

February 26, 2012

To the Marin County Board of Supervisors:

I am a property owner in Bolinas where I recently completed a second unit. The process was extremely lengthy, costly and cumbersome, made all the worse by a NIMBY neighbor who moved in after I had already completed all of my plans. The design of my house was completely to code and well within all building restrictions including: height, size, materials, and clustering. My property is behind my neighbors and uphill and therefore also in no way impacted their view, and was in fact only visible from one point in their driveway. However due to the way the codes are written in Marin my neighbor was able to take me through three sets of appeals, each of which cost me a lot in architectural and legal fees. In the end I would estimate that the cost of these setbacks totaled close to 40 thousand dollars, which does not include anything for the time, (a year), lost delaying the project while fighting the battle just to get permission to submit for building permits.

As you know building in Marin is a very costly endeavor and permitting fees are not cheap. By the time someone goes to the county with a set of plans trying to seek approval they have already spent thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars on architectural and engineering fees. If we want to promote second units, and other forms of affordable housing in our communities we must make it easier and more affordable for people to get the permits to build. One way to do this is to restrict the rights of neighbors to interfere with such projects. While some neighbors may have legitimate complaints and may be willing to work towards a common solution, many more are simply exercising their right to interfere with what goes on in their neighbors yard. Please restrict the appeals process by having approval of second units become a ministerial process. Your planners are smart and knowledgeable people. They know how to read the codes and the plans and can easily spot when plans are outside of the scope of the law.

Thank you,

Arianne Dar  
Bolinas, CA