



Letter to the Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to the article written by Bob Goldsborough as a Special to the *Tribune* titled “Naperville clarifies policy on smoke detectors and sprinklers.”

I was saddened to read that the Naperville City Council made the choice to not include fire sprinklers in new homes and hard wired interconnected smoke alarms in remodeled homes in their code adoption. This decision will impact many homes for the life of those homes. National minimum building codes are created by the experts, with sound reasoning behind each and every code requirement – reasoning that ensures buildings are constructed in the safest manner possible. Unfortunately, many times it takes a tragedy for us to realize the significance of the code requirements.

I currently serve as the Associate Director of Public Fire Protection for the National Fire Sprinkler Association, and Facilitator for Common Voices, an advocates’ coalition of those directly affected by fire, so I recognize that I have an increased understanding of the benefits that fire sprinklers bring to the built environment.

As a former Economic & Community Development Director from a community that chose to require fire sprinklers long before they were required by the National Building Code, I can speak to the perceived concerns of the council about driving growth away. Nothing could be further from the truth. Citizens are attracted to communities that value life, and leaders who put quality of life at the forefront of their planning decisions. Builders also embrace the requirement, once they realize that it improves the quality of the home they are adding to the community.

The debate regarding the creation of a certain square footage being required to have fire sprinklers be part of the home do not create a fair opportunity for the citizens whom will be protected. Are community leaders really saying that those who live in larger homes are more valuable than those who live in small homes? I would hate to make the determination that large homeowners are deserving of this added home safety feature, while most of us are not worthy of the protection.

Too many lives are lost each year across our country due to fire (over 3,000). Technology exists to decrease this number (fire sprinklers) – why does it take us so long to embrace the improvements that can protect what we value most? You can not put a price tag on a life, and the cost to install built in fire protection is reasonable (average cost across the U.S. is \$1.61 according the National Fire Protection Association).

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. I hope that the Naperville Council will re-

consider their decision, and that they will open their mind to the benefits that only fire sprinklers can bring to the citizens who choose to build their home in Naperville. Every home constructed in Naperville during this period will be less safe than national standards. The impact of this decision will be there for the life of the home and the people who occupy it. There are numerous neighboring communities' in the Chicago area that have made the choice to improve their community fire protection with fire sprinkler requirements. I encourage the Council to reach out to those communities and look at the success they have had, and benchmark from it.

Sincerely,



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Resources to access for more information:

www.fireadvocates.org

www.nfsa.org

www.fireteamusa.com

www.homefiresprinkler.org

www.nfpa.org