

Serving the 80118 community



Page 2, Larkspur Sentinel, December 2024

A note from the Publisher and Editor

Larkspur Sentinel

Happy holidays from your Larkspur Sentinel team!

The Sentinel is proud to sponsor a holiday tree at Larkspur Community Park this year. We hope you will stop by to enjoy the lights all season long, but definitely make a point to stop by December 7 for Holiday Magic Happens in the park and the official lighting of all the wonderful trees in the park!

As a reminder, we do not publish in January so that our team can enjoy a well-earned rest from production in December. A big thank you goes to all of our many contributors who spend their time writing articles for us to include in each month. Your contributions make our community a better, more informed place to live. And, thank you to our advertisers for your support of our publication and for helping to ensure open access to community-centered news. We couldn't do it without you all!

We're looking for an Editorial Assistant! Our Editor Kate Wessels will be stepping back for a while in 2025 as she and her husband welcome another baby boy to the family. We're looking for an Editorial Assistant to collect and edit content and also write original articles for publication in the Sentinel. Get in touch with us at larkspursentinel@gmail.com if DECEMBER 2024 Cover you or someone you know fit the bill!

From all of here at the Larkspur Sentinel, happy holidays. Cheers to a bright new year ahead for us all!

Kate Wessels

Kate Wessels, Editor

Stephanie J. Deininger,

Stephanie Y. Deininger, Publisher



Submit your photo to larkspursentinel@gmail.com for a chance to see it on the front cover. Rules/info on our website.



larkspursentinel.org

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What's Going On?

Dec. 5: Larkspur Town Council Meeting 6 p.m. at Town Hall

Dec. 7: Larkspur Elementary Holiday Bazaar 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Larkspur Elementary School

Dec. 7: Holiday Magic Happens Tree Lights 4 p.m. in Larkspur Community Park

Dec. 10: Larkspur Planning Commission Meeting INFO 5-6:30 p.m. at Town Hall

Dec. 10: Larkspur Chamber of Commerce Monthly Mixer <u>INFO</u> 5:30 p.m. 650 Sky View Lane **Dec. 12:** Perry Park Metro District Meeting INFO 6 p.m. at Perry Park Country Club

Dec. 12: Larkspur Fire Protection District Board Meeting <u>INFO</u> 6 p.m. at LFPD Station 161

Dec. 17: Larkspur Water & Sewer Meeting INFO 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Town Hall

Dec. 18: Perry Park Water and Sanitation District Meeting <u>INFO</u>2 p.m. at 5676 Red Rock Drive

Dec. 19: Larkspur Town Council Meeting 6 p.m. at Town Hall

*All dates are 2024 unless otherwise noted

Interested in adding your upcoming Larkspur event? Email larkspursentinel@gmail.com with the subject "LARKSPUR EVENT." All events must be open to the public and community-focused.

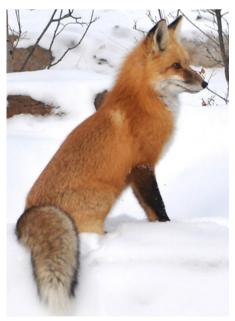
Backyard posers

Mike Riebau, Contributor

Thanks to Mike Riebau for submitting these photos of a red fox!



Photo credit: Mike Riebau



Town of Larkspur update

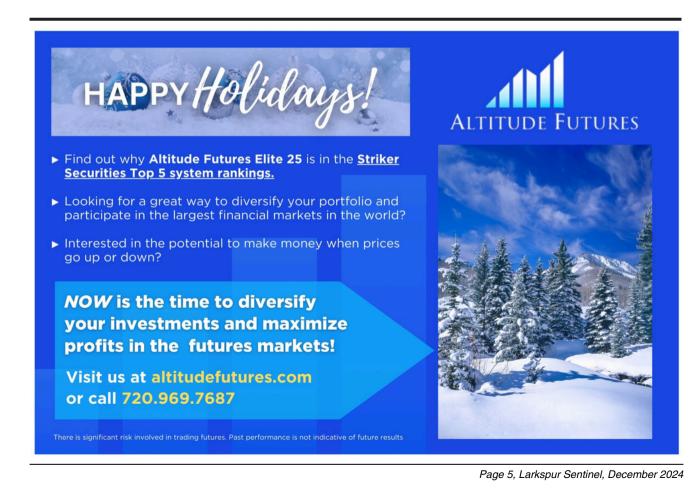
Sherilyn West, Mayor Town of Larkspur



Wishing you all a very merry holiday season! In Larkspur it all starts on December 7 with Holiday Magic Happens in Larkspur Community Park. The festivities will include hot drinks, cookies, and music. You won't want to miss the s'mores tent, and I hope that you all will make it a priority to stop by. Santa will be arriving right at 5 p.m. with the illumination of lights on 60+ trees.

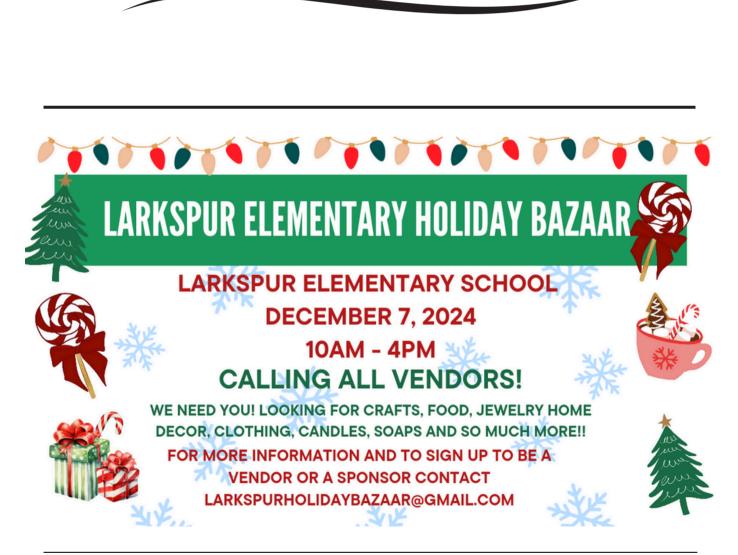
On the development front, we have been told it will be late January into February before we have any more news on the civic complaint from the owner/developers of the proposed travel center. A judge released a ruling on the complaint in favor of the town in early October; however, there are still two other pieces of the complaint that still need to be addressed.

