

to Canyon Courier  
Environment Column  
Joan Spalding  
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### **Safety vs. Privacy**

New homeowners and developers are concerned about the fire regulations adopted by Jefferson County which determine the amount of trees left around the building site and the trees within the property that need to be cut down before a building permit will be issued. Another concern voiced by one homeowner on Lookout Mountain is what he termed, the arbitrary nature of the regulation. Case in point:

What happens when you have 4 contiguous building lots on 7 acres on Lookout Mountain but altogether they only have 12 trees? The homeowner asked the county forester to certify all the lots while inspecting one lot but the answer he received was that each lot would have to be inspected separately and he would have to pay the \$100.00 fee each time. The scarcity of trees didn't matter; each building permit issued required a separate visit and inspection of the trees. The homeowner was mad enough to relay the story to me saying he felt it was a rip-off to get more money. Since there were only 12 trees, he felt it was just common sense that he would plan building sites to save all the trees and the inspector could easily discuss the amount of feet required around each home site as a fire barrier. .

Developers wonder about the privacy left on the home site, and the regulations that affect new homes but not existing homes. Larry Roberts who is presently the project manager for Brittany Builders has been building homes in the mountain area since the 1970's. He believes concerns about saving trees are "On the bottom end" when it comes to getting a building permit. He said the trees must be inspected and cut down before the permit will be issued. He also has concerns about the trees and the underbrush that must be cut down along the driveway coming into the house.

In Clear Creek county, he said, the trees can be cut down after the hole is dug for the building. Developers in Jefferson County, he related, may have concerns about the trees but in order to begin building they must have the permit so they do not buck the regulation. Instead it is up to the new homeowner to be concerned about privacy or aesthetic issues.

As a developer who wants to maintain the natural environment and save as many trees as possible, he also looks at the other side when he remembers the homes destroyed by the Buffalo Creek fire. He wonders if the trees were cut down within a 25 ft. corridor around homes would more homes have been saved?

Next week, we will look at the "rest of the story" from the forest service. In the meantime homeowners can see a graphic representation of the fire safety zones around

homes at the building department at Jefferson County. There, a model illustrating the fire zones is provided for developers and homeowners as well as brochures describing the fire regulations.

Joan Spalding is a certified arborist and an educational consultant. This column is provided as a service of the Evergreen Rotary Club.