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ISSUE 03

DECEMBER 2018



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The Spenardian is a hyperlocal magazine for the neighborhood of Spenard that is published three times a year. In addition to the current events and news of Spenard, The Spenardian features stories about food, culture, arts and entertainment, history and profiles of the neighborhood's businesses and inhabitants.

— STAFF —



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EDITOR IN CHIEF

Victoria Petersen made a career move to the Peninsula, but she drives by Spenard Builder's Supply every day, and she's still Spenardian by blood. As a fourth generation Spenardian, Petersen is passionate about her community, even from afar.



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Sam Davenport is a freelance writer in Anchorage with plans to graduate in December. You'll usually find her eating chicken pad Thai at Pho Lena in her favorite baseball tee.



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Young Kim is a freelance photographer living in Anchorage, Alaska. He enjoys grilling steaks while relaxing at the lake on sunny days, coaching high school football and green teas with a hint of citrus.

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In the Beginning: The Northern Lights Center



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**WORDS BY VICTORIA PETERSEN
PHOTO BY YOUNG KIM**

The Northern Lights Center strip mall is home to many Spenard mainstays. Middle Way Cafe, Title Wave Books and Kaladi Brothers Coffee have been storefront neighbors for some time now. Big name retailers and trendy restaurants, like REI Co-op, Hearth Artisan Pizza and a revolving sushi bar, bring people from the far reaches of the Anchorage bowl to what some say is the heart of Spenard.

The iconic Northern Lights Center strip mall was developed by former Alaska Governor Wally Hickel in 1960. Anchorage's first escalator was built inside the Caribou Department store shortly after the strip mall was built. Hickel Investment Co. owned the property until 2006. Now, Mush Inn Corp. and Yoo Jin Management Co. Ltd. are equal owners of the strip mall.

Title Wave Books has been in the mall since 2002. Angela Libal, current owner who has been working at the bookstore for 20 years, said the move to the Spenard mall made quite a splash. Their former location was on Fireweed Lane, behind Chilkoot Charlie's, in what is now the Pack Rat Antique Mall. Libal said the bookstore went from having to own a 12,000 square foot building to leasing a 35,000 square foot space in the Northern Lights Center.

"[Governor] Wally Hickel and his wife Ermalee were even frequent customers to the mall," Libal said. "This new space was

an amazing opportunity for us to finally have the chance to do and try many of the things our customers had asked for, like carrying gifts and hosting events. We were able to expand sections in the store, and grow as a company."

Libal took over Title Wave Books in 2017 after former owners, Julie Drake and Steve Lloyd sold Libal, their employee at the time, the used bookstore. When Libal took over at the beginning of 2017, she knew the rent would be raised at the end of Title Wave's lease in May of that year.

Libal considered moving the bookstore.

"We explored moving, working with a commercial real estate agent looking at all kinds of spots in Midtown, and even South Anchorage," Libal said. "Yet Spenard, with all of its quirks and charms, remains our home."

Ultimately, Libal decided to keep Title Wave in its Spenard home.

"We decided on staying put, and re-working our space to better suit our needs for the next 15 years and beyond," Libal said. "We gave up under-utilized square footage, about 10,000 square feet and still having 24,000 square feet to play with. We reworked the flow."

Libal has seen the mall and Spenard change over the last 20 years. At one point, the center housed an oriental rug store, a laser tag shop and Marty's New York Bagel Company. No

more Johnson's Tire Service in the parking lot. Now there's a Starbucks and a Walgreens. Yak and Yeti moved in. La Bodega and Hearth Artisan Pizza opened their doors. Great Clips and Today's Nails moved in on the west side and Natural Yogurt Selections opened this fall, Libal said.

"Even in a couple block's radius, there have been major changes," she said. "Nearly all for the positive. It feels great to be surrounded by all of the other small, locally-owned shops popping up all around us. Bambino's, Hoarding Marmot, Dos Manos and The Clothesline Consignment Shop. I'd like to think that having Title Wave Books in the neighborhood is why that's possible."

