and kitchen suppression
systems, residential smoke detectors, and emergency lighting.

Lack of maintenance - General poor upkeep results in holes in walls and broken stairwell and bedroom doors that contribute to smoke and heat spread. Fire protection systems, emergency lighting, and exit signs, when in place, can be in disrepair or out of service.

Occupant behavior - Large social events and rough treatment of the facilities causes damage or excessive wear and tear. Poor fire safety awareness of occupants may result in blocked exits, flammable decorations, unsafe use of combustibles and smoking materials, and tampering with fire protection equipment. Guests in the facilities may not be familiar with exits and fire alarm signals.

To emphasize the importance of occupant behavior, consider the following contributing factors in the fatal Bloomsburg University Fire: the fire started in a couch which was thought to have been extinguished by the occupants and placed out on the porch. The smoke detector batteries had been removed (which was a common practice during smoke-filled parties according to the coroner), and one of the victims was a guest. (Sactor, 2002).

The National Fire Academy course, “Leading Community Risk Reduction” focuses on the skills needed by an executive fire officer to lead and implement a community risk-reduction effort. To this end, and in line with the five-year stated operational objectives of the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) of reducing the loss of life from fire by 15%, this applied research project has relevance to the Executive Fire Officer Program.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to study what critical community risk-reduction factors could be used to enhance fire protection in off-campus student housing in College Park, Maryland.

Several authors outlined the need for sprinkler installation in private buildings that are used to house students at higher education institutions. These buildings include apartment buildings, condominiums, and fraternities and sororities.

Aftermath (Comeau, 2002) outlines two tragic fires that occurred at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsberg Pennsylvania. The first fire occurred in 1994 and killed five students in a fraternity house fire. The second fire occurred in 2000 and killed three students in another fraternity house fire. Comeau also details several bills that are in legislation throughout the country that deals with off-campus student safety by mandating that all dormitories, sororities and fraternities be equipped with sprinkler systems.

Kasey Seymour summarizes in his article Seton Hall Sounds Alarm on Fire Safety in the Loyolan that students who are caught in their rooms by members of the student housing staff during a fire alarm face a $50 penalty. When a fire alarm is pulled at Loyola Marymount University a call is automatically made to the fire department and the department of public safety. Each time the alarm is found to be a malicious false alarm, the university is charged $500 by the fire department. While these tactics are being used to get students to pay attention to fire safety, the strategy is not dealing with the need for more education on fire safety and the consequences of ignoring fire alarms.
Fire Safe Student Housing: A Guide for Campus Housing Administrators (Mowrer, 1999) deals with the duties assigned to administrators of campus dormitories as well as administrators of fraternities and sororities. Mowrer identifies the four primary elements of fire safety in student housing as:

- Prevention
- Occupant awareness and training
- Detection and alarm
- Suppression

Mowrer stresses that smoke detectors and fire sprinklers are essential elements in a successful fire protection program for residential buildings including college dormitories as well as off-campus student housing.

In the Fraternity House Fire, Chapel Hill, North Carolina report (Eisner, 1996) the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) reported that the following factors were significant contributors to the loss of life resulting from that fire:

- The lack of automatic fire detection and fire alarm systems
- The presence of combustible interior finish materials throughout the building.
- The lack of automatic sprinkler protection
- The improper use or disposal of smoking materials.

The NFPA had investigated three fraternity fires in the 1970's and one fraternity fire in 1990. While these fires occurred at different universities and involved different organizations, these same four points were listed as major factors that contributed to several injuries and deaths.
In *Dormitory Safety*, a feature of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (Briese, 2003), several important points are made that stress what parents need to look for when moving their child into student housing with regards to fire safety. Some of the points that Briese made include the need for smoke detectors and fire alarms and whether the room and common areas are equipped with sprinklers.

*America Burning* (FEMA, 1989) summarizes some of the aspects of this country’s fire problems as:

- The need for more emphasis on fire prevention – Fire Departments need to spend more time educating people on fire safety and enforcing fire prevention codes
- The need to educate Americans about fire safety – Many injuries and deaths could be prevented if people knew how to react to a fire
- The fire protection features of buildings need to be improved – There is a need for automatic fire extinguishing systems in every high-rise building and every low-rise building in which many people congregate.

