

CITY OF BATAVIA

DATE: January 23, 2013
TO: Community Development and City Services Committee
FROM: Jeffrey S. Albertson, Building Commissioner
SUBJECT: Discussion: Concrete Floor Separations for Multiple-Family Construction

Background

Staff has recently had discussions with a potential developer interested in a multiple family residential development. The main item of concern during the discussion with this developer was the economic feasibility of developing a project with our current floor separation requirements. Staff feels that it is appropriate to revisit past discussions on amending our Building Code regarding concrete floor separations in Multiple Family Construction. Staff periodically receives inquiries about multiple family construction requirements and they have expressed the difficulty and expense of building a multiple family project under the current code requirements.

Masonry and/or Concrete fire separations have been required in Multiple Family Residential since approximately 1990. In 2007 staff proposed the elimination of the masonry/concrete wall and floor separation requirements. The City Council at that time voted to eliminate the masonry wall separation requirements, but retain the concrete floor separation requirements in common corridor apartment/condominium buildings.

Analysis

Staff continues to believe the elimination of the concrete floor separation requirement makes sense both from a fire safety and economic development feasibility standpoint. Fire sprinkler systems are required in this type of construction. Staff is not proposing a reduction in the hourly fire rating required between floors, but only allowing more flexibility to the developer to choose which fire separation assembly best suits their building and allows a consideration of cost. Staff is also not proposing to eliminate the concrete floor separation requirements between parking garages and residential living spaces above. We believe the elimination of the masonry wall requirement was a step in the right direction, but the cost of the concrete floor requirement is still substantial. The concrete floor can't be supported on standard light frame construction and requires additional steel beams and columns to support the concrete floor, which adds significantly to the cost. We have discussed this change with the Fire Department and they are in support of the change because of the requirement for sprinklers in the buildings and also the hourly fire rating being maintained as currently required. This change would bring the City's requirements in line with most other municipalities in the Chicago area.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Committee discuss this issue and provide direction to staff on what additional information or research they would need to see to make a decision on this item. Staff is supportive of the change to the building code to eliminate the masonry separation requirement. This will be on the January 29, 2013 meeting agenda for your consideration.

Cc: Mayor & City Council
File