While Title Wave decided to stay, some store owners felt the need for a change of scenery, but not a change in the neighborhood. Grassroots Fair Trade sat by Kaladi Brothers Coffee from October of 2008 to March of 2017. They decided to leave the mall and venture across Northern Lights Boulevard to what co-owner, Liz Dean, describes as a cozy and wonderful new location next to Dos Manos and the Bead Shack.

REI Co-op, one of the center's main retailers is moving out soon, too. This summer, they announced they will be taking over space in the Midtown Mall that once housed Carr's grocery store in early 2019.

There has been no confirmation of what will take REI Co-op's space. Spenard will just have to wait and see.

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ENLIGHTEN ALASKA: LOCALS SUPPORTING LOCALS

WORDS BY ZAKIYA MCCUMMINGS
PHOTOS BY YOUNG KIM

In Spenard, being a part of the community has become what sets pot shops apart from the crowd. Enlighten Alaska, a family owned shop run by brother and sister Evan and Leah Levinton, opened its doors in 2017 and has made giving back to the community one of the pillars of their business.

It all began with their Thanksgiving food drive.

“We have so many beautiful, lovely customers and they’re so willing to give, and we thought testing it out by holding a food drive during Thanksgiving time would be a really good time to start,” Leah said.

After the Thanksgiving food drive, the shop continued the season of giving by hosting a clothing drive for Christmas. Both events were successful in allowing Enlighten to give back to their local community.

“It all stems from our values because we want to participate in our community,” Leah said. “It’s a privilege to be where we are, and it’s also an honor to be able to give back to the community because our community is certainly heavily in need.”

December of 2017 marked another milestone for Enlighten as well: the shop’s first ever First Friday. The Levinton family is a family of artists, Leah said, and the idea to host First Fridays was one that came up naturally with an ample amount of wall space in the Enlighten shop.

The shop does not charge a commission to the artists, a decision Evan said stemmed from the belief that it’s Enlighten’s responsibility as a business to give back.

“We’re supporting local,” he explained. “It’s kind of like a collab, too. When they send out things promoting their art, it brings people into our store, too. There’s value in having them just come and bring their own support network.”

The shop’s biggest advantage is its location: Enlighten sits on the corner of the Spenard Center, right across the street from Koot’s and around the corner from Bear Tooth.



“It’s just sort of this hub for hip, progressive open-minded people, and that’s the type of demographic that might be more interested in a First Friday experience,” Leah said. “It’s a whole new involvement in this new industry and helping normalizing it. It’s sort of giving people permission to support us.”

The response has been positive. Customers regularly comment on the rotating artwork and ask about what’s coming next. Local artists have taken notice as well, and Enlighten now has First Fridays booked through February of 2019. And this year, Enlighten will once again host a Thanksgiving food drive and Christmas clothing drive.

“The cannabis industry is becoming more and more competitive. There have to be ways that each individual [shop] stands out,” Leah said. “It truly stems from your values and manifesting your vision. I think people really feel that and see that when they come here.”





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“When I started to think of art that would fit with *The Spenardian*, the first thing I thought of was my first apartment. This was in Spenard, off the airport side of the road. I saw the fire station and the light up post driving or walking every day. I really like the colors of the lights, and how they’re everywhere down Spenard, even closer to the downtown side where I moved! I wanted to make a piece representative of my old apartment and that daily scene, and that’s how we got this.”

— Brook Beveridge



ILLUSTRATION BY BROOK BEVERIDGE

FROM HOMEBREW TO STOREFRONT: ZIP KOMBUCHA IS FIRST OF ITS KIND

WORDS BY SAM DAVENPORT
PHOTOS BY YOUNG KIM

You may have sipped on Ginger Rogers at Double Shovel Cider Co., or bought a growler of your favorite Blueberry Mary kombucha from La Bodega, but Zip Kombucha now has its own brick and mortar in Anchorage's Spenard neighborhood.

Zip Kombucha's storefront officially opened Sept. 23.