*Fire In The United States* (FEMA, 1999) reports that the failure to respond quickly to a smoke alarm allows a fire to rapidly evolve and significantly reduce one’s chances of escaping.

In written testimony on the need for enhanced fire safety at off-campus housing, Ed Comeau (2003) reports that between 1994 and 1998, an average of 141 fires per year occurred in Greek housing, causing $2.8 million in property damage and the death of eighteen young people. Comeau stresses that fire safety cannot rely solely on one
component. The solution involves three components:

- **Prevention** – The need to ensure that the fire does not even occur through prevention. However, this is not a realistic approach. It is important for students to learn the proper actions to take in the event of a fire.

- **Detection** – Smoke detectors are a necessary factor in alerting occupants of a fire and to provide the fire department with a fighting chance.

- **Suppression** – If a fire has occurred, it must be stopped. By the time the fire department arrives on scene, the tragedy may have already occurred. Sprinklers are the solution.

*Fire Inspection Program for Greek Facilities at the University of Maryland, College Park: A Model of University and Community Cooperation.* (Sactor, 2002) stresses the need fire inspection program for off-campus, facilities. While conducting fire drills for students personnel from the university's Department of Public Safety observed deteriorated conditions within the off-campus facilities that could lead to disaster in the event of a fire. The university has entered into a partnership with local and county inspectors to report any off-campus infractions that will help assure proper fire safety enforcement within these properties.

*City Adds Apartments to Proposed Sprinkler Bill.* (Flanagan, 2003) states that an amendment that would include apartments and condominiums to a proposed sprinkler bill would propose that more than 1,000 students would benefit from a greater level of fire protection.
According to information compiled in *Living With Fire* (FEMA, 2001), for every student that dies in a fire on campus, four students die in off-campus housing. In a residential setting, students often underestimate the danger of a fire and frequently make decisions that place themselves at risk.

*Council Delays Sprinkler Ordinance Decision Again* (Malarkey, 2003) reported on the testimony of fire safety experts in support of sprinklers. They refuted landlords' claims that it is too expensive to re-outfit their buildings with systems. Kenneth Isman of the National Fire Sprinkler Association reported that sprinklers are economic investments and can save landlords money though tax deductions and lower insurance costs. He also reported that it is possible to retrofit a sprinkler system for less than it would cost to install wall-to-wall carpet.

The *College Fire Prevention Act* (NFSA, 2001) made note that the NFPA had no record of a fire killing more than 2 people in a completely fire sprinklered public assembly, educational, institutional, or residential building where the sprinkler system was operation properly.

The testimony and findings of this literature review influenced this research project to focus on the need for off-campus student housing. While many of these authors have proven the need for effective fire prevention measures, the public has yet to understand the need for smoke detectors and fire sprinkler systems. The cost of installing these systems needs to be address to make installation more affordable. College campuses need to have system in place to educate all students with regard to fire safety, regardless of whether they live in a dormitory on campus or in an apartment, fraternity or sorority off-campus.
PROCEDURES

The procedures used in preparing this applied research paper began with a group discussion focusing on the lack of consistent fire protection and the high degree of life safety hazards in off-campus student housing, particularly in both buildings of the College Park Towers Condominiums; as identified by the officers of the CPVFD. This discussion generated a higher awareness of the problem among these fire officers, and promulgated a meeting between the Major in charge of the Fire Prevention Bureau of the Prince George’s County Fire and EMS Department, code enforcement officials of the City of College Park, and the Chief of the CPVFD. Concurrently, city officials had been working on an automatic fire sprinkler ordinance for off-campus student housing.

A literature review of the student text and handout materials received during the NFA “Leading Community Risk Reduction” course held in October of 2002 was also utilized.

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) was utilized, as was a search of the Internet to identify relative sites, along with the library system at the University of Maryland and the record archives of CPVFD and the Prince George’s County Fire and EMS Department.

The literature review focused on the experiences of other similar university communities with regard to fire protection and life safety in off-campus student housing. The history and fire experiences of these similar university communities could be applied to College Park, and hopefully a more robust fire protection plan applied locally before suffering life and property loss similar to that of other jurisdictions.
Using many of the concepts presented in this course, the City of College Park Public Services Director, Robert Ryan, worked directly towards enacting a local ordinance to require automatic sprinkler legislation and retrofit in multi-family occupancies within the City of College Park.

