

Home

cont'd from pg 1

neighborhood could receive up to three points; people with parents or grandparents who had lived in the neighborhood could receive additional points, for a total of six possible points.

Battles, a SummerWorks coordinator for Multnomah County, received all six points, placing him high on

also be “mortgage-ready” within a certain time frame, and must make up to 60 percent of the area median income.

The first rollout was in May of last year, when the Portland Housing Bureau allocated \$5 million in funding for homeownership assistance for first-time homebuyers. Some went to down

“The preference policy is an attempt to correct decades of urban renewal policy

the priority list for the homeownership assistance through the program.

This summer he bought his first house at North Chataqua and Willis, three blocks from where his mother grew up and across the street from Rollins’ grandfather’s former house.

“I was a Northeast Portland kid,” Battles said. He was part of the first class to attend De La Salle North Catholic High School, and had gone to Holy Redeemer and Woodlawn Elementary Schools. One grandmother lived at the intersection of North Rodney and Killingsworth; the other lived at the intersection of Northeast 12th and Stanton.

‘There was no mold that I had to fit into’

The preference policy is an attempt to correct decades of urban renewal policy, as well as a more recent rapid wave of gentrification that displaced Black families in Northeast Portland. Recent census figures show about 20 percent of residents of inner northeast Portland identify as Black, as compared to 50 percent in the 1980s.

The policy gives priority to African Americans who have been displaced or are at risk of displacement, or whose parents or grandparents were displaced by eminent domain programs. Prospective homebuyers must

payment assistance — administered through the African American Alliance for Homeownership, Proud Ground, Habitat for Humanity, the Native American Youth and Family Center and Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives — and some went to funding for new development, according to housing bureau spokesperson Martha Calhoon.

Battles was one in a group of 65 people to become eligible for homeownership assistance through the program. He went to AAAH’s homeownership fair in 2016 and went on a bus tour of eight houses listed for sale.

“The funny thing is, of the eight houses, the one house I decided not to get out and look at, that was the house we bought,” Battles said.

He was reluctant because it was being offered through a model where a nonprofit organization would own the lot, while he would own the house — a model that made him uncomfortable.

After discussing it with staff at AAAH, he was reassured they would find an arrangement that worked for him — and they did. Battles moved into his new home in July.

Battles attributes his success to culturally specific services he received through AAAH.

Read the rest of this story at TheSkanner.com

Reo’s

cont'd from pg 1

scene witness interview with someone who said she saw a group of Black juveniles running from the scene of the fire. That report concludes the fire was caused by an ember left burning in the barbecue pit.

In an interview with *The Skanner* Tuesday, Varnado expressed skepticism of the official account. He said he’d been assaulted twice at the restaurant and received a threat to the property itself. Varnado, who opened his first restaurant in Portland in 1999 and has relocated four times, was in 2010 the target of neighbors’ complaints about the smell of the smoke at a southwest Portland location.

Girod also expressed skepticism of

the report’s finding. But she and Varnado also said they’re eager to get back to work, and to put their employees — who have been out of work for several

“I’d like to see everybody come, enjoy themselves, talk and make new friends

months — back to work as well. Landlord Leon Drennan, who has owned the building since 2001, raised \$3,030 through a crowdfunding campaign to help support the couple financially

during the months their business has been closed.

“It’s a unique place because it’s like going to your grandma’s kitchen. It’s like going to your family,” Girod said. “It’s a fun place, and nobody cooks like Reo.”

Varnado said the restaurant, which seats about 20, is also a community gathering space, and he’s looking forward to seeing community members get together again.

“I’d like to see everybody come, enjoy themselves, talk and make new friends. This world would be a better place if people would just talk to each other,” Varnado said.