A 39-acre property on Fox Farm Road that has been exploring annexation to the town of Larkspur for the past couple of years has submitted an annexation petition to the town. They are requesting zoning for the development of eight residential lots of 2.2-6.3 acres each.



The town planner is looking over the petition to be sure it has all the proper documentation required to go to an annexation eligibility public hearing. The Town Council will set this public hearing at a regular meeting in December or January to be held not less than 30 days and no more than 60 days in the future. Once this public hearing is set, you will receive a text notification if you have signed up for texts from the town of Larkspur. This hearing will only determine if they are eligible to annex--not to actually annex them.

The railroad crossing on Perry Park Ave has been slated for replacement. Douglas County and the BNSF railroad have been working on an agreement for cost sharing on the project. This agreement has been finalized and the plan is to replace the crossing next year. The town will execute an agreement to refund a portion of the cost back to Douglas County.



News from the Perry Park Water and Sanitation District

Brian Arthurs, Director Perry Park Water and Sanitation District

"What people don't understand is like when water gets polluted, it's an entire aquifer. There's a whole fascinating world that exists underneath our feet that we don't see, therefore we don't relate." --Erin Brockovich



Nearly all water districts in Douglas County, including Perry Park Water and Sanitation, rely on groundwater from the Denver Basin Aquifer System (DBAS) to supply drinking water. This massive aquifer, covering 3,500 square miles and reaching depths of 1,300 feet, has long been a reliable source of water for Colorado's Front Range. However, recent studies, including a comprehensive report by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), have revealed a concerning trend: The DBAS is being depleted.

The study was a large-scale, multidisciplinary investigation into groundwater availability within the Denver Basin. The findings revealed a concerning trend: Bedrock groundwater storage in the Denver Basin is being depleted.

Although the exact timeframe for this depletion remains uncertain, the conclusions of this and other studies suggest that continued pumping from the Denver Basin's bedrock aquifers is not sustainable in the long term. To secure future water supplies, the region will need to rely on renewable water sources.

Common sense tells us that groundwater storage is dwindling. This is driven by a combination of factors:

- Population growth: As the population grows, so does the demand for water.
- **Climate variability:** Fluctuating precipitation patterns and droughts reduce the amount of water replenishing the aquifer.
- **Over-pumping:** Excessive groundwater pumping is outpacing the aquifer's natural recharge rate.

It is a simple fact that we cannot survive without water. Water districts along Colorado's Front Range rely on a diminishing resource. What will happen when the Denver Basin reaches its limits?

Another significant concern is the increasing presence of radium in drinking water. This issue is particularly relevant for residents of the Perry Park Water and Sanitation District (PPWSD). After decades of safe water quality, recent tests have revealed elevated radium levels exceeding EPA standards. Why is this happening now?

Almost all water providers in Douglas County, including PPWSD, have detected radium in their water supply. Increased water demand has exacerbated this issue by drawing water

from deeper, older aquifer layers, which tend to have higher concentrations of radium. USGS offers a scientific explanation: Water that has seeped into aquifers over extended periods contains higher amounts of dissolved minerals and lower levels of dissolved oxygen. These conditions make the water more prone to leaching radium from surrounding rocks.

While radium has naturally occurred in groundwater for millennia, recent increases in water demand and changing environmental conditions have exacerbated the issue.

Why is radium rising?

- **Depletion of groundwater:** As groundwater levels decline, the concentration of radium in the remaining water can increase.
- Water chemistry: Changes in water chemistry, such as lower oxygen levels and higher mineral content, can make radium more soluble and easier to leach from surrounding rocks.

To address the elevated radium levels, PPWSD has taken immediate action:

- 1. **Filter cleaning:** The district cleaned filters at the water treatment plant to remove accumulated radium.
- 2. **Chemical treatment:** The feed rate of potassium permanganate, a standard treatment chemical, was increased to further reduce radium levels.
- 3. Monitoring: The district is closely monitoring water quality through additional testing.

Looking ahead

- **Continued monitoring:** PPWSD will continue to evaluate and report radium levels to customers as required by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).
- **Treatment adjustments:** The district may need to implement additional treatment methods, such as ion exchange or reverse osmosis, to further reduce radium levels. These methods can be costly and time-consuming to implement.
- **Regulatory compliance:** The district must comply with strict regulatory standards, including the 5 pCi/L limit for radium.

Important note: Even if the next quarterly test results show a decrease in radium levels, the district may still be required to send out violation notices if the four-quarter average exceeds the 5 pCi/L limit.

It is also important to stay informed regarding water quality and any potential impacts on your health. Visit the PPWSD website (perryparkwsd.colorado.gov) for the most up-to-date information.

Homeowners insurance dilemma

Wayne Moore, Secretary–Board of Directors Larkspur Fire Protection District



Maintaining homeowners insurance is essential for all living within the Larkspur Fire Protection District (LFPD) and may determine if we can sustain a residence here in a wildland/urban interface area!

With the number of communities that have incurred catastrophic losses due to wildland fires, many insurance companies are no longer writing policies based solely on the location. When coverage is obtainable, the prices have risen to be unaffordable for some or influence a decision to move for others. In the July 2024 edition of the *Larkspur Sentinel*, I wrote an article about the stop-gap insurance program by the state of Colorado, but it is not yet available. LFPD is taking every feasible measure within our capabilities for wildland firefighting. Communities have organized programs to mitigate their risk of fires. Despite all of this, the reality is that homeowners insurance will be harder to find and afford.

Understanding fire-pertinent insurance coverage is essential for being prepared for what is immediately ahead for all of us within the LFPD. This article outlines vital policy information to help you navigate the complexities of being adequately insured.

Coverage A: Dwelling amount – This is an estimate of what it would cost to rebuild the structure of your home. It is a VERY significant coverage clause to thoroughly understand, as many other coverage features will use a percentage of this amount. The policy may or may not have an inflation coverage guard clause, which would automatically adjust the dwelling replacement amount to compensate for inflation. Rebuilding your home may cost well over \$500/sq. foot. Another potential clause is dwelling extension, which gives an additional rebuilding cushion as a percentage of the dwelling amount.

Coverage B: Other structures – This covers structures not attached to the home such as detached garages, sheds, fences. This is calculated as a percentage of the dwelling amount and potentially can be increased as a decision to tailor your policy. Basic coverage is standard with all policies; removing it will not reduce your premium.