"Our grand opening went really well. It was so amazing to see many of our original fans come in and be excited to buy our kombucha again," Jessie Janes, owner of Zip Kombucha, said.

Janes has always dreamt of being an entrepreneur. In high school, he tried to create his own business. During his time in the Army, he had shirts printed and sold them for profit, but none of those ideas kept his attention for very long. Then, he started brewing kombucha.

"I've tried different things to get that entrepreneurial bug out of my system," Janes said. "And this was finally something tangible that I could touch that was, timing wise, in the market... something that you love that's also feasible in the market. Kombucha kind of hit that groove."

Janes began brewing five years ago in a little glass pot in his kitchen with leftover tea him and his ex-wife had purchased for gift baskets. Janes and his ex-wife began the process by developing Zip's logo and creating the name. They put an ad on Craigslist for employees or potential partners, and an engaged couple started working with the pair in February of 2016.

From then on, they hit the ground running and were rolling into production in the spring of 2016. The group had raised \$15,000

from a Kickstarter campaign and found a commercial kitchen they could rent with the equipment they needed to start brewing. But things began to fall apart near the end of the summer. In August of 2016, two partners left the business while Janes and his ex-wife separated and were going through the divorce process — all while trying to negotiate the business.

Months passed until him and his ex-wife decided to sell everything at auction. In October of 2017, Janes purchased the name, recipes, social media and website for Zip Kombucha through the bidding process. Now, it's just him.

"In the back of my mind, I always want to move forward and do something," Janes said.

Today, Janes is canning at the brewery and distributing to New Sagaya Midtown, South Coffeehouse and Pita Pit, to name a few. You can even sip on some Zip at a number of breweries in town.

Zip has had a variety of events in their new space since opening, including a show from the Snow Drifters and "Can Launch Parties." Zip has six kombucha flavors on tap along with a hard cider and five local beers. They have started brewing special, small batch flavors, like pineapple passion fruit and coffee pumpkin. The two most popular flavors, Ginger Rogers and Blueberry Mary, are available in 16-ounce cans in 4-packs in the brewery.

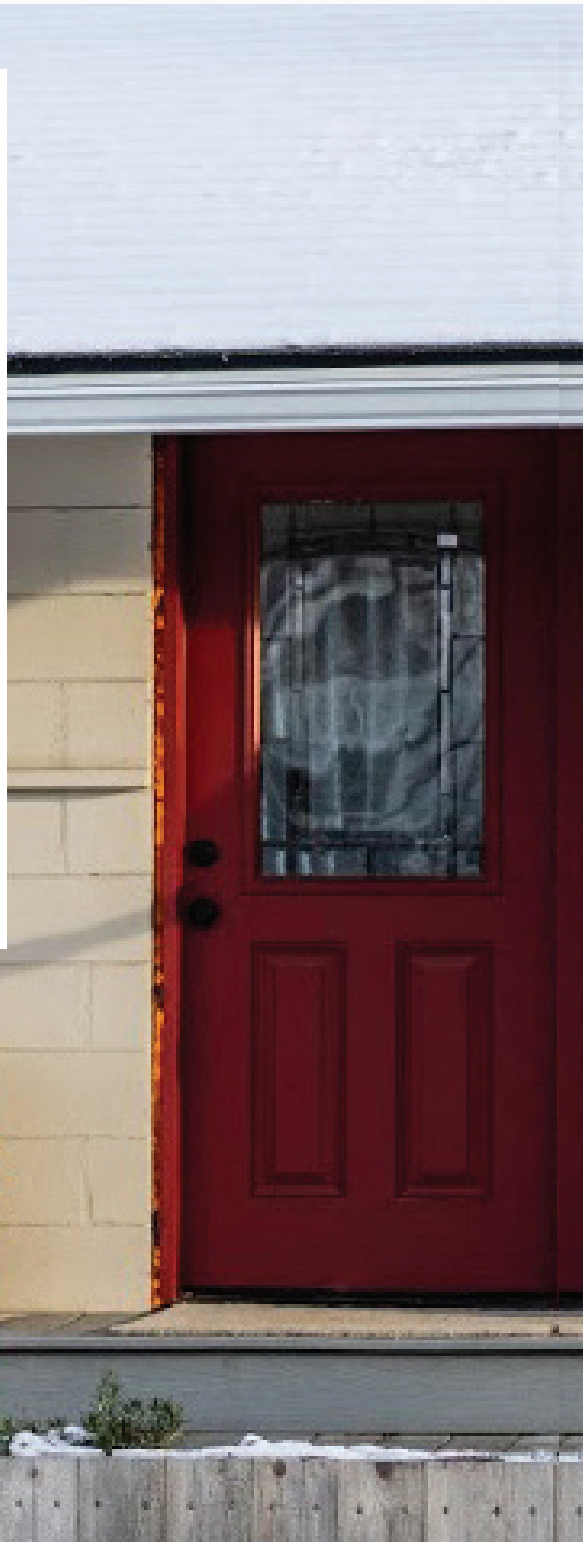
The tasting room also offers food. Janes said he wants people to come in with their friends and family to also enjoy dinner. There are currently no other kombucha breweries in Anchorage. Zip Kombucha is located at 3404 Arctic Blvd.



