



Thursday, April 09, 2009

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Mount Rainier bans couches on porches

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by Elahe Izadi | Staff Writer

The Mount Rainier City Council voted 3-2 Tuesday night to ban upholstered furniture made for indoor use from being placed on outdoor porches. The city will enact the ban May 7.

Councilman Byran Knedler (Ward 2) originally introduced the ordinance in response to a November 2006 house fire started by a lit cigarette discarded on a couch on a porch.

The fire in the 4100 block of 34th Street caused \$100,000 in damages and displaced nine people.

"We have a house for two years that has been sitting vacant, boarded up," Councilman Pedro Briones (Ward 2), who voted for the ban, said. "It contributes to blight."

Those in favor of the ban said it's a public safety measure meant to prevent fires on porches without smoke detectors and reduce rodent infestations. College Park has a similar ban.

But Councilman Jimmy Tarlau (Ward 1) and Mayor Malinda Miles decried the measure as over-regulation of individual property rights.

"I just feel very bad that people who have had couches on their porches for years can't anymore," Tarlau said.

Tarlau said some residents have had couches outdoors for 20 years.

Miles said she's heard equally from residents for and against the measure. Some residents at the council meeting said the ban could affect the city's unique character.

"I moved here because I like the artistic, eclectic flavor of Mount Rainier," Adrienne Charles said. "If I wanted to move into a cookie-cutter neighborhood, I could have."

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design of raised platforms, railings, stairs and ramps. She said the park can be used as a plaza when not used by skaters. The design includes some large trees that give shade and a border of landscaping between the park and a nearby house.

The park was approved by the City Council in 2007 and will be paid for with \$175,000 in Capital Improvement Program

M-NCPPC planner Eileen Navarra presented the final

The council also approved the city's new historic preservation tax credit, giving owners of historic homes a 10 percent tax credit from the city for repairs already approved by the Maryland Historical Trust. The city's credit is limited to repairs on windows and exterior doors that are architecturally compatible with the historic home.

The council also unanimously approved a design for the skate park that will replace a basketball court at the corner of Otis Street and Wells Avenue. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission held three meetings with the city and public over the park's design.

money.

The council unanimously approved a \$3,000 donation to the Gateway Community Development Corp. for work on its Web site. The Gateway CDC oversees and drives arts-related development in the Gateway Arts District, a two-mile stretch of the Route 1 corridor that includes Mount Rainier.

Gateway CDC board member P.J. Park said Mount Rainier's donation is a part of \$20,000 to develop the organization's Web site and pay staff to redesign it.

"It will be used to promote the arts district," Park said.

Hyattsville, Brentwood and North Brentwood will be asked to make similar donations, Mile said.

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