



OFFICE OF THE FIRE CHIEF

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January 23, 2008

Dale Pelch, Esq,  
Hahn & Hahn  
301 S. Colorado, Ste. 900  
Pasadena, CA 91101

Bill Wheelock, President  
Castle Green Homeowners Association  
99 S. Raymond Avenue  
Pasadena, CA 91105

RE: CASTLE GREEN - FIRE, LIFE AND SAFETY ISSUES:  
NOTICE OF REQUIREMENTS TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

Dear Mr. Pelch and Mr. Wheelock:

As you are aware, the fire safety issues with respect to Castle Green have been around a long time. Accordingly, a complete review of the file was necessary. The file clearly documents the basis for the need for Castle Green to take the actions which the City is now demanding (and has demanded in the past without compliance to this point).

**BACKGROUND**

This background is not intended to be comprehensive, rather, it is meant to highlight the basis for the City's demand that an approved fire sprinkler system be installed throughout the building.

In 1980, the Fire Marshal allowed the building to remain as an unsprinklered building provided the top floor and the attic were not occupied (this was an erroneous interpretation of the code relating to existing high rise buildings).

Our records reveal that in or around 1989, and again in 2005, Castle Green had agreed to sprinkler the building, but failed to follow through on this commitment.

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On or about April, 2006, an inspection revealed that contrary to prior stipulation, the top floor and basement were in fact occupied. The City does not know how long the top floor and basement had been occupied because building permits for the tenant improvements were never obtained by Castle Green.

Based upon that inspection, the City sent Castle Green a notice of correction which included the requirement that the building be equipped with a fire sprinkler system. Castle Green had Heritage Architecture and Planning prepare a "Fire Protection and Life Safety Study" (the Study) which was dated June 1, 2006, and subsequently provided to the City. One of the Study's conclusions was that, per the code, the building did not need to be sprinklered. Castle Green, however, volunteered to provide a "limited area fire sprinkler system." The City, after a thorough review of the Study, determined that it could not agree with that conclusion and provided a letter in March, 2007, reiterating its demand that the building be equipped with an approved fire sprinkler system.

Representatives of the City and Castle Green met to discuss the issue and Castle Green agreed to do some feasibility studies with respect to having the building fully sprinklered. The results of the feasibility study apparently concluded that the entire building could not be fully sprinklered without destroying the historic fabric of the salons on the ground floor.

#### **CURRENT SITUATION**

The Fire Department with full knowledge and approval of the Chief, has determined that the building must be fully sprinklered. This is in accordance with Chapter 8 of Uniform Building Code which requires that all existing high-rise buildings be fully sprinklered. Furthermore, the City recognizes that Castle Green is a historical building. However, the City has determined that the building has significant fire safety violations, which cannot be corrected without totally demolishing the historic fabric of the interior of the building. For example, and as previously set forth in our March, 2007 letter, one of the original two exits of the second floor tower room required under the Code has been eliminated and would have to be reinstalled; the first floor Moorish Room, Turkish Room, and Grand Salon have occupancy loads of 136 and require two exits, the second exits would have to be installed; the two existing open stair shafts would need to be enclosed; the elevator shaft would be required to have a two hour rated enclosure.

The above are cited as examples of the violations existing at Castle Green which, if required to be corrected would affect its historic fabric. Per SHBC Section 8-410.1, every historical building that cannot conform to construction requirements, as specified in the regular code for the occupancy or use, constitutes a distinct fire hazard. It shall be provided with an approved automatic fire extinguishing system. Section 8-402.2 requires that such fire extinguishing systems be installed throughout the building.

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**REMEDIAL ACTION**

Because the code declares the building to be a "distinct fire hazard", the City is requiring that you immediately install an approved fire sprinkler system throughout the building. The City recognizes that such installation could take some time. To ensure fire and life safety, Castle Green shall not be permitted to have any assembly uses until an approved fire sprinkler system has been installed. Additionally, the building shall be posted with warning signs at each entrance advising the occupants or any visitors that the building constitutes a fire hazard.

With respect to the lack of building permits, and plans for the improvements to the basement and the top floor, tenant improvement plans and building permit applications shall be submitted immediately.

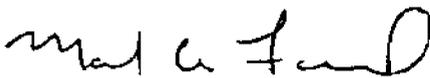
Accordingly, the City demands the following actions be taken by Castle Green:

1. Castle Green shall submit plans for the installation of an approved fire sprinkler system throughout the building within 30 days of this letter and shall commence installation of approved sprinkler system within 90 days.
2. Castle Green shall submit plans and building permit applications for the tenant improvements to the basement and the top floor within 30 days of this letter.
3. Castle Green shall, within 3 days of the date of this letter, post the building with signs at each entrance that the building constitutes a fire hazard.
4. Castle Green shall immediately cease the use of the building for all assembly uses.

Sincerely,



DENNIS J. DOWNS  
Fire Chief



MARK A. FASICK  
Fire Marshal

cc: Frank Rhemrev, Assistant City Attorney  
Pari Bagayee, Senior Plans Examiner

c:/mark fasick/01-23-08 castle green letter