

**New Allstate Agency Opens**



African-American businessman and church leader Vernon Norris has opened an Allstate Insurance agency at 2435 N. Lombard St., just four blocks east of the Walgreens drug store.

"My staff and I are excited about opening for business," Norris says. "This will be a full service insurance agency, offering a complete line of insurance products and services."

Norris comes to Allstate with several years of insurance agency ownership and business experience. A resident of north and northeast Portland for the past 40 plus years, he has the advantage of knowing the area and makes it a point to get to know his clients so that they get the coverage they need.

Norris is an assistant pastor and director of a teen outreach ministry that focuses on giving youth positive guidance and direction as they seek to find themselves.

His agency will sell auto, property, commercial and life insurance

# MIXED blessings



Earl's Barbershop proprietor Earl Clark operates one of the few long-time community-owned businesses on Northeast Alberta Street.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

continued from Front

that picture."

Comparing this phenomenon on Alberta to that on Boise-Elliot is not a stretch.

Between hipster coffee shops and upscale boutiques, only a few of Alberta's long-time community owned and operated businesses remain. Earl's Barbershop on Northeast 17th and Alberta is one of them.

Earl Clark, the barbershop's proprietor, has been lucky. He's been in business on Alberta Street for 10 years, long enough to see most of the other businesses that were around when he set up shop out of business altogether.

The exit of old businesses is often blamed on the skyrocketing rental prices. The good side, according to Clark, is that the new development has driven away gangs and brought more business

and neighborhood activities to the area.

"They enjoy it," Clark says of area residents. "There's stuff going on."

However, the disproportionate number of white business owners

owned businesses off Alberta, but also residents, many of whom have moved due to rising rents, while more middle class people move in to enjoy the rising commerce.

One area resident, Nicole Hess, was happy with the new develop-

According to statistics on [www.movingtoportland.net](http://www.movingtoportland.net), housing costs in north and northeast Portland have risen 18 percent from 2001 to 2003 alone—faster than any other part of the city. The rising costs of housing force renters out

*"I go to the video store, the coffee shop, the bar, the breakfast place, and I see no black people working in these establishments. There's something wrong with that picture."*

—Charles Santos, an organizer with Reclaiming Our Origins Through Struggle (ROOTS)

flooding the area disappoints Clark, who complains that there's "not enough black businesses around here."

The rising value of the neighborhood is not only pushing locally-

ments at first, but now she isn't so sure.

"I think it is pushing all the people who used to live here out," Hess said.

The numbers agree with her.

of the area, and renters make up a large percentage of households in these inner-city neighborhoods.

In the Boise neighborhood, for example, 59 percent of households are renters according to the 2000

census. And because in Portland, as in the rest of the United States, minority home ownership still lags behind, it is primarily ethnic minorities that are being pushed out, and disproportionately whites benefit.

But the development of Alberta is just a small part of a much larger picture.

Since the 1948 flooding of Vanport, a small community of shipyard workers near what is now North Portland, displaced about 5,000 African-American working poor, the city of Portland has repeatedly red-lined and segregated poor communities and communities of color.

Until the 1990s, many people were segregated in certain areas based on race or class alone, creating ghettoized sections of town.

Meanwhile, projects such as I-5, the Memorial Coliseum and Emanuel Hospital displaced centers of African-American commerce within areas of town, taking power away from this community and pushing it farther towards the outskirts of town.

Clearly, Alberta Street development has not occurred in a vacuum. Although the changes on Alberta have been dubbed "gentle gentrification" for its positive attributes, there are less gentle patterns that threaten to repeat themselves.

## NEW SEASONS MARKET

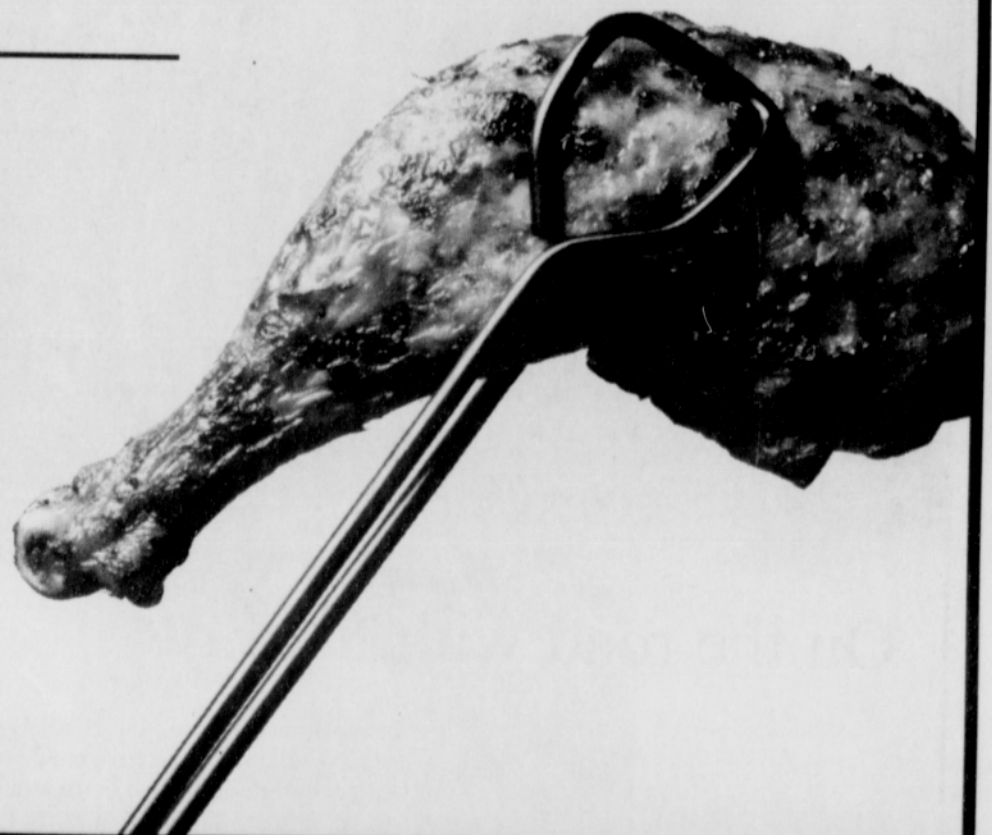
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