Walkabout

WORDS BY ANNIE ZAK
PHOTOS BY YOUNG KIM

The mint-colored mobile home
is my favorite to walk past. Refreshing to look at.
I think of old diners and mint-chocolate chip
milkshakes during frigid winter, served in the malt cup.
(The kind of cold that almost burns
to touch, but still you can't take your hand off.)
There's a man with his dog in the road
because there's no sidewalk, the man
on a skateboard and the dog pulling him,
a galloping rapture like there should be snow.
I see him and think of when my brother and I
would fly young down suburban streets,
bicycling helmetless, racing as if
it could get us somewhere else.
I walk past the mobile home park, two men
and two women gathered at a smoky fire pit
at the sidewalk's edge, Budweiser in hand,
a radio playing soft. I think of my mother.
My mother lives in Florida, which is
4,782 miles from Anchorage, which I know
because I looked it up. It is fall but
there are no trees changing color in Florida.





In Spenard, it's real October and there's a gold carpet in the street. In the yard it blends magenta. There's the quonset hut they wanted to make into a shiny pot operation, a spindly woman walking wobbly past it in the morning, plastic bags hanging off each thin arm. I hold my breath for her as if we know each other. Walking, I think about that night we were all at the dive. Halloween, the women soaking in the corner after the wet t-shirt contest. The Hell's Angels were there. How one of us predicted the band was about to play Mustang Sally — those old guy cover bands always do — and then they fucking did. We bought shitty champagne and passed the bottle. I walk faster to slip from view of the van that has circled the block three times now, whose driver keeps looking out the window, who slows to a crawl as he moves past, his exhaust thickening in my nose. On the street next to mine, a house has mannequins on the front deck, positioned with arms up, as if to embrace visitors with a plastic hug. I've never met my neighbors. I am thinking about the pretty way the light hits the mannequins and houses at 6 p.m., making its way through golden leaves like memory. I don't want to be creepy but it's too pretty not to take a picture, so I do, trying to make it look like I am doing something else.



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A TWIST ON A CLASSIC: THE ROYAL OLD FASHIONED

WORDS BY VICTORIA PETERSEN
PHOTOS BY YOUNG KIM & YLLI FERATI

Ylli Ferati, bartender at Spenard's own Fiori D' Italia restaurant, which holds Alaska's largest whiskey collection, offered his royal take on the classic old fashioned cocktail. Ferti said the warm plum notes of Dalmore, alongside the hints of chocolate and orange, "tantalize your taste buds." Sip on this and you're bound to stay warm all winter.

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WORD LIST

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BUCKAROO	PALM TREE
CHURCH OF LOVE	PIGGLY WIGGLY
CITY EXPRESS	SPENARD
KOOTS	WINDMILL

SPENARD VIA NEW YORK: A TRANSPLANT LOVE STORY

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY DARCY STEIN





Seven years ago, I moved here from New York, selling pretty much everything I owned besides some clothes, books and my 12-cup Bodum French Press.

