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# Rainier Automotive sells its dealerships

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Rainier Automotive Group, with dealerships in Auburn, Burien and Kirkland, is selling out, an apparent victim of the recession that has battered auto dealerships across the nation.

Of the Burien-based company's four dealerships, two have pending sales, according to people involved with the deals.

In one of the pending sales, **Ford of Kirkland** is completing a deal to buy the **Eastside Hyundai** dealership in Kirkland, said Ford of Kirkland owner Jim Walen.

In the other pending sale, **Eastside Subaru** of Kirkland is being sold to Bruce Titus Nissan of Olympia, said Mark Johnson, whose company is advising Rainier Automotive Group on the dealership sales.

Johnson — president of MD Johnson Inc., which advises auto dealerships on mergers and acquisitions — said the other two Rainier Automotive Group dealerships are for sale. Those dealerships are Auburn Nissan and Burien Nissan.

Messages with owners and managers of Rainer Automotive were not immediately returned.

Walen, who has the pending acquisition of Eastside Hyundai, said he was excited to be acquiring the dealership, despite the recession, which has led to a rash of dealership closures. He said he hopes to close on the deal later this week.

He said that AAA just came out with its list of the 13 most sporty cars by price range, and five of the 13 were either Ford or Hyundai.

With the Hyundai acquisition, Walen will have two dealerships. Eventually he wants to own more.

David Gjersee, who is a sales coordinator and "jack of all trades" at the Burien Nissan dealership, said that the store was closing. He said that sales have been bad for a while, and the last straw was when Nissan took away the dealership's inventory.

Gjersee was matter of fact about the closure, despite the fact that his father started Burien Datsun at the same location in 1969 before selling it in the 1980s.

"It is what it is," Gjersee said. "What else can you do?"

