

## Large subdivision could bring more than 2,000 to the Mat-Su

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WASILLA (AP) - A subdivision more than 20 years in the planning is poised to be launched outside of Wasilla that could bring 2,000 new residents to the fast-growing area north of Anchorage.

The nearly 1,000-acre development, called The Ranch, is sandwiched between the Parks Highway and Palmer Hay Flats.

If owner Rex Turner is able to connect the land to Wasilla's water system and Palmer's sewer lines, that number of residents could dramatically increase.

Borough officials are working with the developer to figure out how to serve the area with the new classrooms, road access and utilities it will need.

"It's actually, on one hand, pretty exciting. On the other, I won't say scary, but challenging to be able to cope with that," said Murph O'Brien, planning director for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Borough public works director Don Shiesl said The Ranch and accompanying development could be like a new, small town sprouting along the Parks and Glenn highways.

"What it is is a new community in the making, a new small city," he said. Turner said he hopes construction of the first homes will begin this summer, Turner Co. marketing director Gary Gearhart said. The first phase of the subdivision includes 108 homes.

Work on the next round of houses on 84 lots may begin as early as next year.

People living in surrounding subdivisions have told the borough they're worried about the large subdivision clogging their roads, said Paul Hulbert, borough platting officer.

Gearhart said such complaints are inevitable. People may have moved to the Valley for wide-open spaces, he said, but a lot of those spaces belong to somebody and may one day be developed.

For now, one of the only ways to get to The Ranch is through Garden Terrace, an older subdivision off of Fairview Loop. At his home last week, Garden Terrace resident Avery Clark said just about every other garage or driveway in the neighborhood holds a four-wheeler or motorcycle. The land The Ranch is planned for has been a favorite spot for zooming off-road and blasting clay pigeons, he said.

Clark moved from Eagle River when it got too crowded, he said, and lately he's seen traffic grow on the roads near his house.

"I don't give it too much longer and we'll be moving farther out of town," he said.

Just how large The Ranch will be is unclear. Count on at least 650 homes, probably more, Gearhart said.

He has told the Mat-Su Borough School District to expect more like 1,200 to 1,500 new homes, spokeswoman Kim Floyd said. The borough will likely try to use bonds to pay for a school in the area. The state would then reimburse about 70 percent of the costs.

Whether the developer can carve The Ranch subdivision into smaller lots and increase the number of homes depends partly on the availability of utilities.

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