



## “CAN WE TALK” ?

By Terry R. Brunette, Special Investigator for the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department

**Correction;** Last month I stated that County zoning will accept an ILC for a plot plan. The County does NOT Accept Improvement Location Certificates.

**QUESTION;** My wife and I own our own lot. We don't think we can afford to have a General Contractor build for us. Can we be our own General Contractor?

**ANSWER;** The Building Codes do allow a person to be their own contractor, if the home will be the person's primary residence. What could be more rewarding than sitting in your easy chair in front of a crackling fire enjoying the fruits of your labor in a home you built for yourself? Having inspected many owner built projects over the last nine years, let me give you some advice.

Spend the time learning about the process and the products available for your home. If you've read my previous columns you already have a lot of information relating to the permitting process. If you've missed any of the previous columns they are available on our web site. Unless you are a jack-of-all-trades and own a lot of tools, you will be using sub-contractors to do a lot of the work for you. First make sure that your plans are complete and that all the information is included so the subs can give you an accurate bid. If you sub out most of the work, you will be dealing with the following trades: an excavator, structural engineer, foundation contractor, waterproofing company, plumbing contractor, mechanical contractor, electrical contractor, insulation company, lumber supplier, insulation company, painting contractor, drywall company, tile and carpet company, cabinet company, glass company, landscaping company, and many suppliers. In some cases a Marriage Counselor may need to be added to the list. Get at least 2 bids for each phase of the project. Require references and take the time to contact them. Check to see that contractors requiring a license have the appropriate license. Licenses are required for plumbing, septic system (if applicable), heating, electrical, roofing, and stucco. Plumbing and electric contractors are licensed thru the State. Be aware that professional General Contractors negotiate their bids with subs based on volume. The subs you will be dealing with are aware that you will be a one-time customer. They are aware that they may have to make multiple trips to your job because of your limited experience in scheduling the project. So the bids you receive may not be the same as a licensed general contractor would receive. Changes are inevitable, however changes cost money and time for your subs and that cost will be passed on to you. Contact your insurance agent and follow his or her recommendation regarding liability coverage. You will probably want a Workers Compensation policy to

cover anyone that may be injured on your property. You will want proof of insurance from your subs. If they don't have coverage your premium will be adjusted to cover anyone that doesn't have coverage. Plan on adding at least 10% to your final cost estimate. Too many times your dream home can't be finished because the money runs out. Without a Certificate of Occupancy, you will not be able to secure a mortgage. Don't expect the workers to have the same 'passion' you have for your dream home. You will be disappointed. Your job is one of many they will do during their career.

I'm not trying to discourage anyone from being his or her own general contractor. Just trying help you avoid some pitfalls. As I said at the beginning of this article enjoying, the finished product, and even the process can be very rewarding. Good Luck!

**QUESTION:** My neighbor has a storage shed and didn't get a permit. I built one and an inspector came by and said I needed a permit. How can that be?

**ANSWER:** Storage sheds can be built up to 120 Square Feet without a building permit, if the shed does not exceed the 120 Square Feet code allowance. However if you live within the City of Colorado Springs there are zoning requirements for setbacks, height, and number of storage sheds. You need to meet the City Zoning requirements regardless of size. Storage Sheds, by code are considered accessory structures. In the City you are allowed to have no more than 2 storage structures. They are not allowed in the front yard, (corner lots have two front yard setbacks) and need to meet the minimum side and rear yard setbacks for the zone in which they are located. The storage shed is limited in height depending on where the shed is located on the property. All roof covered accessory structures are subject to lot coverage maximums for the zone district. Modular carports also require Land Use approval and a Building Permit. They cannot be within the front yard setback (corner lots have two front yard setbacks) and the structure must meet all setback requirements for the zone district.

In the single-family zone district the garage size is limited to 1,200 square feet with garage doors for no more than four cars. It's always a good idea to check with City Planning at (719) 398-5095 and Regional Building Department (719)-327-2880 before buying or building an accessory structure.

You can now access all of the past and current '**CAN WE TALK**' columns on our website under the PPRBD link.

Please take the time to visit our website at [www.pprbd.org](http://www.pprbd.org)

Submit your questions or comments to [terryb@pprbd.org](mailto:terryb@pprbd.org) or mail to Pikes Peak Regional Building Department 2880 International Circle 80910