Coverage C: Personal property – This covers all your belongings that are not affixed to the house such as appliances, furnishings, clothing. This is calculated as a percentage of the dwelling amount and fire-relevant insurance policy, which could potentially be increased as a decision in tailoring your policy. A video or photo inventory of your home with a secure copy would be helpful during the claim process. Some insurance companies may require owners to list every item destroyed in the claim, which would be daunting! Basic coverage is standard with all policies; removing it will not reduce your premium.

Coverage D: Loss of use – This covers housing accommodation expenses during the time required to repair or rebuild your home following an insured loss. It also covers loss of rental

income as a landlord. Be aware of any time or monetary limits, such as a one-year limitation, since rebuilding may take several years.

Pertinent additional coverage options

Scheduled or blanket personal property: This provides coverage beyond personal property for unique or higher value articles such as cameras, fine art, golf equipment, guns, jewelry, and musical instruments. Each covered item is specifically listed and given a monetary insured value amount.

Ordinance and law: This covers when civil authorities require you to comply with demolition, building, or zoning codes that will increase your costs to repair or rebuild your home. This can be offered as a percentage of the dwelling amount.

Demolition and site cleanup: Be sure this will cover foundation and dead tree removal. If your home is a complete loss, the foundation will be structurally damaged by heat exceeding 1,800 degrees for many hours.

Cash settlement: This coverage gives you the option to "walk away" following a total loss of the dwelling, within the policy limits, instead of requiring rebuilding on the exact location. Subsequently, the insurance company will own all dwelling assets described explicitly in the policy. Personal property within the dwelling would be settled separately.

Further considerations

Post-fire flooding: This may not be covered if your home survives the fire but is damaged due to severe water runoff or mud/debris flows. Policies rarely cover loss due to this type of "flooding." Coverage from flooding is available separately through the National Flood Program.

Fireproof safes: If you rely on a fireproof safe, be aware these offer limited protection. If you check the fire rating, it typically is rated to withstand 1,200-1,400 degrees for 30-45 minutes. A home engulfed in a wildfire will sustain temperatures exceeding 1,800 degrees for many hours.

Property fire mitigation measures, knowing your evacuation notice actions, and having adequate insurance coverage are vital components in your home wildfire plan.

Don't hesitate to contact LFPD Fire Marshal Jeff Hahn at 303-681-3284 for assistance with your fire prevention/protection questions.

Douglas County voters say yes to a \$490M bond

Erin Kane, Superintendent Douglas County School District



I am beyond thrilled to let you know that ballot initiative 5A

(a \$490 million bond) passed...with 60 percent of the vote! We are incredibly thankful to the voters of Douglas County for understanding our need to care for our buildings and provide our students and staff with comfortable learning environments.

Funding from the bond will help us:

- · Update and equip aging schools and facilities.
- Create additional Career and Technical Education pathways, including for our students with special education needs.
- Construct two new elementary schools in rapidly growing neighborhoods (one in RidgeGate and one in Sterling Ranch).
- Build an expansion at Sierra Middle School.
- Begin Phase 2 of the Legacy Campus.
- Provide safety and security updates at all schools.

Click here to view the full bond plan. Click here to see how your school will benefit.

Our Board of Education has established a citizen's committee, the Mill Bond Oversight Committee, to oversee the expenditure of every dollar of the bond in order to ensure that the district is spending the money as promised. There will be regular updates, including financial progress, posted on the funding page of our website.

It's truly incredible to see our community investing in our school district via last year's Mill Levy Override and this year's bond initiative. This partnership, trust and support is incredible!

I am so grateful to our Board of Education for their leadership and their unwavering support for our district! They really paved the way for an amazing effort to fund our schools through their unanimous support. Thank you to the school and district leaders, teachers and staff for the countless hours spent volunteering to spread the word about 5A.

Our staff and our community have people from all types of backgrounds who have differing viewpoints and opinions, which makes Douglas County such an incredible place to work and live. I am so inspired by our community's ability to come together for our students. It is such a privilege to lead this amazing school district...today and every day.

News from the Perry Park Metropolitan District

Steve Ostrowski, Director & Secretary Perry Park Metropolitan District



Perry Park Metropolitan District The Special District For Perry Park Ranch

Hello Perry Park Metropolitan District residents,

We held our annual town hall and regular meeting in November and thank those who attended in person and online. At this month's board meeting, the Board of Directors approved moving forward with a design firm to develop potential designs for the renovation of the Perry Park entrance. The firm will create several design options, which will be shared with the community for review and feedback.

We also reviewed this year's slash program which had 320 piles picked up across the neighborhood this round. Thank you for participating and clearing fire fuels from your yard. Our fire mitigation program on PPMD properties is in progress, and the Big D is completed. This is a multi-year program to clean up our parcels and do our part in neighborhood mitigation.

Several residents met about speeding concerns in our neighborhood and formed an independent Residents Committee for topics such as this. Douglas County Sheriff's Office is planning to increase patrols in December and January to enforce speed limits in our neighborhood. Please be careful driving here, to protect our wildlife, school children, and the many walkers who are along our roads.

Perry Park Ranch is expected to donate a large tract of land to the PPMD; we plan to clean it up enough to add a walking trail for residents. Our Perry Park Community Fund 501(c)3 exists for donations such as this. However, we are also considering stopping or spinning off that fund, as residents can also send tax-deductible donations directly to the PPMD and the accounting costs for the fund are a significant percentage of the fund balance.

The status of other current topics on the board include:

- Wauconda Park plan: The UC Denver group is preparing their final report on the concept and estimated concept for park improvements, which the board will use to continue discussions with further community input. We budgeted \$200K for 2025 to perform a portion of recommended improvements.
- Entryway improvements: We are still awaiting a decision from Colorado to designate our Gateway Pond as a fire suppression pond, which is taking a very long time to complete.
- **Donations to community events:** Our non-profit, 501c(3) fund accepts tax-deductible donations. This fund may be dissolved soon, but funds will not be lost. You can also make tax-deductible donations directly to the PPMD as a non-profit government entity.

Thank you on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Perry Park Metropolitan District earns Firewise USA renewal

Keith Worley, Guest Contributor Perry Park Metropolitan District Firewise Committee

Perry Park Metropolitan District (PPMD) has renewed its Firewise USA® designation. Firewise USA® designations demonstrate a community's commitment to fire mitigation and can help homeowners obtain and maintain their insurance in areas of wildfire risk.

