



RIBBON CUTTING—Young Hunter McCann did the honors of cutting the ribbon as the Nome branch of Northrim Bank opened on July 17. Pictured is Assistant Branch Manager John Baker, Joe Schierhorn (Northrim Chairman and CEO), Mike Huston (Northrim President), Dave Karp (Northrim Board of Directors), Drew McCann (Nome Branch Manager) and Paisley McCann.

Northrim Bank opens financial center in Nome

By Anna Lionas

Doors opened Monday, July 17 for Northrim Bank at 306 W. 5th Ave., Suite C across from the courthouse.

The event brought in people from the community and included speeches from Mayor John Handeland, branch manager Drew McCann, Northrim President Mike Huston and Linda Uttech, Director of Facilities Operations.

The speeches culminated in the presentation of a \$10,000 donation to HomePlate, a housing project bringing shelter for unhoused people in Nome.

"One of our major values as a company is investing and building our communities," said Huston. The check was presented to Butch Palmero, Executive Director of Nome Community Center. Palmero thanked the Northrim team for their support. "Your team here has a very good level of professionalism, I'm very impressed," said Palmero.

The event occurred from noon to 3 p.m. and included hand-outs of berry pickers boasting the Northrim logo, a raffle for a Yeti Cooler and drink station with cookies, water, tea and coffee.

"We saw a need in the community and filled it," said Marketing and Communications Kari Skinner. The goal of Northrim is to be flexible and responsive to the community, Skinner said.

At 1 p.m. speeches were held outside beginning with Mayor Handeland. "It's been great to have a bank that has posted business hours and they're open when they say they're open," said Handeland. Mayor Handeland went on to say a choice is always a good thing and competition amongst banks in the area will improve services, opportunities and rates.

Northrim is the third full-service bank in Nome.

In her speech on how she designed the bank Uttech described how Nome's rich history, Native culture and wildlife guided the look of the branch. The photography in the bank is by local artist Bonnie Piscoya-Reynolds and Debbie Schiffer.



WELCOME TO NOME—Mayor John Handeland welcomes Northrim bank to the city of Nome. Northrim presented a \$10,000 check to Nome Community Center for the HomePlate housing project. Pictured is Executive Director of Nome Community Center Butch Palmero, Northrim President Mike Huston, Mayor John Handeland and Branch Manager Drew McCann.

There is also a whale vertebrae carving from carver Fred Nayokpuk.

After the speeches everyone gathered inside to watch the ribbon cutting. It was cut by Drew McCann's son.

Northrim has been present in Nome for a few years. In April 2022 the loan office opened temporarily. After Typhoon Merbok, the state approved a temporary branch to fit customers' needs beyond commercial businesses. That business center opened in December 2022. "We're very glad Northrim stepped in and at that point in time and got authorization for full service," said Handeland in his speech.

"A lot of other banks are closing offices and we're opening offices because we see the opportunities there are in Alaska," said Huston.

"Northrim is a breath of fresh air," said McCann. He's been working as a banker in Nome since 2008. He began his career at Credit Union One then moved on to work at Wells Fargo as their manager for many years. McCann says he left Wells Fargo on his own free will because he wasn't "able to help people the way he wanted."

That's why in March 2022 when Northrim reached out to McCann

about opening a branch in Nome he learned about the company before agreeing to take the new branch. "I wanted to make sure it would serve rural and bush customers as well as Nome," McCann was able to personally hire and train the Northrim team which includes John Baker, Thaddeus Payenna and Ashley Crowe. McCann said he's looking forward to opening up more options to the people of Nome.

"I was with Credit Union One for 30 years, but I was eager to switch to Northrim," said Northrim customer Nancy Green. "Credit Union One would close for lunch and not come back for hours, it was frustrating."

"I've always supported Graphite One and what they're doing in Alaska, but really after my site visit there on Saturday, I'm convinced



HOUSING—The construction of the HomePlate apartments is progressing. Northrim Bank donated \$10,000 toward the project.

• Graphite One

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would truck its partially processed material about 50 miles to Nome. That route would take haul trucks over a proposed industrial access road through Mosquito Pass, and then over about 28 miles of the Kougak Road. From the Port of Nome, the mineral would be shipped to a proposed processing facility in Washington State. That processing facility would begin operations with imported graphite while Graphite One waits to begin its own mining operations.

Politicians rally behind Graphite One

The new grant earned praise from the bipartisan Alaska Delegation—U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan and Representative Mary Peltola—as well as Alaska's Governor Mike Dunleavy.

"Critical minerals like graphite will be key for the inventions of the future, from clean energy to advanced defense technologies, and with this funding, Alaskans can build a crucial link in our nation's supply chains," said Peltola. "This project will also bring needed jobs and economic development to a rural area of Alaska, with opportunities for hundreds of local hires during construction and operation. I look forward to seeing the completion of the feasibility study for this project, and will continue to support the development of our critical mineral resources."

In his own statement, Dunleavy thanked the Department of Defense and the Alaska Delegation, adding that "Alaska is a resource powerhouse in a strategic position globally, with much more to offer than just our beautiful scenery and wildlife."

Earlier this month, Murkowski visited Graphite One's drill site. She returned to Washington with a hunk of graphite to show off as she continues to ask for more federal support for the company's proposed mine.

"I've always supported Graphite One and what they're doing in Alaska, but really after my site visit there on Saturday, I'm convinced

that this is a project that every one of us, those of us here in the Congress, the Biden Administration, all of us needs to support," Murkowski said in a speech on U.S. Senate floor last Tuesday. "This, Mr. President, is a major opportunity for us."

Murkowski noted that she previously expressed disappointment that the Biden administration—specifically the U.S. Department of Energy—offered loans and grants to a graphite-processing plant in Louisiana that imports graphite from Mozambique. The senator said Mozambique has a "poor human rights record" with "significant labor unrest" and is a place where "ISIS is reportedly active."

Critical minerals push

Murkowski has been a leading figure in the recent political push to bring about more domestic mineral extraction and production after decades of relying on offshore operations. She appeared at another event in Washington, D.C. last week to talk about graphite. The Wilson Center think tank hosted a two-day summit called "Critical Minerals in the Arctic: Forging the Path Forward," in which Biden administration officials, politicians, analysts and researchers discussed the strategies and problems involved in building out domestic supply chains in Alaska. Virtual participation was not possible and the few sessions that were livestreamed began at 5 a.m. Alaska time.

During one panel, Duncan Wood, the Wilson Center's vice president for strategy and new initiatives, identified three main factors that he said have brought a more intensive focus on critical minerals.

"The first one is what I like to call the shift from value to values in our supply chain thinking," Wood said. "We used to think, 'Well listen, if it's dirty, if it's low value-add, let's just make it where it's cheapest. If we can save five cents on the widget, then let's put it across the other side of the Pacific Ocean, because that brings down the price for everybody."

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