

Gas station going

Chevron Food Mart will make way for Walgreens store at Pines, Sprague

By Melodie Little
Staff writer

Motorists looking to fill up their tanks and grab a quick car wash in recent days have been surprised to find that the Chevron Food Mart at Pines and Sprague has closed.

The mini-mart closed on Labor Day weekend to make way for a new full-service Walgreens Drug Store. It will replace the existing Walgreens RxPress Pharmacy across the street.

Walgreens bought the Chevron property for \$2 million. The company is in the process of purchasing the adjacent Taco Time building and property in a sale expected to close next week, said Scott Grainger of S.E. Grainger Development Group, a Bellevue-based company that oversees the building of Walgreens stores in the Northwest.

Construction of the new store is expected to begin

within two months and will be completed in about five months. The express store will vacate its leased building when it moves into the larger building across the street.

Tentative plans include renovating the Taco Time building, which Walgreens may then lease back to the operators of the restaurant, or to another restaurant, Grainger said.

Rob Tee, pharmacist and manager of the Walgreens RxPress, said the move will allow the store to expand from a pharmacy with limited retail capacity to a full-scale retailer. The 14,000-square-foot store will offer a mix of gifts, cosmetics, food items, housewares, health products and one-hour photo developing services, in addition to the drive-through pharmacy with two windows.

Walgreens is a national chain with more than 4,000 stores, including eight in the Spokane area, one in Coeur d'Alene and another opening in Post Falls. The chain used Spokane as a test market for the smaller express stores, Tee said. "Walgreens is trying to phase out the express stores because they don't offer the full selection of what we carry," he said.

Dick and Don Douglas owned the Chevron Food Mart,



A gas pump stripped of cover, pumps and power stands Tuesday at the closed Chevron on the corner of Pines and Sprague in Spokane Valley.

which they purchased eight years ago from Chevron Corporation. Although the father-son business team still owns two Chevrons, one in Liberty Lake and one in Spokane, Dick Douglas said fierce competition from companies like Safeway and Costco is making it tough for independent stations to stay afloat.

Douglas put the station up for sale two years ago. Sitting at the intersection of two of the Valley's busiest streets, the property sees heavy traffic and caught the attention of Walgreens representatives. "It's been a two-year negotiation," he said. "Big deals like that take time."