I grew up in a town called Long Beach, which is the most south you can go on Long Island. Basically, my hometown is a tiny island off another larger, longer island. There isn't much to do in Long Beach (which, you guessed correctly, is literally just that: a very long stretch of beach) besides lay around in the sand, jump in and out of the chilly Atlantic Ocean (or surf, but that would have required way too much effort for my teenage self), eat amazing pizza, bagels and Chinese food, and go shopping.

But one thing my hometown does have going for it is it's the last stop on the Long Beach line for the Long Island Railroad. I could get on the train and be in Manhattan in 50-ish minutes. As a teenager, this was a cultural dream come true. Punk shows on school nights, subway rides to obscure places in Brooklyn, 24-hour diners, bars that never carded, 4 a.m. last call, and traipsing around the city that never sleeps in questionable footwear and pretending my heels weren't bleeding all over themselves. Like I said, a dream come true.


Fast forward 10-ish years. My husband and I move from the small yet hip college town of Ithaca, located in the Finger Lakes Region of upstate New York, to Anchorage, Alaska (much to the confusion and disbelief of many family members).

As soon as I arrived, my husband drove me around the city so I could get acquainted. I'm sort of geographically challenged, although I maintain to this day that as a trade off I have the ability to write myself out of a box. Somewhere along the way, my newly found Alaska enthusiasm mixed with my cold, sarcastic New York heart and I decided I would play a little game equating the boroughs of New York City to the neighborhoods of Anchorage.

I decided immediately that Spenard would be Brooklyn. The place everybody secretly, or not so secretly, wanted to live because it was interesting and cool. The neighborhood where the sketchy fourplex at the end of the block with your friendly neighborhood drug dealer living in the ground level apartment coexists peacefully with the nearby Boys & Girls Club, the brand new million-dollar condo in the middle of the block and the prostitute wandering by. A place filled with promise — a unique sort of charm — and an unusual spirit.

After a short stint of living downtown (South Addition would be Manhattan, by the way), my husband and I moved to Spenard. I was enrolled in the Culinary Arts program at UAA at the time and learned many things, among them, surprisingly, was my passionate love for film photography.

I would walk around taking photos of things in the neighborhood that caught my eye. Moody skies, random refrigerators, rusted out cars, the vast array of items left under those handwritten "free" signs, overturned office chairs on the side of the road and all the alleys I could find.



END OF
TRACK



Besides the location factor that most Spenardians appreciate so deeply, I also love this neighborhood for a reason that's very much in line with my massive snowflake complex and intense need to constantly celebrate my uniqueness. Here in Spenard, you can be yourself.

Your lawn can be immaculately manicured, or it can be wildly overgrown, but somehow it all just sort of fits together. You can live in a Seaweed green tiny house with Tibetan prayer flags strung all around, or in a trailer, or have chickens, or drive a Range Rover that you park in front of your three car garage. You can walk your rescue dog from Bethel in the middle of the day while enmeshed in all clothing items Lululemon and wave hello to your neighbor in their Seahawks pajama pants taking their cat for a stroll, all the while paying careful attention not to step on a discarded needle. Or, in my case, you can be kneeling down in the middle of the street to take a shot of a very intriguing reflection with your film camera from 1975 and only get interrupted once to hear a story from a very nice older man about how he used to shoot film back in the day.

He tells you to keep film alive for all of us and then he drives off. You take your shot and nail it. Yes, Spenard is the type of neighborhood with an unusual spirit that finds you, whether you are looking for it or not.





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ALASKAN BUSINESS OWNERS BREATHE LIFE INTO SPENARD VACANCIES

WORDS BY MARIAH DEJESUS-REMAKLUS
PHOTOS BY YOUNG KIM

There have been vacant buildings in the Spenard area for some time now, including the old buildings that once housed TapRoot and La Mex. But while Anchorage locals may have walked and driven by seemingly abandoned properties, they were actually passing by the resurrection of these “ghosts.”