Several other communities in the Larkspur area also hold Firewise USA® designations including Antlers at Sageport HOA, Bear Dance HOA, Spruce Mountain Estates, Hidden Forest, and Valley Park/Hidden Valley. Colorado is ranked #3 in the nation for the number of recognized Firewise USA® sites with 180+ designated sites.

PPMD is one of the nine oldest Firewise USA® communities in the nation starting in 2001. This recognition has been a boon to PPMD and just one of the many reasons PPMD has received over \$2.1 million in grants over the past 24 years.

- Firewise USA® recognition demonstrates that PPMD recognizes a fuel problem. An Australian saying: "We own the fuel; we own the fire."
- Firewise USA® requires: 1) Establishment of a Firewise Committee; 2) A community wildfire hazard assessment [updated 2023 Community Wildfire Protection Plan]; 3) Action Plan [PPMD 5-Year Plan]; 4) Firewise events/activities; and 4) Annual reporting.
- Coordination with other outside support agencies is required. In PPMD's case, these are Larkspur Fire Protection District, Colorado State Forest Service, and Douglas County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Management. These are our partners for learning to "live with fire."
- Other PPMD wildfire mitigation programs, such as the slash pickup, demonstrate how PPMD works to address the fuel problem.
- Money begets money. PPMD's ability to match grant funding has leveraged approximately \$350,000 of PPMD funds into \$2,100,000 awarded to PPMD over the past 24 years.
- Firewise USA® helped PPMD set up an "in-kind tracking" program that allowed the district to match many earlier grants using resident time and expenses when a grantmatch was required. NOTE: PPMD is not currently tracking time and expenses. However, future grants may require PPMD to track it. Watch for future notices from PPMD if required.
- Insurance coverage is at risk for everyone. Some insurers provide a discount for their clients with Firewise USA® recognition. USAA is one of these companies.

- For homeowners still able to work with their insurers and meet insurer requirements, the PPMD slash pickup program is in place as a Firewise USA® recommended tool.
- Firewise USA® provides long-term support to PPMD and now encourages PPMD to become "Fire Adapted". To learn to live with fire as a reality that is not going away.
- The real estate community is quickly recognizing the importance of Firewise USA® designation. So much so, that the Colorado Association of Realtors (CAR) has launched its own wildfire awareness program: <u>coloradorealtors.com/coprojectwildfire</u>
- The Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association (RMIIA) strongly supports Firewise USA® as one of many programs available to assist communities with their fuel problems: <u>rmiia.org/downloads/RMIIA_NM_Wildfire_web.pdf</u>

Although your insurer may not currently take Firewise USA® designation into consideration, Residents of Firewise USA® communities should still obtain the Firewise USA® certificate from the PPMD and provide it to their insurance agent. Even with USAA, you need to let them know you live in a Firewise USA® community to receive their discount.

Residents of non-PPMD communities should visit the **<u>Firewise USA® website NFPA</u>** for additional user-friendly tools and additional information on how to become Firewise USA®.

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News from Larkspur Elementary School

Larkspur Elementary School

Dear Larkspur community,



Larkspur Elementary School would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the voters of Douglas County for their support in passing the 5A bond. This bond will allow us to make crucial improvements to our school, ensuring that our students and staff have a safe, comfortable, and up-to-date learning environment. With these funds, we will be able to enhance safety and security across the campus, refresh technology for both students and staff, and make essential repairs to the building, including:

- · Replacing panels and transformers
- Installing new flooring
- · Updating washing stations
- · Installing a new intercom system
- · Resurfacing the parking lot
- Repairing the foundation
- Repairing metal siding

We are so grateful for the community's commitment to our school and look forward to seeing these enhancements take shape in the coming months.

Thank you for a successful Bobcat Beastly Bash

We would also like to sincerely thank the Larkspur community for the tremendous support during our Bobcat Beastly Bash. The event was a huge success, with a fantastic turnout and a lot of fun. The support from families, staff, and local businesses made this event unforgettable. Thank you for helping us create such a memorable experience for our students!

A special highlight for our students was the Frightfully Fun Staff Experience Raffles they won at the Bash! The students are having a blast enjoying their prizes, which include memorable experiences with their favorite teachers and staff members. From "SRO Lunch Adventure" and "Fire Drill VIP Experience" to fun-themed activities with classroom teachers, these raffles have created wonderful memories and opportunities for our students to bond with the staff outside of the usual school day. Thank you again to everyone who made the event such a success!

Upcoming Holiday Bazaar – don't miss it!

As we move into the holiday season, we invite everyone to join us for our first-ever Holiday Bazaar! This free event will feature over 50 local vendors, food trucks, and, of course, a visit from Santa! It's the perfect way to get into the holiday spirit. Be sure to visit the bazaar

before heading to Larkspur Park for the annual tree-lighting ceremony. We look forward to seeing you there!

Field trips and special events

Our students have been enjoying some incredible learning experiences recently. Our 4th, 5th, and 6th graders had the opportunity to visit Young AmeriTowne, where they experienced hands-on learning in a simulated town environment. Meanwhile, our kindergarten and 1st grade students had a delightful field trip to the Parker Performing Arts Center to watch The Pout-Pout Fish play. After the performance, they enjoyed visiting the Douglas County Library in Castle Rock, where they enjoyed a special story time and engaged in fun activities.

As the holidays approach, we are grateful for the experiences we've shared with our students and the community. We can't wait to see what the rest of the year holds!

Veterans Day celebration

We were honored to host a meaningful Veterans Day celebration on November 12. Many local veterans and first responders attended this year's ceremony. It included performances of patriotic songs by our students, a flag-folding ceremony led by veterans from the American Legion Harry C. Miller Post 118, and guest speakers who shared their stories. It was a moving and memorable day, and veterans and their families were treated to a lovely lunch afterward. We are so proud of our students for participating in this important event.

Larkspur alumni scholarships available

We are pleased to announce that college scholarships are now available for Larkspur alumni students. For more information and to apply, please visit our website at LarkspurElementary.org.

Thank you again to our incredible community for your ongoing support. We look forward to the exciting events and developments ahead.

Go Bobcats!