Following the lead of the City of College Park towards legislative change, I testified on the need for automatic sprinklers in student housing. By presenting statistics on the number of malicious fire alarms pulls within the city and on the campus, I tried to stress that the fire alarm system was being undermined by the blatant malicious use of the fire extinguishers and the malicious pulls of the fire alarm system. My fear was that at a certain point, there would be a real fire and the occupants of the building would become trapped because they ignored the alarm system. With the installation of automatic sprinklers, we could avert such a disaster.

The legislative process was followed for enacting a new local ordinance within the City of College Park. This required draft legislation received public comment, formal review by the City Council and finally a motion and vote by the elected Council members.

**Limitations**

The City of College Park effort to enact an automatic fire sprinkler ordinance was already underway when this research project began, and as such not all aspects of the Community Risk Reduction format were followed.

In addition, this research project was limited by an initial lack of willingness by some of the stakeholders to participate in the necessary meetings and forums needed to promote consensus.
The initial response experience of the CPVFD line officers provided focus on the lack of consistent fire protection and the high degree of life safety hazards in off-campus student housing. These conditions were particularly prevalent in both buildings of the College Park Towers Condominiums, which is located immediately adjacent to the campus and comprises approximately 94% rental units to UMCP students, faculty and staff (Robert Ryan, personal communication, May 20, 2003). PGFD research of incidents at the College Park Towers Condominiums from 1995 through 2002 uncovered 17 reported building fires and 34 total fire incidents at these two buildings for the reporting period (PGFD archives).

The meeting held between the PGFD Major in charge of the Fire Prevention Bureau, code enforcement officials of the City of College Park, and the Chief of the CPVFD identified a common interest to reduce the total number of fire incidents within the university community, improve built-in fire protection and reduce life safety hazards in off-campus student housing. An agreement was struck between these stakeholders to work toward local code adoption of enhanced automatic fire sprinklers for off-campus student housing (CPVFD archives). The Chief of CPVFD became more directly involved in the process, which included directing the CPVFD line officers to ensure that each building was in fact evacuated when the fire alarm was activated and to ensure that all fire protection violations were addressed every time CPVFD was dispatched for a fire or other emergency at the College Park Towers Condominiums.

Pursued by several City Council members and Mr. Ryan, the legislative process was followed for enacting a new local ordinance within the City of College Park. This
required generating draft legislation, receiving public comment on the ordinance, formal review by the City Council and finally a motion and vote by Council members.

Unfortunately even after City sponsored Landlord Workshop Sessions designed to address sprinkler issues up-front, many rental property owners were staunchly against the sprinkler ordinance due to economic concerns and the apathy of not believing their property would suffer a significant fire loss.

After several public forums and Council meetings that included presentations and testimony by rental property owners, the fire service and the sprinkler industry, the city council approved a compromise ordinance that will require all off-campus fraternities and sororities to retrofit their houses with a full sprinkler system over the next three years. An amendment to the ordinance to retrofit mid-rise apartment buildings failed as council members instead conceded to landlords' complaints of the costs to install retrofit systems in their dated buildings and threats to turn expenses over to rent-paying students. Estimates submitted by contracts to install a system ranged from $176,000 to $800,000 and the buildings' owners consented that cost does not justify necessity (Malarkey, 2003). In all, 338 units and 1,344 residents would receive a level of fire protection that city officials deem essential for fire-prone students. (Flanagan, 2003).

1. What fire prevention code requirements are currently in effect for off-campus student housing in College Park, Maryland; and are these codes and ordinances being maintained at the College Park Towers Condominiums?

The City of College Park is an incorporated municipality in the State of Maryland and as such has adopted the Building Officials and Code Administrators International
(BOCA), Fire Prevention Code 1999 edition, along with the NFPA Life Safety Code 101, 2000 edition. The City inspects these properties annually and enforces compliance at the time of inspection (Robert Ryan, personal communication, May 20, 2003). However, with the transient and constant fluid nature of a university community, the fire department finds many fire code violations when responding to emergencies.

