During the course of the lawsuit, Booth gathered evidence that fire doors in the hallways, which would have kept the fire from spreading up the stairwells to additional floors, were routinely kept open for additional ventilation. City fire inspectors had cited the building owners several times over the fire doors, but the problem remained, Booth said.

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‘Result of Arson’

“Some people may feel that it’s inappropriate for the building owners to be liable when the fire was a result of arson, particularly when the arsonist was a relative of the people who were injured,” Booth said.

“But the theory of the law is that buildings ought to be as safe as possible from fire, irrespective of what causes the fire, and we believe that if the building had been appropriately safeguarded, it would have been a very small fire, the Fire Department would have put it out and there would have been little, if any, injury or loss of life,” he said.

A little more than a year and a half after the fire—and as a direct result—the Los Angeles City Council adopted a tough new safety ordinance that requires such things as automatic sprinklers, fire doors activated by smoke detectors and self-closing devices on guest room doors that open into interior corridors.

The owners of the hotel, a partnership including Los Angeles attorney Hiram Kwan, could not be reached for comment Monday.

But attorneys for the insurance carriers who agreed to the settlement, David Bailey and William Huss, said in a prepared statement:

“This arson fire was caused by a convicted arsonist and has been a tragedy for all involved, tenants and owners alike. This settlement will put the matter to rest and let everyone get on with their lives.”