Commercial real estate update: Big plans for Pine Canyon development in Castle Rock

Cameron McClellan, Contributor Owner of Colorado Team Real Estate

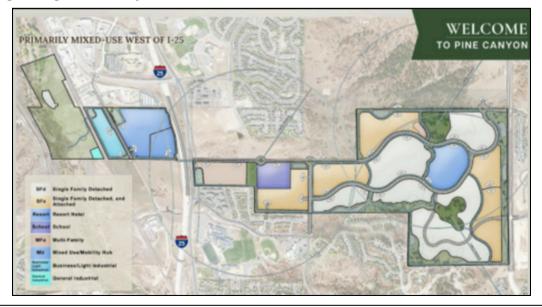
The Pine Canyon project could bring big changes to Castle Rock. Developers are planning a mix of homes, businesses, and entertainment spaces on a family-owned ranch that's been around since 1909.

With the city expanding around them, ranching operations no longer make sense and the family decided it was time to transform their land. The project will include 600,000 square feet of commercial and industrial space, a transportation hub, 1,800 homes, and a luxury hotel and spa. The site stretches on both sides of I-25, between Wolfensburger Road and Founders Parkway.

On the west side, near Castle Rock Self Storage, the plan includes space for businesses that mirror the area around it. A transit center with Bustang access, and the possibility of future train routes on the current tracks to the west. On the east side, developers are planning 1,000 apartments close to Front Street, 800 houses, and a hotel and spa with views of the town.

While the project sounds exciting, it's causing some controversy. Castle Rock officials and neighbors worry about how it will affect traffic, water supply, and emergency services. They believe the development should follow the town's rules by becoming part of Castle Rock and helping pay for the extra strain on local resources. Currently the development will remain in unincorporated Douglas County and use its own groundwater.

This project could change Castle Rock's future, bringing new opportunities and challenges for the growing community.



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Crystal Valley interchange project update

Town of Castle Rock

The Town of Castle Rock's top transportation priority — the Crystal Valley interchange reached a major milestone last month when the new portion of the East Frontage Road and roundabout intersection at Crystal Valley Parkway opened to traffic. Relocating the East Frontage Road and Crystal Valley Parkway interchange to the east allows the new bridge over Interstate 25 and connecting northbound I-25 on- and off-ramps to be constructed. The next phase of the project will focus on bridge foundation work over I-25 and the BNSF Railway tracks, with construction taking place in the median and on both sides of the interstate.

Constructing the new bridge foundation requires pile driving operations to create a deep below ground foundation for the new bridge structure.

Major earthwork operations continue east and west of I-25 to support new drainage system installations and grading for the accompanying new pond structures. Roadway construction is progressing on the new Dawson Trail Boulevard west of I-25 and other neighboring roads that will connect to the future interchange.

Once completed, the new I-25 Exit 179 and Crystal Valley Parkway interchange will provide a key regional transportation link from I-25 to southern Castle Rock and Douglas County. Construction east of I-25 is anticipated to be completed by early 2025, with total completion of the interchange project anticipated in 2027.

Please watch for heavy machinery and for trucks entering and exiting the work zone. Throughout the duration of the project, watch for flagging operations and daytime and nighttime lane closures on surrounding streets and on I-25. Heed the speed limit and avoid distracted driving.



Aerial view of the project area in November, featuring foundation work for the future bridge over I-25, and the new portion of the East Frontage Road and roundabout intersection at Crystal Valley Parkway. Photo credit: Town of Castle Rock

A matter of upbringing

Richard Bangs, Member–Board of Directors Douglas Land Conservancy

It was a cool March day in northern Montana, but a Chinook wind was blowing and the snow was melting. It was time for a hike down to the creek.



Long-legged jackrabbits were looking for bits and grass in open patches in the snow and flocks of English sparrows were lifting out of their hiding places and swirling about. If I was lucky, I would spot a coyote searching for a snack.

For me, saving open space in Douglas County has its roots in farm country.

I've been on the Douglas Land Conservancy (DLC) Board of Directors since about 1992. But my love and appreciation for the quiet, powerful ability of open country and wild things to bring calm and a renewed spirit began as I was growing up on a farm in northern Montana.

Our family has had a wheat and cattle farm there since 1910 when my grandmother homesteaded. That area of Montana is relatively flat with a small range of mountains about 15 miles west of the farm and several small creeks running through the area.

Montana wildlife includes deer, antelope, coyotes, ground squirrels, and rabbits. There are many varieties of birds ranging from small migratory birds to several species of pheasants, barn swallows, sparrows, blackbirds, red-winged blackbirds, magpies and many types of raptors, from the biggest to the smallest.

Home for all of these are the flat prairies and farmlands that provide food and enough shelter for the animals to survive the coldest of winters where blizzards regularly sweep the countryside, and snow can stay on the ground from October to April.

Summers are hot, usually hitting 100 degrees, and scorch the fields of grain and blister the grass in the pastures and creek drainages. The small creeks are seasonal with our local creek, Big Sage Creek, often drying to just potholes by August or September.

One of my first memories at about age 4 or 5, was of coyotes yipping in the dead of winter as they hung out around the farmstead. They were there because of the many rabbits that took shelter in the tree rows and the machine rows which were nearly covered by drifted snow. They also were there to tempt our farm dogs to come out and play. Several of our dogs were injured before they learned the coyotes were doing more than just playing around.

As children, we were kept pretty busy around the farm, doing chores like weeding the garden and large potato patch and tending to the animals.

But there was even more time to play around in the outdoors. All year long we were outside, playing in the tree rows with our toy soldiers, hiking to the creek, building caves in the cutbanks and carving a toboggan run on that same cutbank in the winter.

What I remember most was just getting out on the land when the stress of dealing with four brothers was too much or, later, when the pressures of school seemed overwhelming.

It was my mental health break to just take a walk down to the creek or over to a dam where I could watch the ducks and other water birds wading or swimming in the stock pond.

It always brought me back down from whatever frustration I was feeling. The same is true for the open spaces in Douglas County. I find it very refreshing to take a hike around Dawson Butte Open Space, Spruce Mountain Open Space, or Sandstone Ranch Open Space.

I hope a wander there affects others the same way.

In the spirit of the holidays, I'd like to thank everyone who supports DLC in its work to preserve and protect open space. And I'd like to say, in the spirit of giving, DLC will be around for years, if not decades, to continue giving people the gift of open space, wildlife habitat, and a place where one might wander when stresses of everyday life seem too much.

Happy holidays to everyone.



The Sweetgrass Hills are a small, isolated range of mountains that stand about 6,900 feet tall and were often places of exploration and excitement during my early days in Montana. Photo credit: Rich Bangs.

