



Helping Business do Business Since 1893

February 13, 2013

Eagle River, Alaska, enjoys building boom

By ZAZ HOLLANDER
Chugiak-Eagle River Star

EAGLE RIVER, Alaska — An influx of new retailers and a housing boom will be remaking the face of downtown Eagle River in 2013.

Most national chains venturing into Alaska open a store in Anchorage and then skip right over Eagle River en route to the Mat-Su. This year, Walgreens and AutoZone bucked that trend to open new locations on the Old Glenn Highway.

Meanwhile, Cook Inlet Housing Authority plans to build more than 50 units of senior housing off Coronado Road. Eklutna Inc. — the developer of the high-end Powder Ridge subdivision on the north end of town — has the wheels turning on the new Powder Reserve subdivision across the road.

“That gives a sense of the uptick in housing,” said Eklutna CEO Curtis McQueen. “Thirty percent of people moving into our area are military.”

Military spending is always a factor here. Plus, though Eagle River and Alaska as a whole didn't get hammered by the recession as hard as Outside, business dropped off as banks tightened down on lending.

A recent briefing from Wells Fargo on national lending indicated that “things are loosening up at the bank level,” said Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce executive director Susie Gorski.

Walgreens plans to open its new store by summer, a corporate spokesman said. The pharmacy with an “As Seen on TV” section will sit at the former Holiday gas station site, at the intersection of the Old Glenn and Eagle River Loop Road. Spokesman Robert Elfinger said Walgreens expects to hire 25 to 30 part- and full-time employees.

Walgreens already operates five stores in Anchorage and one in Wasilla. So why Eagle River?

“We look for the best corner locations to build stores,” Elfinger said. “We look at a whole host of things that go into planning a store. We look at vehicular and pedestrian travel, the demographics of a community when deciding if we have a good location.”

AutoZone plans to open a 6,000-square-foot store in mid-April, according to corporate spokesman Ray Pohlman, based in Memphis. That store will sit along the Old Glenn at the former location of Aztec's restaurant and Everything Under the Midnight Sun thrift store.

The store “will probably employ 10 to 12 what we call AutoZoners,” Pohlman said. About 30 percent of them will be part-time employees.

As the two national chains ready for opening, a number of housing developments are coming together around town.

Cook Inlet Housing Authority plans to start construction on a new senior housing complex at the Coronado Park project on Coronado Road.

The authority is building 56 one- and two-bedroom units for rent to seniors, according to spokeswoman Sezy Gerow-Hanson. Some will come with garages. The units will be a mix of affordable rentals — for households at 60 percent of the median local income or below — and market-rate units. Rents for a one-bedroom with no garage will range from \$710 to \$935, Gerow-Hanson said.

The whole thing will be powered by a solar-thermal system, making it the largest alternative energy system in a residential building in Alaska, she said. The system will provide more than half the energy to heat hot water for domestic use. Contractor Neeser Construction expects to break ground in April and finish work next year.

Along with the senior housing, private developer The Petersen Group plans to break ground soon on duplex-style condominiums for sale, Gerow-Hanson said. Peterson will also be developing tri- and fourplexes in a townhouse style on the parcel.

When news of the Coronado development broke in 2010, community members voiced concerns about traffic problems and emergency vehicle access.

CIHA is creating a “microsite” on its Web site so the community can track progress, Gerow-Hanson said. “We're always open to dialogue from the community.”

Eklutna Inc. — the largest private landowner in Anchorage — is also gearing up for hopping season of residential construction in Eagle River.

Eklutna developed Powder Ridge, the 400-lot subdivision known for its homes in the \$400,000-\$600,000 range. The last of those lots are being sold now — about 44 — with 25 pre-selected by builders, according to McQueen.

In the works: a 1560-home master plan for Powder Reserve, with lots to be sold over the next 10 to 15 years. Plans include leaving an existing beaver pond for greenspace, but also using six concrete pads along the North Eagle River Access for future development into shops and maybe a community hall. There's also an identified school site in the area.

But instead of the higher-end homes of Powder Ridge sitting on roomy parcels, these homes will fall in the high \$200,000 to low \$300,000 range and sit on smaller lots, McQueen said.

“What you'll see in 2013 and mainly 2014 is Eklutna having two product lines where traditionally we only had one,” he said.

Eklutna also owns a commercial parcel across from the Fred Meyer store it filled last summer. The “Eklutna Plaza” site will house Eklutna's headquarters but plans also call for commercial, office, or retail development.

Walgreens actually poked around on that property two years ago but it wasn't cleared, filled and ready, McQueen said. It is now, and Eklutna is in early conversation with potential opportunities, as the CEO put it.

“Maybe add an additional strip mall or box store that might fit Eagle River,” he said.

