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Board of Supervisors, Mendocino County

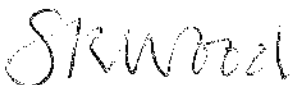
I am an architect, and a long-time resident of Anderson Valley. My experience is that the Class K Ordinance is an important provision that allows and encourages affordable housing in our County, at a time when land prices and construction costs are driving younger residents and working-class people out of the housing market. Economic stratification in this County is an acute problem. Affordable housing is in acute shortage.

Some of the proposed changes to the Class K Ordinance make sense to me. Requiring an inspection before electrical, plumbing and mechanical installations are covered by finish materials will insure that defective and dangerous work is not hidden. Limiting the size of a Class K residence to 2000 square feet signifies that the ordinance is focused on modest, affordable housing; an ample single-family residence is possible on a 2000 square footprint.

Health and Safety concerns are important of course, but that we cannot legislate a perfectly safe world. The zoning regulations by themselves provide a low-density matrix which lowers the likelihood that fires will leap from one residence to the next. Cal Fire regulations regarding defensible space also reduce the chance of a wild fire destroying a structure, and leapfrogging to another. Wildland Urban Interface fire resistive materials and assemblies can reduce the likelihood of a wildfire destroying a structure, and should be encouraged by outreach and education, but not required by ordinance. Similarly, fire sprinklers in a residence may reduce both death rates and property damage, and individuals should be urged to consider such installations, but also allowed to build without them. Perimeter foundations improve a structure's resistance to earthquake forces, and provide some protection from fire, and should be encouraged. But numerous residences in the County have stood the test of time on well-built post and pier foundations.

In short, I urge you to consider leaving the Class K Ordinance largely intact, as a route to affordability. I grant that it is somewhat difficult to administer, in that it requires considered judgement in many instances rather than hard and fast rules. But I do not think it too much to ask of our Building Officials.

Sincerely,



Steven Wood, AIA