

## Local safeguards needed in Title 21

As some of you may know, Eagle-River Chugiak is expected to grow by about 20,000 people over the next 20 years; that's a thousand people per year. This level of growth is going to have profound impacts on the way we live here.

Right now, on-going this summer, a Community Advisory Committee is working to revise the Comprehensive Plan for Chugiak-Eagle River. This document is referenced in the new Title 21 as the master guide for development of our area.

Representatives from the community councils, Parks and Recreation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Road Board and Eklutna Corporation have been going through the 1993 document line by line in a public meeting format under the guidance of two representatives from the municipality's Community Planning Department. I have been fortunate to have participated in the last three weekly meetings.

But what I have discovered these last three meetings is that we are not going to be able to direct the course of development in our area as we see fit. Even though the new Title 21 is in a draft form and not finalized, Community Planning is not allowing us to create the master document for our area that differs from the Title 21 draft. Case in point:

From where I sat it was apparent that efforts to have open space as a requirement in single family subdivision developments have been diverted by the municipality staff. Language will apparently be adopted by the staff without the consensus of the committee or the vote of the majority.

Chapter 8 of the Title 21 draft uses the word "should" three times in its preface to subdivision design when referring to "open space." There is no requirement for "open space" in the Title 21 draft for single family subdivisions, and there will not be any in The Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan unless the language is changed.

Public open space must be acquired from developers with public funds, rely on donations or the good will of developers. Public funds for the acquisition of open space in new subdivisions is just not readily available. What was made perfectly clear was that the municipality was not in step with the community, but with the developers, and that they have no intention of altering Title 21 to fit our community. What we can expect is Anchorage Bowl type development in Chugiak-Eagle River.

Where does this leave us then? First, Title 21 is not finalized, and we have strong representation in the Anchorage Assembly with Anna Fairclough and Debbie Ossiander. Second, the Comprehensive Plan update for our area has not yet been completed, although, as I've stated, I believe the process is largely marred by the preconceptions of the municipality staff who are guiding the process. I understand that Girdwood is being treated completely differently and that they are handling their own development. This is exactly what we need in Chugiak-Eagle River. We cannot allow the Anchorage Bowl to

dictate the terms and conditions of our development. If we do, if we have not learned anything from the way Anchorage has done it, then we will end up just like that.

Chugiak-Eagle River needs to come together and take charge of its own affairs. We certainly have the expertise in our community to create a Comprehensive Plan without the dictates of the municipality's planning and zoning department.

The Anchorage borough is not going to give us independence, but our representatives in government can take action to allow us to do what's best for our community and neighborhoods. How about our own Community Planning Board? How about a Chugiak-Eagle River Section in Title 21?

The next public meeting on the Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan is scheduled to take place 6 p.m. today in the Municipal Meeting Room in Valley River Center.

Andrew Brewer represents South Fork Community Council on the Community Advisory Committee for the Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan.

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