DanceAbility and UO Dance Present ‘Spectrum’

DanceAbility International, directed by Alito Alessi, and University of Oregon senior dance majors, directed by Shannon Mockli, will co-produce a collaborative concert, “Spectrum” at 7 p.m. Dec. 7 at the Dougherty Dance Theater in Gerlinger Annex at the UO Campus in Eugene. Admission is free. DanceAbility International is a local dance company that focuses on bringing people of all abilities and disabilities together through dance and movement. The senior undergraduate dance majors have been studying the DanceAbility method this term alongside community dancers with disabilities. Pictured here are Ruth, a community member and wheelchair user who has been participating in the UO dance class which Alessi has been guest teaching. Ruth contracted polio at age three and grew up in an institution in Cameroon; when she was released, she became an activist for disability issues and women’s rights. She arrived in the United States seven months ago. For more information about the upcoming performance, visit www.danceability.com.

PHOTO BY HAILEY BAYLIS



PAALF

cont'd from pg 1

event will take place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday at 4222 NE 12th Ave.

Along with celebrating the hard work that went into the plan, the PAALF will also present its key vision statements concerning areas of justice, housing, arts and culture, education and more.

“If Portland loved Black people it would be the best city it pretends to be

“All too often we get asked to come to the table after the discussion has already been made,” PAALF executive director, Joy Alise Davis, told *The Skanner*. “It feels very reactive, and we wanted a more proactive way of shaping our city.”

Davis explained how traditional planning models can often intimidate community members with technical language and complex processes.

So instead, the PAALF designed the People’s Plan to empower Portland’s African American citizens on their terms. That way the solutions are informed by the people they affect.

To gather the collective data, the

PAALF’s team hosted 16 events around the city back in 2015 — from traditional committee meetings to happy hours, meetups and dance parties — where they surveyed African Americans on their experience of living in Portland.

They were asked to actively weigh in on what they want in a thriving, resilient Black community — and how to get it.

The survey was broken down into five questions:

- If Portland was a utopia, what would the African and African American community look like?
- What does the current African and African American community look like?
- How do we get to utopia?
- If you had to pick three priorities for the People’s Plan to focus on, what would they be?
- Where can you be Black in Portland?

Among the responses across all questions were: “If PDX was a utopia, Black community looks like me and you as family. Always looking out for each other...” “Youth are valued and respected — and elders are honored and revered...” and “If Portland loved Black people it would be the best city it pretends to be...”

The leadership forum then spent the next two years writing and editing the plan, as well as internally restructuring its organization.

The PAALF worked with grad students and colleagues at Portland State — including Lisa Bates, director of the Center for Urban Studies, who Davis called “the brainchild behind the project” — to apply an urban lens while sifting through the research.

Each topic area — housing, health, justice, for example — has its own chapter within the plan, where it’s then broken down into ‘the vision,’ ‘the problem,’ ‘advocacy and action’ and ‘emerging ideas,’ based on responses from the Black public.

The end result is a “data-driven document for people to take to neighborhood association meetings, which typically tend to be White spaces,” said Davis, who added that the document itself reads as a point-to guide to identify problem areas and their proposed solutions.

As an extension of the project, the PAALF is currently meeting with various bureaus and departments, including the Portland Bureau of Transportation, to find out how their programs or services might align with putting the People’s Plan into action.

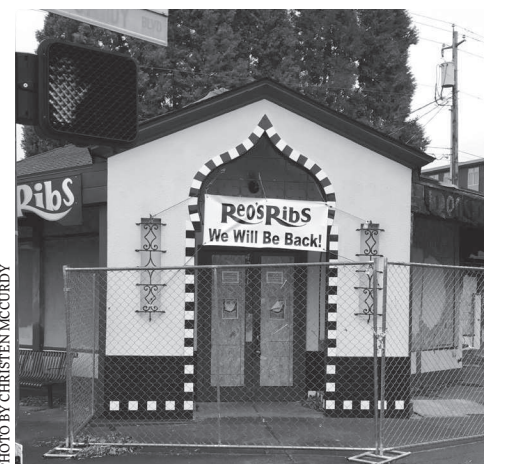


PHOTO BY CHRISTEN MCCURDY

The owners of Reo’s Ribs have announced the restaurant will reopen soon, although they did not have an exact date.