

Converting a Car Wash into a Dental Practice

By MADISON MILLER



Dr. Bradford Allen has owned and operated Allen Dental Group in Eagle River, Alaska for several years. With its location, many patients and families make a long commute from Anchorage to Eagle River for their dental care. To best serve these patients, Dr. Allen opted to convert a conveniently-located car wash into a new practice.



Dr. Allen had already worked with Burkhart on a previous remodel of the Eagle River location, so he felt confident in going forward with a new project.

The new Anchorage location was originally a car wash. It was a unique project to convert a car wash into a dental practice, Equipment Specialist Louis Ullrich said.

He had a *vision* that the huge bay doors would turn into huge windows, and would *shed natural light* throughout the clinic. Dr. Allen and I had worked together on the Eagle River project, so we *spent hours* going over the details of the clinic.

“We meticulously looked at multiple layout floor plan options until we came out with the perfect plan. We looked at where each outlet was placed, where each sink would be in each room, etc.,” Ullrich said. “The attention to detail was quite miraculous. We even laid out multiple rooms so we could measure down to the inch where each cabinet would be placed, the chair would sit, and where each outlet would be.”





The new build offers a spacious waiting area and a large amount of natural light coming from the converted car wash windows.



The seven operatory practice is decked out with top-of-the-line A-dec and Vatech equipment.



The new location is approximately 3,500 square-feet and has seven operatories, making the space comfortable for staff and patients and is filled with top-of-the-line A-dec and Vatech equipment.

The project was not without its challenges, as construction was set to begin shortly after the pandemic started in 2020 in addition to converting a car wash into a dental practice.



With a new build comes new marketing opportunities.

Tips for Tackling a New Practice

It can be incredibly overwhelming for a doctor considering a remodel or new build. To help, Dr. Allen has shared his recommendations.

- Be very clear about your vision for the practice; the experience you want to provide to your patients before even considering a project of this nature.
- Have buy-in from your team. I have such a strong team at our primary location.
- Family support. Personally, having support from my wife was vital; she helped me with decision-making and perspective when stressed.
- Get creative in making your dream a reality — everyone comments on how they never would have guessed the previous use of the building.
- Look for a location that attracts your core patient. For me, it was families — lots of schools, grocery stores, medical, high traffic, and visibility, easy parking.
- Be very clear with your design ideas but enlist the help of a professional interior designer to fine-tune them. You will have to adapt your vision to the available material and budget, but a good team (general, architect, engineers, design team) will be vital in finding alternatives that shine.
- Form a bond early with Burkhardt sales specialists — they are a vital link between you and your contractor when you are busy.
- Work on your branding (logo, colors, design ideas) well in advance so you don't compromise on the important things when you have the pressure to make decisions quickly during construction.
- No amount of planning can prepare for the unknown challenges but do as much planning as you can anyway.
- Have enough cash reserves so you can cover cost overruns when they happen; be prepared to adapt the scope as needed.
- Talk to an owner who has recently expanded their practice or build a building before moving forward as they can give you direct insight into things they would have done differently.
- Form a relationship with your general contractor early on; get to know them by visiting other job sites; interview the superintendent because they will talk to you daily; be adaptable and don't give up on your vision.



Despite this unique challenge, Ullrich said he's satisfied with the end result.

Seeing the *beautiful* clinic and Dr. Allen being satisfied with the finished end product was the *most rewarding*. It is the *niciest* clinic in Anchorage and possibly Alaska.

"Only our Burkhart team could put this all together for him. It turned out great!" Ullrich said.



It's the little things that make a difference — like the water bottle station for staff and patients' convenience or the lab coat with a personalized touch.



“Going from one to two practices is very challenging when it comes to managing systems and communication,” Dr. Allen said. “But, we are developing better and more efficient symptoms between the two offices. It has been fun to see the growth from within the existing team; they have really stepped up and embraced the challenges.”

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