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PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON JR./THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Longtime Northeast Alberta Street business owner Roslyn Hill (left) of the Tin Shed Garden Café, and Sara Wittenberg, executive director of the Alberta Main Street organization, promote a new African American legacy markers project.

## Alberta Main Street markers to honor black community

BY CHRISTA MCINTYRE  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A history markers project to recognize and celebrate the contributions of African Americans in Portland and on Northeast Alberta Street in particular has taken shape as a local business and community group tries to rebuild fractioned relationships and work together to strengthen a diverse city.

Alberta Street is ground zero for a Portland community that has been transformed by an influx of new commercial and residential investments over the past two decades, but one that has also left many people behind, especially for members of the black community and other disadvantaged residents.

Sara Wittenberg, the executive direc-

# Rebuilding Trust

tor of Alberta Main Street, is leading an organization that promotes a vibrant and creative but also equitable community.

"Too often, I hear accounts from longtime African American residents that Alberta Street doesn't feel like home anymore or that they don't feel welcome on the street. I understand that this project on its own can't reverse decades of discrimination and disinvestment. But, I hope it is a step in the right direction and that over time we can begin to rebuild fractured re-

lationships and collectively work together to strengthen our community," Wittenberg said.

She acknowledges that promises for inclusion have been heard before by the black community.

"There are skeptics and we want to hear that," Wittenberg said. "But we want to do this project right. We want to do it better."

Last month, Alberta Main Street announced a contest to collect stories for historical markers which will be added to

the street to document the history of the African American community.

These won't be your typical bronze plaques with a name and a date. Winners will work closely with artists to create permanent markers, which could be anything from a sculpture or a mosaic in the sidewalk. The goal is also to have African American artists and fabricators involved in the work, as well.

The Alberta Main Street Legacy Project was developed to celebrate the deep roots of the neighborhood and create spaces which bring the stories and history to life.

Last year the group kicked off a community check-in called "Honoring Our Past, Planning Our Future." During the gatherings, many historically under-served and under-represented stakeholders shared that they have not benefited from the changes on Alberta Street.

Kenya Budd, who works on equity and

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