Winter garden bones

Douglas County CSU Extension Office

What do holiday turkeys and gardens have in common? They both have bones. And just as skeletons support flesh, giving shape and support to soft tissues, so too do a garden's foundational structures.

In horticultural parlance, "garden bones" typically refers to those visual elements of a landscape that persist through all four seasons and influence how the garden is seen or interacted with. Similar to a turkey, after Thanksgiving is a great time to get a good look at your garden's bones. Identifying structural gaps in a landscape is more easily done without the enfleshment of flowers, leaves, and fluttering butterflies of spring and summer; you might be surprised what changes in structural elements can do for you. Contrary to what you might think, the smaller the area, the more important well-planned garden bones become to maximize beauty and function.



Garden bones can be whimsical. Photo credit: Douglas County Extension Office.

Proportion in a landscape is determined by the

garden bones. A house often dominates a residential landscape and the planting beds need to cooperate with it to keep everything in proportion. The shapes and sizes of planting beds relate to the scale of the site, and the size of plants relate to the size of the patterns on the ground. Most houses are designed with proportion in mind; you can use the strongest features of the house (a window, entryway, etc) to continue this proportion into the landscape with evergreen plants, walls, and pathways. Consider repeating shapes and patterns that call out other landscape features or architecture.

Shrubs and trees, an important part of garden bones, are often used as screens for neighbors or unfavorable views. The most common screening technique of planting a row of tall trees, shrubs, or grasses along the edge of the property is often one of the least effective if used by itself. A planting bed in proportion to the house and filled with several layers of shrubs and trees not only is an effective screen, it provides ample interest and is resilient to damage. I will never forget the hedge of columnar junipers that, having just become the sought-after screen for the neighbor's house, was taken out by a heavy wet snow! If at all possible, don't put your eggs in one basket, and don't plant your screen in one row.

Winter ornament, also known as winter interest, relies on garden bones in our part of the world. In keeping with the advice given about screens, considering trees and shrubs as masses rather than as isolated individuals will help the garden to seem calmer and weightier. Isolated shrubs placed without regard to the proportion of the area can create a "restless" effect.

Mix colors and textures together for contrast. Many conifers are an obvious and good choice for much of the region, but don't forget to consider broad-leaved evergreens like creeping grape holly (berberis repens) and manzanita (arctostaphylos varieties) along with groundcovers.

Finally, you can expand the range of plants and garden styles available by using your garden bones to create **microclimates**. Plants and structures alike can provide extra protection from temperature swings, or shade to help slow lie long on the ground, making more comfortable habitat for woodland plants.

Alternatively, a protected south-facing alcove with gravel mulch or ample garden stones will rarely remain snow-covered for long, providing opportunities for comfortable outdoor recreation year-round;



Contrasting colors and textures in the winter garden can drive interest. Photo credit: Douglas County Extension Office

On the town: Local social events

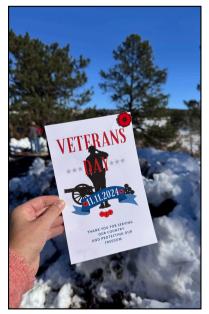
Larkspur Sentinel

VETERANS DAY 11/11/24 HOSTED BY TOWN OF LARKSPUR



Photo credit: Larkspur Sentinel



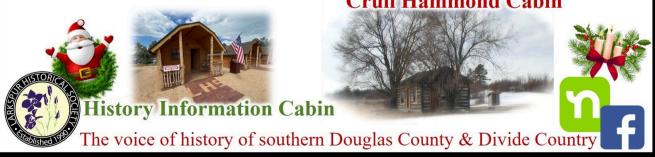


Larkspur Historical Society Wishes you A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

and A HAPPY, PROSPEROUS NEW 2025!

This year, Larkspur Historical Society's (LHS) year of walks, tours, and programs were well received by the Larkspur area public. Thank you for all who participated. We had a number of requests for some new events as well as for reruns by some of our events attendees. Our January 2025 will carry a preview of what LHS will be offering and some changes for 2025.

If you have an interest in the history of Larkspur and southern Douglas County, we invite you to come to one our monthly meetings and see who we are, what we do, and, if you like what you see, join our Society. Except December (*when we take time off to enjoy the season*), LHS meets monthly at the Spur of the Moment in the Spur's back room. We are changing our meeting time schedule in 2025 which will be announced in our advertisement page in January's *Larkspur Sentinel* ...along with a much different agenda than usual! You'll want to come check us out. Crull Hammond Cabin



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CLASSIFIED ADS

SECURITY DOORS & RETRACTABLE

SCREENS for sale along with screen repair. Call Jack 719-231-1719

MITIGATION OF GAMBEL OAKS:

mastication, lot clearing, excavation, material hauling. ASL Construction 303-638-1249

NOTARY SERVICES available in the Perry Park/Larkspur areas. Dakota Hoyt 719-671-3720

SPRAYTECH: preventive beetle spraying, noxious weed control, tree spraying for insects & diseases, tree deep root watering & fertilizing. www.treesandweeds.com 720-248-0000

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The Larkspur Sentinel invites your letters, comments, and ideas for columns. Because of space limitation and legal ramifications, we reserve the right to edit any submitted material and cannot assure that submissions will be printed verbatim or unedited. The Larkspur Sentinel will correct all errors that occur. If you find a problem with a story - an error of fact, or a point requiring clarification, please email larkspursentinel@gmail.com

The opinions expressed in the Larkspur Sentinel are not necessarily the opinions of the staff or its advertisers.

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\$5/line (\$10 min) \$40.00 Quarter Page Ad(3-1/2"w X 5"h) \$50.00 \$62.50 \$87.50

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Articles/Letters/Ad Artwork/Classified Ads an of each month

Any ads in this newsletter are paid for by the advertiser and do not represent an endorsement from the editor, publisher, writers, or others affiliated with the production of this communication. Ad requests after the 20th are subject to a 10% charge

READY TO BUILD 1 ACRE VACANT LOT in Perry Park for sale. Call 303-681-4460

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It's time to spray your

Pine or Spruce trees or other evergreens!

Evergreens are beautiful and provide many benefits. However, they need special care because they're under constant attack from insects. If they are not managed, they can be lethal to the trees. Preventative treatments are the best way to protect your trees. We can help with that. Please call for a free tree evaluation and estimate.