2. What are the best alternatives for fire protection for off-campus student housing?

According to the United States Congress, the USFA, and the NFPA, the most reliable alternative for life safety and fire protection in off-campus student housing includes automatic fire sprinklers and working smoke detectors. On February 27, 2001, during the 197th congress, a bill was introduced in the United States Senate entitled “College Fire Prevention Act.” The purpose of the Act is to provide for fire sprinkler systems, or other fire suppression or prevention technologies, in public and private colleges and university housing and dormitories, including fraternity and sorority housing and dormitories. To fund this initiative, the Congress would appropriate $100 million for four successive fiscal years. The Secretary of Education, in consultation with the USFA, would be authorized to award grants to States, private or public colleges or universities, fraternities, and sororities to assist them in provided fire sprinkler systems for their student housing and dormitories. Matching funds would be required, and priority would be given based on need. According to the NFPA, sprinklers typically reduce your chances of dying by one-half to two-thirds in any kind of property where they are used. (NFSA, 2001). NFPA reports that, in 1997 (the latest year that statistics are available), sprinklers were present in only 28% of all dormitory fires (FEMA, 2001).
3. What critical community risk-reduction factors could be used to enhance fire protection in off-campus student housing?

All seven steps of the Community Risk Reduction Model should be incorporated into a local risk reduction plan for off-campus student housing. The seven steps include:

1. Getting Ready
2. Performing a Risk Assessment
3. Gaining Organizational Support – when the final sprinkler ordinance came up for a vote, it almost died in Council for the lack of a “second” to the motion
4. Developing Intervention Strategies
5. Gaining Community Support - The rental property owners directly influenced the Council members to reject including sprinklers in the final ordinance for the College Park Towers Condominiums,
6. Writing an Action Plan
7. Establishing Evaluation Strategies. - If the Community Risk Reduction Model had been used from the beginning of this effort, it is plausible that a different outcome would have materialized that included automatic fire sprinklers in the mid-rise College Park Towers Condominiums and other off-campus student apartment buildings.

As a result of the amendment for mid-rise apartment buildings not being passed, the mayor and city council of College Park decided to regroup and proposed a study group comprised of owners, tenants, officers of CPVFD, and a representative of the
National Fire Sprinkler Association to meet. Hopefully, this effort will incorporate the Community Risk Reduction Model as presented in the NFA course “Leading Community Risk Reduction.”

**DISCUSSION**

The research and literature review of automatic fire sprinklers in off-campus student housing has provided an abundance of information on the topic. The research and my personal participation in this ordinance adoption process has highlighted a general lack of understanding and appreciation on the part of the property owners that serious fires cannot happen to their property, or possibly cause a loss of life. At a public hearing, the resident manager of the Berwyn House Apartments made the statement, “Smoke detectors saves live; Sprinklers save sofas” (Flanagan, 2003). Due to political pressure from rental property owners, the ordinance adoption process failed to require sprinkler protection in the mid-rise apartments altogether. However sprinklers will be required in existing off-campus fraternities and sororities within 3 years.

Property owners, resident managers and attorneys for the College Park Towers Condominiums and the Berwyn House Apartments repeatedly indicated that no fires had occurred in those buildings within the past twenty years. This was not true according to Prince George's County Fire Department statistics and my own recollection: there have been four fires in Attick Towers, 8 in Berwyn House Apartments and 34 in both College Park Towers between 1995 and 2002 (PGFD archives). The proposed City ordinance would have altered the current state high-rise standard from 75 to 50 feet. This technical change to the code would have forced the Berwyn House Apartments, Attick Towers, and the College Park Towers buildings to install sprinkler systems (Malarkey, 2003).
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research, the following recommendations are made:

1. That the City of College Park, in conjunction with the fire department, conduct more frequent inspections of all off-campus student and multi-family housing in accordance with the existing fire prevention code, and cite all non-compliant code violations.

2. That the City of College Park, in conjunction with the fire department and all stakeholders, including tenants and property owners, begin in earnest to utilize the Risk Reduction Model and work through the Sprinkler Study Group that was proposed by City Council member Peter King to incorporate automatic fire sprinklers in the existing mid-rise apartment buildings.

3. That the City of College Park work with the off-campus fraternities and sororities directly affected by the new sprinkler ordinance to reduce any negative impact of implementation.