[Next Story >](#)

Alaskan who sped past Canadian border guards pleads guilty in Yukon court

Building boom remakes Eagle River

Published: February 10, 2013

By ZAZ HOLLANDER — Chugiak-Eagle River Star

EAGLE RIVER-- An influx of new retailers and a housing boom will be remaking the face of downtown Eagle River in 2013.

Most national chains venturing into Alaska open a store in Anchorage and then skip right over Eagle River en route to the Mat-Su. This year, Walgreens and AutoZone bucked that trend to open new locations on the Old Glenn Highway.

Meanwhile, Cook Inlet Housing Authority plans to build more than 50 units of senior housing off Coronado Road. Eklutna Inc. -- the developer of the high-end Powder Ridge subdivision on the north end of town -- has the wheels turning on the new Powder Reserve subdivision across the road.

"That gives a sense of the uptick in housing," said Eklutna CEO Curtis McQueen. "Thirty percent of people moving into our area are military."

Military spending is always a factor here. Plus, though Eagle River and Alaska as a whole didn't get hammered by the recession as hard as Outside, business dropped off as banks tightened down on lending.

A recent briefing from Wells Fargo on national lending indicated that "things are loosening up at the bank level," said Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce executive director Susie Gorski.

Walgreens plans to open its new store by summer, a corporate spokesman said. The pharmacy with an "As Seen on TV" section will sit at the former Holiday gas station site, at the intersection of the Old Glenn and Eagle River Loop Road. Spokesman Robert Elfinger said Walgreens expects to hire 25 to 30 part- and full-time employees.

Walgreens already operates five stores in Anchorage and one in Wasilla. So why Eagle River?

"We look for the best corner locations to build stores," Elfinger said. "We look at a whole host of things that go into planning a store. We look at vehicular and pedestrian travel, the demographics of a community when deciding if we have a good location."

AutoZone plans to open a 6,000-square-foot store in mid-April, according to corporate spokesman Ray Pohlman, based in Memphis. That store will sit along the Old Glenn at the former location of Aztec's restaurant and Everything Under the Midnight Sun thrift store.

The store "will probably employ 10 to 12 what we call AutoZoners," Pohlman said. About 30 percent of them will be part-time employees.

As the two national chains ready for opening, a number of housing developments are coming together around town.

Cook Inlet Housing Authority plans to start construction on a new senior housing complex at the Coronado Park project on Coronado Road.

The Authority is building 56 one- and two-bedroom units for rent to seniors, according to spokeswoman Sezy Gerow-Hanson. Some will come with garages. The units will be a mix of affordable rentals -- for households at 60 percent of the median local income or below -- and market-rate units. Rents for a one-bedroom with no garage will range from \$710 to \$935, Gerow-Hanson said.

The whole thing will be powered by a solar-thermal system, making it the largest alternative energy system in a residential building in Alaska, she said. The system will provide more than half the energy to heat hot water for domestic use. Contractor Neeser Construction expects to break ground in April and finish work next year.

Along with the senior housing, private developer The Petersen Group plans to break ground soon on duplex-style condominiums for sale, Gerow-Hanson said. Peterson will also be developing tri- and fourplexes in a townhouse style on the parcel.

When news of the Coronado development broke in 2010, community members voiced concerns about traffic problems and emergency vehicle access.

CIHA is creating a "microsite" on its Web site so the community can track progress, Gerow-Hanson said. "We're always open to dialogue from the community."

Eklutna Inc. -- the largest private landowner in Anchorage -- is also gearing up for hopping season of residential construction in Eagle River.

Eklutna developed Powder Ridge, the 400-lot subdivision known for its homes in the \$400,000-\$600,000 range. The last of those lots are being sold now -- about 44 -- with 25 pre-selected by builders, according to McQueen.

In the works: a 1560-home master plan for Powder Reserve, with lots to be sold over the next 10 to 15 years. Plans include leaving an existing beaver pond for greenspace, but also using six concrete pads along the North Eagle River Access for future development into shops and maybe a community hall. There's also an identified school site in the area.

But instead of the higher-end homes of Powder Ridge sitting on roomy parcels, these homes will fall in the high \$200,000 to low \$300,000 range and sit on smaller lots, McQueen said.

"What you'll see in 2013 and mainly 2014 is Eklutna having two product lines where traditionally we only had one," he said.

Eklutna also owns a commercial parcel across from the Fred Meyer store it filled last summer. The "Eklutna Plaza" site will house Eklutna's headquarters but plans also call for commercial, office, or retail development.

Walgreens actually poked around on that property two years ago but it wasn't cleared, filled and ready, McQueen said. It is now, and Eklutna is in early conversation with potential opportunities, as the CEO put it.

"Maybe add an additional strip mall or box store that might fit Eagle River," he said.