Consider Knothead your personal arborist expert (everyone needs one).



Call us today at 303-885-3800 for a free estimate on all your tree and lawn needs.

Knothead Tree and Lawn Care is a TCIA member and an ISA certification Arborist. Find more information about us at knotheadtree.com

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The bulletin board

Larkspur Sentinel

An informative bulletin of events from our local non-profits and local community groups.





What are your neighbors saying about Wolfe Realty Group?

Feedback received from Dennis and Cindy Holehouse Regarding the sale of their Perry Park, Larkspur home

"Ben Wolfe is very professional. He sold our home in record time. The experience was very positive from beginning to end. It was a pleasure to do business with him. I highly recommend Ben Wolfe for all of your real estate needs."

Feedback received from Derek and Denise Meredith Regarding the sale of their Perry Park, Larkspur home

"Ben is honest, professional, communicative and informed. He knows the local market, its trends and reasonable values. There is no better agent for the local Larkspur market (whether buying or selling) than Ben Wolfe."

Feedback received from Cherron Schotzie Hoppes-Davis Regarding the sale of their Jackson Creek, Monument home

"Ben has been a part of three real estate transactions for us. He is whip smart and always has his clients interests at heart. More than anything he is a kind person and a joy to work with."

Feedback received from John and Cathy Sweeney Regarding the sale of their Hidden Forest, Larkspur home

"When we decided to sell our home in Larkspur, the only realtor we considered using was Ben [Wolfe]. He is results oriented and absolutely fantastic to work with! Honestly, Ben exceeded our expectations! We knew he was going to represent the sale of our home extremely well and we could not have been more impressed with his success! We highly recommend Ben Wolfe to anyone planning to buy or sell their home. He is incredibly knowledgeable, professional, pro-active and engaging! He sold our home and our experience was flawless from beginning to end."



Ben Wolfe Managing Broker & Owner Larkspur Resident

Wolfe Realty Group, Inc. Office: 303-681-3553 • Cell: 303-667-7995 Fax: 303-681-0678 • Home: 303-681-0679 Ben@DiscoverLarkspur.com

If you have any real estate needs call Ben Wolfe, Your Larkspur Real Estate Expert!

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A walk on the wild side

Susan Peters, Contributor

Deck the trees...short takes

Holiday decorations of an edible nature



In years past, the holiday issue of Duncraft's bird catalog would get my birdy feathers fluttering with magnificent ways to boost the economy–maybe for Duncraft's, but not for my personal economic picture. It features cute decorations made of bird seed, complete with a hanger and a decorative piece of red ribbon. The catalog shows festive pictures of evergreen trees laden with these edible ornaments. You can tickle your wild birds' fancy with such delectables as gingerbread men, finch stockings, peanut balls, fruit cakes, and seed art in the form of snowflakes, BEARS, squirrels, wreaths, and stars. It also includes fruit cake options a-plenty–ones that will avoid death by trebuchet.

Note: I recommend putting these decorations on an outdoor tree for maximum bird attention. These ornaments would make a lovely and unusual gift for teachers, hostess gifts, and birdwatchers. Or if you just wanted to wear the smaller ones as earrings, just hope that only chickadees and finches frequent them. A flicker could cause ear lobe elongation.

A less expensive alternative...go the Martha route!

Birds and Bloom has published a recipe from Angie Dixon:

Thanks to cookie cutters, you can offer birdseed for your feathered friends while decorating at the same time! All you need are unflavored gelatin, water, and seed mix. Combine the ingredients:

- 1/3 cup gelatin
- · 1-1/2 cups water
- 8 cups of birdseed

Mix gelatin and water on low until gelatin is melted and clear. Remove from heat and stir in 8 cups of birdseed. Stir until it is well mixed and there is no dry seed. Spread the mixture onto a cookie sheet, chill and use cookie cutters to make the shapes. Let dry before putting outside or wrapping.

Or fill cookie cutters with the seed mixture and pack tightly. Then refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours. Dry on baking rack for 3 days.

Another alternative is the Aiken Society suet recipe, but you can find many tempting recipes on the web, including the no-melt bird suet recipe on <u>cooks.com</u>. One caution as I found out the hard way–do not use rancid lard.

- 1 c. crunchy peanut butter (8 oz.)
- 1 c. lard (8 oz.)
- 2 c. quick cook oats
- · 2 c. cornmeal
- 1 c. white flour
- 1/3 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. sunflower seeds (optional)
- 1/2 c. safflower seeds (optional)
- 1/2 c. raisins (optional)

Melt the lard and peanut butter in a microwave or stove top pan. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Pour the suet mixture into a square container about 2" thick or another mold like the cookie cutters. Store the suet in the freezer. These suet cakes will not melt in warm winter weather or during summer temperatures except in the tummies of bears. Makes 3 Tupperware sandwich containers. (If adding optional ingredients this will then make 5-6 sandwich containers.)

And just think, the kids can lick the bowl! Yum!

I just use the song bird mix that I stock in place of any seed. A few dead mice mixed in will ring the hawks' chimes. Oh, and don't forget the decorative ribbon–no, it does nothing for the birds. It's for the "awe" affect as well as serving as a hanger.

A quick-to-make treat involves spreading crunchy peanut butter on pinecones, being careful to get it in all the groves. But first tie a thin ribbon around the top of the pine cones. Then hang in outdoor trees.

Short takes

Get out your magnifying glass to see this photo. A flock of sandhill cranes circled the sky above us, honking madly, making lazy circles. By the time we could get a picture, they were high up. What is puzzling is that they then headed north. The leader either has a bad navigation gene or they were signaling more cranes to join them on their quest to go to warmer climes in Texas, Arizona, or New Mexico. See you next February, cranes!



Sandhill cranes in Larkspur. Photo credit: Susan Peters

The annual clean out of the bird houses has yet to happen. We still have significant drifts from the mega snowstorm in early November. Wintering over birds will need the houses for refuge during storms. Speaking of, the shy Oregon race species of junco, draped in its executioner's hood, made its numbers known during the mega-snowstorm.

A white leucism, characterized by only a partial lack of pigment, humpback whale calf has been photographed in Tongan waters. She has appropriately been named Mãhina, which means "moon" in Tongan. "Her complexion is so illuminating and glowing white she appears like a bright full moon underwater," says tour guide and photographer Jono Allen. Her mom raised her up to the surface to introduce her to the ogling divers.