The research strongly indicated the need for automatic fire sprinklers in these occupancies, however the lack of buy-in from property owners based on economic impact drove a political decision on the part of many City Council members to adopting the full ordinance. A fire sprinkler ordinance adopted in the City of College Park that included all of the housing units described would greatly improve life and fire safety for future occupants. It is the intention of the CPVFD to continue to support the adoption of sprinklers in off-campus student housing and work within the framework of the Risk Reduction Model to obtain consensus within all stakeholders.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A
ORDINANCE
OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLLEGE PARK,
MARYLAND AMENDING CHAPTER 125, HOUSING REGULATIONS, ARTICLE 1,
"GENERAL PROVISIONS" BY REPEALING AND REENACTING SECTION 125-1,
"DEFINITIONS: WORD USAGE" AND SECTION 125-17, "FIRESAFETY LAWS", AND
AMENDING CHAPTER 110, "FEES AND PENALTIES" BY REPEALING AND
REENACTING SECTION 110-2, "PENALTIES", TO DEFINE DORMITORY, AND
HIGH-RISE BUILDING, TO INSTITUTE A REQUIREMENT THAT ALL EXISTING
DORMITORIES AND HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS WITHIN THE CITY BE EQUIPPED
WITH A SPRINKLER AND FIRE ALARM SYSTEM, TO DELETE A REQUIREMENT
THAT THE PRINCE GEORGE'S FIRE MARSHAL APPROVE CERTAIN CHANGES,
AND TO SET PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION OF THE SECTION.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Art. 23A, §2, the City of College Park,
Maryland (hereinafter, the "City") has the power to pass such ordinances as it deems necessary to
protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the municipality and to prevent and remove
nuisances; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Art. 23A, §6, the City has the power to adopt
fire prevention codes; and

WHEREAS, the City is home to a number of dormitories, fraternities and sororities and
high-rise buildings; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that in a typical year between 1980 and 1997, there were an
average of 1,800 fires at dormitories, sororities and fraternities, involving 1 death, 69 injuries, and
$8,100,000 in property damage; and

WHEREAS, the National Fire protection Association has no record of a fire killing more
than 2 people in a completely fire sprinklered public assembly, educational, institutional, or
residential building where the sprinkler system was working properly, and evidence demonstrates
the important role that sprinkler systems play in reducing fatalities and injuries from fires;

WHEREAS, in many cases where fatalities from fire occurred at colleges, alcohol was a
factor. There is a strong link between alcohol and fire deaths, as alcohol impairs judgment and
hampers evacuation efforts. Cooking is the leading cause of fire injuries at colleges, closely
followed by careless smoking and arson; and

WHEREAS, while new buildings in Prince George's County are generally required to
have fire sprinkler systems, such requirements are rarely imposed on existing buildings; and

WHEREAS, sororities, fraternities and dormitories have traditionally housed students in
residences that involve one or more of the risk factors for fire; and

WHEREAS, high-rise buildings pose several unique problems, including potential for
wide distribution of smoke to all floors due to natural draft within stair towers and utility shafts;
difficulty of evacuation, due to higher concentration of people and types of egress; difficulty
experienced by firefighters in reaching the fire due to need to manually carry fire suppression
equipment to the area of fire, which would be mitigated by a sprinkler system; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Art. 23A, §3, the City has the power to provide
certain penalties for violation of City ordinances and resolutions; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council have determined that it is in the public interest that
sprinkler systems, coupled with fire alarms, be required in all existing dormitories, sorority and
fraternity houses within the City.

Section 1. NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED, by the Mayor
and Council of the City of College Park, Maryland that Chapter 125 "Housing Regulations",
Article 1, “General Provisions” §125-1 “Definitions; word usage”, of the Code of the City of College Park be, and is hereby, repealed and reenacted with amendments to read as follows:

§ 125-1 Definitions; word usage.

A. The following definitions shall apply in the interpretation and enforcement of this article:

* * * * *

DORMITORY - A BUILDING OR SPACE IN A BUILDING IN WHICH GROUP SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS ARE PROVIDED FOR MORE THAN 16 PERSONS WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY IN ONE ROOM OR A SERIES OF CLOSELY ASSOCIATED ROOMS UNDER JOINT OCCUPANCY AND SINGLE MANAGEMENT, WITH OR WITHOUT MEALS, BUT WITHOUT INDIVIDUAL COOKING FACILITIES.

