

Alternative Housing Plans Proposed

By PAUL BEATTY

Sentinel Staff Writer

Calling it a "first in the nation," a county committee this morning unveiled recommendation to allow unconventional construction standards for homes that are built by their owners, and lived in for at least two years by the owner-builder.

The "owner-built standards" would allow use of adobe, tamped earth, stone and single-wall wooden construction.

Under more specific circumstances, teepees would be legally built and occupied.

Also allowed would be low-voltage electrical systems that could be run by solar and wind power, and alternative methods to the traditional toilet,

including pit privies where the parcels are large enough.

Richard B. Spohn, director of state Consumer Affairs, said of the report which was completed by the county Committee on Alternative Standards for Owner-Built and Occupied Dwellings:

"The report, to my knowledge, is a national first; it represents the first serious, thoughtful, deliberate and successful attempt to balance responsibly the range of interests and equities (in) permitting people more direct control over their housing."

It was not so enthusiastically received by county Environmental Health Officer Ray Talley—a member of the committee who cast a number of "no" votes on recommendations.

Talley said, "We would be less than candid if

we did not point out that there was not a uniformity of opinion in the report."

He said that county building and health officials were concerned about whether the owner-built standards could be restricted to actual owner-builders, and that he saw the owner-built standards "as experimental."

Talley would prefer the owner-built standards, if adopted by county supervisors, to "be adopted on a zone basis, and not countywide."

He also said that enforcement could be a major problem and require a great deal of voluntary compliance.

Anon Forrest, a member of the county committee and the state Commission on Housing and Community Development, said the "success of the

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owner-built regulations will depend on a sensitive and positive attitude by enforcement officials."

Committee Chairman Hal Levin noted the proposed standards would be monitored and require a "certificate of compliance" that the home was constructed within the new guidelines.

He and Spohn spoke of the inability of many people to afford housing, with Spohn saying that 80

percent of today's adult population cannot afford to own a home.

Spohn also said the committee's recommendations encompass "the most comprehensive set of regulations for owner-built homes ever made in this country."

He added Attorney General Evelle Younger's opinion on Class K Housing (state recommenda-

tions for owner-built rural housing) was incorrect in its statement that all housing must comply to the building code.

Spohn, an attorney, said that the law supports separating owner-built from commercially-built housing.

The committee's report is scheduled to be formally presented to county supervisors Tuesday.