

Aasgutú Hít



Central view to downtown Juneau

Aasgutú Hít (*"House in the Woods"*) will start construction in late May of 2024. The development features six high-end residential units, sold as condominiums and managed through a homeowner's association. The combination of site, building features, and amenities will set a new standard for shared housing in Juneau.

The project is located on waterfront property near Lawson Creek along Douglas Highway. Four waterfront lots have been replatted into a single lot with 250' of water frontage, and 210' in depth; including a tideland accretion which extends the property into the grassy high tide areas. This beautiful waterfront setting is peaceful yet convenient, featuring unobstructed views of downtown Juneau, the harbor, and Mt. Juneau.

Property Details: The upper property has a relatively level portion along Douglas Highway, then slopes steeply down toward the beach. The sloped part is heavily forested, with mature spruce and hemlock trees. A flat pad at the base of the forested slope is where the housing will be built.

The pad was built years ago by a previous owner, including a "sea wall" of large, stacked rock generally following the high tide line. The buildable pad area is at elevation 28', above the FEMA 25' flood elevation designation. This area includes a few sizable spruce and alder trees at the site boundaries, with a small creek along the NW site edge. Outboard of the sea wall is a grassy alluvial fan formed by Lawson Creek, creating a significant and attractive bird habitat area.

Development: The property will be developed with a three-story residential complex with elevator access built on the lower pad. Each housing unit totals 1,500 square feet of enclosed space, with a private deck and shared exterior stairway. Five of the condominiums are identical two-bedroom, two-bath units, mirrored on the centerline. The sixth residential unit, on the ground floor, has a slightly smaller entry space, allowing a shared elevator lobby space for residents to access the exterior and beach.

Access and parking are the most challenging aspects of the project development, given the steeply sloped site. To solve this, the parking garage is conveniently located along the highway. Six parking spots are provided in a secure, heated garage, one designated for each unit. Three additional spots for visitors are provided at the exterior, with one covered to provide ADA drop-off, mail, emergency, and service access.

The enclosed garage area will include private storage areas for residents and EV charging. The covered entry area includes concealed garbage and recycle bins, and mail area.

Access to the housing units from the covered entry is provided by a covered pedestrian bridge extending out from the garage, with access controlled by a locked gate. This flat walkway spans 50' through the trees, until it reaches the enclosed elevator and lobby, which links to the units below. An exterior covered stair also adjoins the elevator at all levels, allowing safe egress up or down.

Design Features: The design will provide high-quality living units on a single level, with a balanced focus on amenities, accessibility, energy efficiency, and reduced maintenance. Accessibility and beauty are seamlessly integrated as complimentary and indivisible, creating uplifting spaces which are also barrier-free. Housing units provide Owners the option to age in place without extra constraints by eliminating stairs, tight access routes, and bathroom hazards.

The elevator serving the building is full hotel scale, allowing easy movement of large items and emergency access. The elevator will provide private elevator use to each unit, along with access to a shared lobby at the lowest floor of the building, providing access to the exterior pathway to the grasslands and garden space.

The exterior and interior design reflects traditional Native influences with an emphasis on exposed heavy timber structure, using cedar, spruce, and fir. The building, inside and out, is detailed with a focus on large vertical wood elements, mirroring the tree setting. Exterior walls between the wood columns and trim will use maintenance-free metal siding, with roofing of EPDM rubber membrane. The roof has a “butterfly” configuration, which slopes to a valley at each side, draining with a ‘rain chain’ to a catchment pond at grade, eliminating gutters and downspouts.



Southeast view, down channel

Ceilings within all units will step up dramatically toward the water view. Primary windows capitalize on the unobstructed channel and mountain views from both the living room and the primary bedroom. The second and third floor units include a private balcony. Units on the first floor include doors to a private terrace.

Efficiency: Energy efficiency and low maintenance construction is emphasized throughout. The building is constructed with highly efficient R-30 walls and R-50 roof. All glazing utilizes fiberglass triple glazing for maximum efficiency and trouble-free operation. Heating is provided by in-floor hydronic heating supplied by air-source heat pumps. Hot water is centrally supplied by air-source heat pumps as well. Ventilation is provided by a heat-recovery fan within each unit. This combination of best practices should give Aasgutú Hít

the lowest energy use per sq.ft. of any housing project in Alaska. For extra security, an automatic fire protection sprinkler system will be provided throughout.

Finishes: The interior of the units will include polished concrete floors, exposed spruce and fir wood beams and posts, and a spruce slat wood ceiling in the kitchen, dining, and living space. All materials will be healthy, with no toxic off-gassing. The primary bath has porcelain tile floors, with a large curb-free shower, sloping to a trench drain. On the top floor, bathroom skylights are provided. Kitchens will include finished wood cabinets and stone countertops, along with an island with raised buffet edge. Appliances reflect best practices for energy, including induction stove tops and ductless washer/dryer combo for laundry.

Acoustics: Great care has been taken to ensure excellent acoustic separation between units. The floor structure includes insulated 2x12 floor joists with plywood upper surface, 10" batt insulation, and a lower sealed layer of 5/8" gypsum wall board. In all areas, an interior finished ceiling is installed below the structural floor, providing more sound buffering. Finally, a 3" concrete slab is placed above the structural framing to provide additional sound deadening.

Site: Site and landscape features will emphasize the special natural setting, enhancing the existing forest environment. New plantings will strengthen the property visual buffers at the east and west sides, with careful use of local indigenous species. No vehicle access to the lower housing development will be constructed, preserving most of surrounding forested site without disruption. A limited number of trees will be cut down for construction of the garage.

An accessible path from the housing will extend to the beach and grass intertidal zone, finishing at a shared wood deck. Portions of the existing rock wall are reconfigured to create a more visually pleasing transition to the beach grasses and tidal areas. At the lower portions of the covered stairwell, an area to store recreational gear such as kayaks will be provided.

Construction and Administrative Details: The project will be constructed by Dawson Construction, Juneau's premier contractor. Construction start-up is anticipated in late May of 2024. The construction period will be about 13 months, with a target move-in date of July, 2025.



Property Development is by Paul Voelckers and Mary Pat Wyatt, with MRV Architects providing design and planning. Construction financing is provided by Northrim Bank.

More detailed information, including architectural and engineering drawings, purchase information, HOA operating agreements, and projected condominium fees can be found through houseinthewoods.net, wyattvoelckers@gmail.com, or by calling Paul at 907-209-1353.

View up-channel to the northwest.