* * * * *

HIGH-RISE BUILDING - A BUILDING GREATER THAN 50 FEET IN HEIGHT WHERE THE BUILDING HEIGHT IS MEASURED FROM THE LOWEST LEVEL OF FIRE DEPARTMENT VEHICLE ACCESS TO THE FLOOR OF THE HIGHEST OCCUPIABLE STORY.

* * * * *

Section 2. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ENACTED, by the Mayor and Council of the City of College Park, Maryland that Chapter 125 “Housing Regulations”, Article 1, “General Provisions” §125-17 “Fire Safety Laws”, of the Code of the City of College Park be, and is hereby, repealed and reenacted with amendments to read as follows:
§ 125-17 Fire Safety Laws.

A. GENERALLY - Division 4 of Subtitle 11 of the Fire Safety Law of Prince George's County, Maryland, as amended from time to time, is incorporated herein and adopted by reference. Inspections shall be performed by the City's Public Services Department and violations shall be enforced in accordance with the provisions of § 125-3. Nothing herein shall be construed as preventing County personnel from performing inspections and enforcing the County's fire safety laws.

B. SMOKE ALARMS - The owner(s) of all rental roaming or dwelling units, to include but not be limited to apartment units, boarding and roaming houses, fraternities, sororities, rooms rented as a home occupation but required to have a rental-license] AN OCCUPANCY PERMIT, hotels, motels, tourist homes, and single-family homes, within the City of College Park are required to install, maintain, and have in operation at all times smoke [detectors] ALARMS of a type, make and model approved by, [the Prince George's County Fire Protection Codes] and mounted in locations as set forth in, the Prince George's Fire Protection Codes. [Any location not covered by or any deviation from these provisions of the Prince George's Fire Protection Codes shall require prior approval of the Prince George's County Fire Marshal's office. Failure to comply with the provisions of this section shall subject the owner to an immediate abatement/correction order and penalties as provided in § 110-2 for § 125-3B(4) violations.]

C. AUTOMATIC FIRE SPRINKLERS -

(1) REQUIRED - THE FOLLOWING EXISTING STRUCTURES OR BUILDINGS SHALL BE PROTECTED THROUGHOUT BY INSTALLATION OF AN AUTOMATIC FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEM MEETING THE
REQUIREMENTS OF NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION (NFPA) STANDARD #13, 13D OR 13R, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COMPLIANCE DEADLINES SET OUT IN THIS SECTION:

(A) DORMITORIES, WHICH FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION SHALL INCLUDE ANY FRATERNITY AND SORORITY HOUSE, REGARDLESS OF THE NUMBER OF SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS;

(B) HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS.

ALL CONNECTIONS SHALL BE LOCATED ON THE STREET SIDE OF EACH BUILDING, AND ACTIVATION OF THE SPRINKLER SYSTEM SHALL ACTIVATE BOTH THE REQUIRED FIRE ALARM SYSTEM AND A SUPERVISORY ALARM AT A TWENTY-FOUR (24) HOUR CERTIFIED AND LICENSED ALARM MONITORY SERVICE. INSTALLATION SHALL BE PERFORMED BY A CONTRACTOR POSSESSING A SPRINKLER CONTRACTOR LICENSE FROM THE STATE OF MARYLAND. SAID CONTRACTOR MUST OBTAIN A PERMIT FROM PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PRIOR TO INSTALLATION OF THE SPRINKLER SYSTEM.

(2) COMPLIANCE PERIOD - EXISTING DORMITORIES AND HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS SHALL COME INTO COMPLIANCE WITH THIS SECTION WITHIN THREE (3) YEARS OF ITS EFFECTIVE DATE. IF AN EXISTING STRUCTURE IS PROPOSED TO BE CONVERTED TO USE AS A DORMITORY OR HIGH-RISE BUILDING, COMPLIANCE WITH THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED PRIOR TO THE ISSUANCE OF ANY
OCCUPANCY PERMIT FOR THAT USE. IF AN EXISTING STRUCTURE IS IN USE AS A DORMITORY OR HIGH-RISE BUILDING AND IS RENOVATED PRIOR TO THE THREE (3) YEAR COMPLIANCE PERIOD AT A COST EXCEEDING FIFTY PERCENT (50%) OF THE STRUCTURE'S TAXABLE VALUE, THEN COMPLIANCE WITH THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED AT THE TIME OF RENOVATION COMPLETION.