Photo credits: Matt Porteous, Jono Allen, Ocean Culture Life.

The calf's white color stands out and makes her more

of a target for predators, as is the case of other abnormally white animals like the lions in Africa and an albino deer that I recently shared a photo of with you. The residents of Tonga will be anxiously waiting her return next summer. Right now, her mom and her mom's male escort are diligently guarding her.

And, how about a couple more nature photography winners? Karine Aigner snapped this photo of a yellow anaconda coiled around a caiman. It is unknown who the aggressor is. The snake does have two blood-sucking horseflies on its back. Karine also took this photo of male cactus bees forming a ball by swarming over a single female in Texas. As a female, I sure am glad that human males don't do this stuff.



Photo credits: Karine Aigner



And one more. This gannet has a mouthful of nesting material. Makes me dream of spring.

A sincere happy holidays to each of you. Don't forget to put out some extra peanuts for your feathered friends! The crazy bumper crop of blue jays will love you. "See ya" in February.

That's all folks for this month. Gotta run. Hubby Dave found a mega pack rat's nest in the basement and needs moral support to clean it out. 🙁 Well, at least I can provide the screams.

How to contact me: Email is best at susan@larskpurconsulting.com. Photo credit: Danny Green, Alternatively, call or text my cell phone at 303-725-6868.



UK - European Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2024.



Homes Currently For-Sale (11/20/2024) ---33 (\$525,000 to \$1,888,885) --- Median \$985,000 Average Days on Market --- 93

Homes Currently "Under Contract" --- 10 (\$499,900 to \$1,374,500) --- Median \$1,142,000 Homes U/C in the past 30-days = 3 Average Days on Market --- 108





\$245

\$730

---The charts above represent a 6-month study of home sales ending on the last date of the month indicated. The top 2 and bottom 2 sales have been removed/deleted from each study. This is because very unusual properties can skew the factors that reflect actual market conditions. For example, a property with 100 acres but having a small 600 Sq. Foot house would be something that is simply not "typical". And because one property sells for over \$4 million does not mean that all other properties have gone up in value. Likewise, a property selling under \$250,000 does not mean that all others have gone down in value.

----The above information has been researched from the Metro Denver MLS System (www.REcolorado.com) by Dave Gardner of Results Realty of Colorado, located in the Town of Larkspur, CO. It is believed to be accurate but is NOT guaranteed. Every property will have unique factors affecting value such as location, condition, acreage, quality, size, age, upgrades and features. A thorough inperson assessment by an experienced real estate broker or licensed real estate appraiser is recommended to determine the actual current market value on an individual property.

> Results Realty of Colorado-Dave Gardner's Results Team 9164 Spruce Mountain Ed. Larkspur, CO 80118 * 303-681-1000 * MAMAY Homesial arkspurCO com

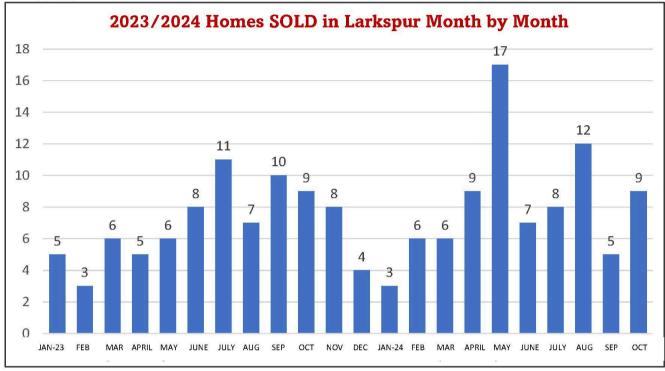
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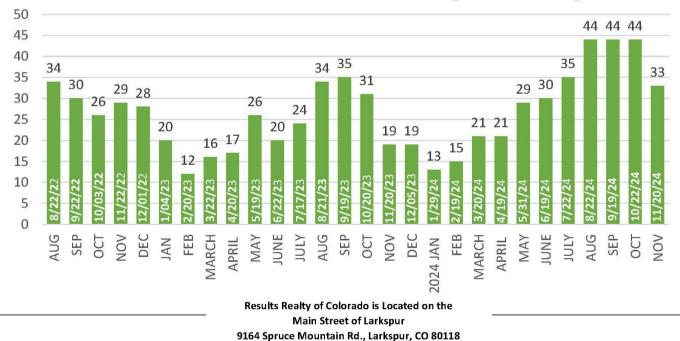
\$243 \$238^{\$243}



Larkspur Real Estate Stats



2022/2023/2024 Homes FOR SALE in Larkspur Month by Month



303-681-1000

DavesResultsTeam@yahoo.com www.DaveGardnerRealEstate.com



DAVE GARDNER'S Results Realty of Colorado



Office located on the Main Street of Larkspur



8174 Inca Road - Perry Park

Welcome to the Foothills of the Colorado Rocky Mountains! BACKS TO OPEN SPACE - VERY PRIVATE! Main Floor Primary Suite and Partial Finished Walkout Basement. 4,763 Square ft. with 5 bedrooms and 3-1/2 baths. Spacious "Great-Room" concept.



13670 Spruce Creek Circle - Woodmoor Mountain This 4.139-Acre Lot is in the Larkspur area of Douglas County and is "READY-TO-BUILD". Enjoy views of nearby flat top "Buttes" and views of the Valley Below. Electric and phone lines along with High-Speed Cable are HERE!



7255 Perry Park Blvd. - Perry Park

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303-681-1000 www.DaveGardnerRealEstate.com LARKSPUR AREA SPECAILIST!



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7749 Inca Rd. - Perry Park READY-TO-BUILD South-Facing 1-Acre LOT in Perry Park. Beautiful Rock Formation ON-SITE!! Will make a gorgeous backdrop for your new Dream Home. All utilities and paved road are here!! Gorgeous Mountain Views!



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1-Acre "READY TO BUILD" Lot in Perry Park BACKS TO OPEN SPACE and has TREMENDOUS MOUNTAIN VIEWS at the back of the lot!! Save approx. \$14K over other lots because of the PRE-PAID Water & Sewer Tap Fees.



5967 Country Club Drive - Perry Park 1-Acre LOT with Tremendous Mountain Views AND a view of the Golf Course!! Backs to the Famous "Sleeping Camel" Red Rock Formation on Open Space. In order to qualify for a build permit, the road must be paved in front of the lot and the other

utilities must be added.