

DEVELOPER CUTS BACK ON CUTTING / THURSTON OFFICIALS HAIL VO'S DECISION TO SCALE BACK PLANS, PRESERVE NISQUALLY BLUFF

The News Tribune - Tacoma, Wash.
Author: Karen Hucks
Date: Dec 13, 1997
Start Page: B.1
Section: Local/State
Text Word Count: 560

Document Text

Copyright Tacoma News, Inc. Dec 13, 1997

A Lacey developer has changed his mind about applying for a lenient tree-cutting permit that would have allowed him to make more money on a new development. Tri Vo, who owns 45 acres on the Nisqually Bluff, converted his permit application with Thurston County to one that doesn't allow him to develop as much of the property, but which will save trees and preserve the bluff.

"It wasn't an easy decision but it was the right decision," said Vo, who has a reputation in the community for being a conscientious developer. "This is not the best of everything, but I think this is the best I can do to help."

Thurston County officials were angered when Vo sought the less restrictive permit intended for foresters. They said Friday they were delighted by the turn of events.

"Christmas has come early this year," County Commissioner Diane Oberquell said.

She threatened in October to try to change zoning on the property so Vo couldn't put as many houses on it as he intended.

County and state officials passed laws this year to try to dissuade sneaky or confused developers from applying for permits geared toward people who won't develop the land.

Vo, president of Tri Way Enterprises development company, had initially intended to log the timber on the Steilacoom Road Southeast site and replant some trees.

Then, after waiting out the county's six-year building moratorium and a 10-year replanting period, he could have cut most of the young trees and built homes.

His new plan will retain a 200-foot buffer of trees visible on the Nisqually bluff, as well as the forest on about half the property.

If the new permit is approved, Vo will gain some perks. He'll avoid the moratorium and replanting periods.

And even though the property is in Lacey's urban growth area - where septic tanks are not allowed - Vo could use septic tanks because the project would fall within a county exception because it would have an average of one house per acre.

To reach that, Vo said he will build about 50 houses on the western 23 acres of the property. He'll charge at least \$200,000 per house to make up for having fewer houses, not being able to sell the timber and from losing views of the valley by leaving trees standing.

"I know up front that we lost the timber and the view, and that is a hardship," Vo said Friday.

Having a view of the valley would have boosted the price of houses by \$10,000, Vo said. The Department of Natural Resources has said timber on the property could be worth \$460,000 to \$800,000.

The project has turned out to be a good example of the private and the public sectors working well together, Vo said.

"I think they recognized the hardships that I have and I recognized their interest and intent," he said. "So, we reached an agreement that I think will work."

County officials think so, too.

"I'm very pleased by his decision," said County Development Services Director Don Krupp. "It means an important part of Thurston County's natural heritage and character will be preserved and protected."

*

Staff writer Karen Hucks covers Thurston County. Reach her at 1-800-388-8742 Ext. 8660 or by e-mail at kxh@p.tribnet.com

[Illustration]

COLOR MAP / Ronnie Ashlock; The News Tribune: Tri Vo's 45-acre site

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

A Lacey developer has changed his mind about applying for a lenient tree-cutting permit that would have allowed him to make more money on a new development. Tri Vo, who owns 45 acres on the Nisqually Bluff, converted his permit application with Thurston County to one that doesn't allow him to develop as much of the property, but which will save trees and preserve the bluff.

"It wasn't an easy decision but it was the right decision," said Vo, who has a reputation in the community for being a conscientious developer. "This is not the best of everything, but I think this is the best I can do to help."

Thurston County officials were angered when Vo sought the less restrictive permit intended for foresters. They said Friday they were delighted by the turn of events.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.