(3) DETACHED AND SECONDARY BUILDINGS – EXISTING DORMITORY OR HIGH-RISE RELATED BUILDINGS ARE EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION AS TO FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS IF THEY HAVE NO MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND (1,000) SQUARE FEET OF FLOOR AREA, ARE NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO THE MAIN BUILDING USED FOR SLEEPING, AND HAVE NO FACILITIES INTENDED OR USED FOR SLEEPING.

(4) DISABLING SPRINKLER SYSTEM - NO PERSON SHALL SHUT OFF OR DISABLE AN AUTOMATIC FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEM INSTALLED PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION, EXCEPT DURING THE ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF MAINTENANCE WORK BY A LICENSED CONTRACTOR.

(5) MAINTENANCE OF SPRINKLER SYSTEM – ANY SPRINKLER SYSTEM INSTALLED PURSUANT TO THIS CHAPTER SHALL BE MAINTAINED IN ACCORDANCE WITH NFPA 25, AS AMENDED, BY A CONTRACTOR LICENSED BY THE STATE TO PERFORM SUCH MAINTENANCE.
D. PENALTIES - FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THIS 
SECTION SHALL SUBJECT THE OWNER TO AN IMMEDIATE 
ABATEMENT/CORRECTION ORDER AND PENALTIES AS PROVIDED IN §110-2 
AND §125-3B(4).

Section 3. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Mayor and Council 
of the City of College Park, Maryland that Chapter 110 "Fees and Penalties", §110-2 "Penalties", 
of the Code of the City of College Park be, and is hereby, repealed and reenacted with 
amendments to read as follows:

§11-2 Penalties.

The following fines and/or imprisonment for violations of various ordinances or 
resolutions are applicable in the City of College Park:

Violation of                      Penalty

                      * * * *

Chapter 125, Housing Regulations

                      * * * *

§125-17, Firesafety Laws

§125-17D                         $1,000 FOR EVERY 24 HOURS 
                                THAT VIOLATION CONTINUES

REMAINDER OF SECTION

First violation            $100.00  
Second violation            $200.00  
Each additional 24 hours    $200.00  

                      * * * *

Section 4. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Mayor and Council 
of the City of College Park that, upon formal introduction of this proposed Ordinance, which shall
be by way of a motion duly seconded and without any further vote, the City Clerk shall distribute a copy to each Council member and shall maintain a reasonable number of copies in the office of the City Clerk and shall publish this proposed ordinance or a fair summary thereof in a newspaper having a general circulation in the City of College Park together with a notice setting out the time and place for a public hearing thereon and for its consideration by the Council. The public hearing, hereby set for 7:30 P.M. on the __th day of ____, 2003, shall follow the publication by at least three weeks, may be held separately or in connection with a regular or special Council meeting and may be adjourned from time to time. All persons interested shall have an opportunity to be heard. After the hearing, the Council may adopt the proposed ordinance with or without amendments or reject it. As soon as practicable after adoption, the City Clerk shall have a fair summary of the Ordinance and notice of its adoption published in a newspaper having a general circulation in the City of College Park and available at the City's offices. This Ordinance shall become effective on ____________, 2003, provided that a fair summary of this Ordinance is published at least once prior to the date of passage and once as soon as practical after the date of passage in a newspaper having general circulation in the City.

INTRODUCED by the Mayor and Council of the City of College Park, Maryland at a regular meeting on the __th day of ____, 2003.

ADOPTED by the Mayor and Council of the City of College Park, Maryland at a regular meeting on the __ day of _____________ 2003.

EFFECTIVE the __ day of _____________, 2003.

ATTEST: THE CITY OF COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND
By: Miriam P. Wolff, CMC, City Clerk

By: Stephen A. Brayman, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

Robert H. Levan, City Attorney