The former TapRoot building is now home to La Potato, a joint project of both style and name between beer, wine and spirits shop, La Bodega, and McCarthy-based restaurant, The Potato.

Pamela Hatzis, owner of La Bodega, said the shop had already been looking for a restaurant to continue their business and spent the summer considering the building at 3300 Spenard Road, which had been vacant since late last year.

“The writing’s been on the wall for a year. In order for us to really do what we already do, we need to just have our own restaurant,” Hatzis said. “We’d been looking for a year and a half, and then we found that building.”

La Potato is a pop-up restaurant; Hatzis describes it as “our venue, their menu.” The Potato runs the kitchen while La Bodega mans the bar and provides the spirits.

“We’re doing the front of the house,” Hatzis said. “The Potato is doing the back of the house, so we just combined it, La Potato.”

The building’s location in Spenard is one of many reasons Nikole Moore, La Bodega’s general manager, is excited about the project.

“That area of Anchorage — it’s my favorite. It’s very diverse,” Moore said, “and I think cultivating that and creating a space where everyone feels comfortable and bring life back into that building — I feel stoked.”



SPENARD



Not far from La Potato is the former La Mex building, now owned by Matt Jones and Rod Hancock, who also own Moose's Tooth. Unlike La Potato, the space is being prepped for a food hall, where several local vendors — think food trucks and the like — will get to set up.

In a story written by the Anchorage Daily News in September, Hancock said he's hoping for a community feel at the food hall that essentially has Moose's Tooth's name on it.

"It's an extension of the food truck concept, which is a variety of food under one roof," he said.

The building still has a lot of work to be done and is in early stages of the food hall concept. Jones noted that it has to be brought up to code and made accessible.

And then there's the old La Mex cactus sign.

As of September, there wasn't quite a plan for it, according to Jones. Hopefully it shares the same positive, albeit eventful, fate as the iconic 1960s neon palm tree that almost left Spenard for good but was successfully purchased by faithful Spenardians.



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SPENARD



OPEN FOR BUSINESS



A look at the economy and consumer behavior in Anchorage's bustling neighborhood

graphics by **SHAYNE NUESCA**

With **2,032** establishments, **23 percent** of all small businesses in Anchorage are in Spenard. Consumers in Spenard also spend more than all of Anchorage combined.

TOP BUSINESS SECTORS

	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNICAL SERVICES	332
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	207
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES	205



78 ACCOUNTING SERVICES
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND
TECHNICAL SERVICES



50 PHYSICIANS AND MENTAL
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HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

67 RESTAURANTS
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Spenardians spend an estimated **\$134,150 annually** on consumer goods and services. That's **54 percent more** than Anchorage's combined annual consumer spending estimate of \$87,310.

Okay, so what are they spending their money on?

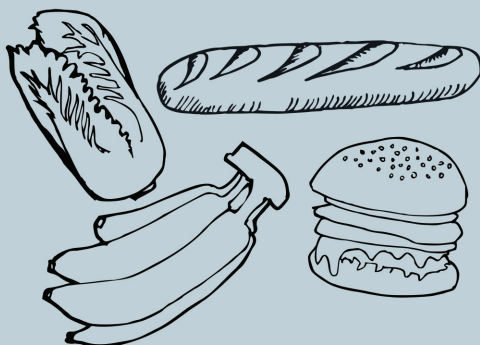
Like the rest of Anchorage, people of Spenard spend the most money on living expenses like housing and transportation. On average, residents are spending **\$42,300 on housing** each year. They also spend about **\$15,710 on transportation** and **\$10,000 on health care**.



Other expenses include **\$5,940 on entertainment and recreation** and **\$4,300 on retail goods and services**.

Also, Spenardians like to eat.

Compared to the rest of Anchorage, residents of Spenard spend about **\$3,600 more** on groceries each year. They also spend about **\$2,370 more** on dining out.



\$6,700

ANNUAL AMOUNT SPENT DINING OUT

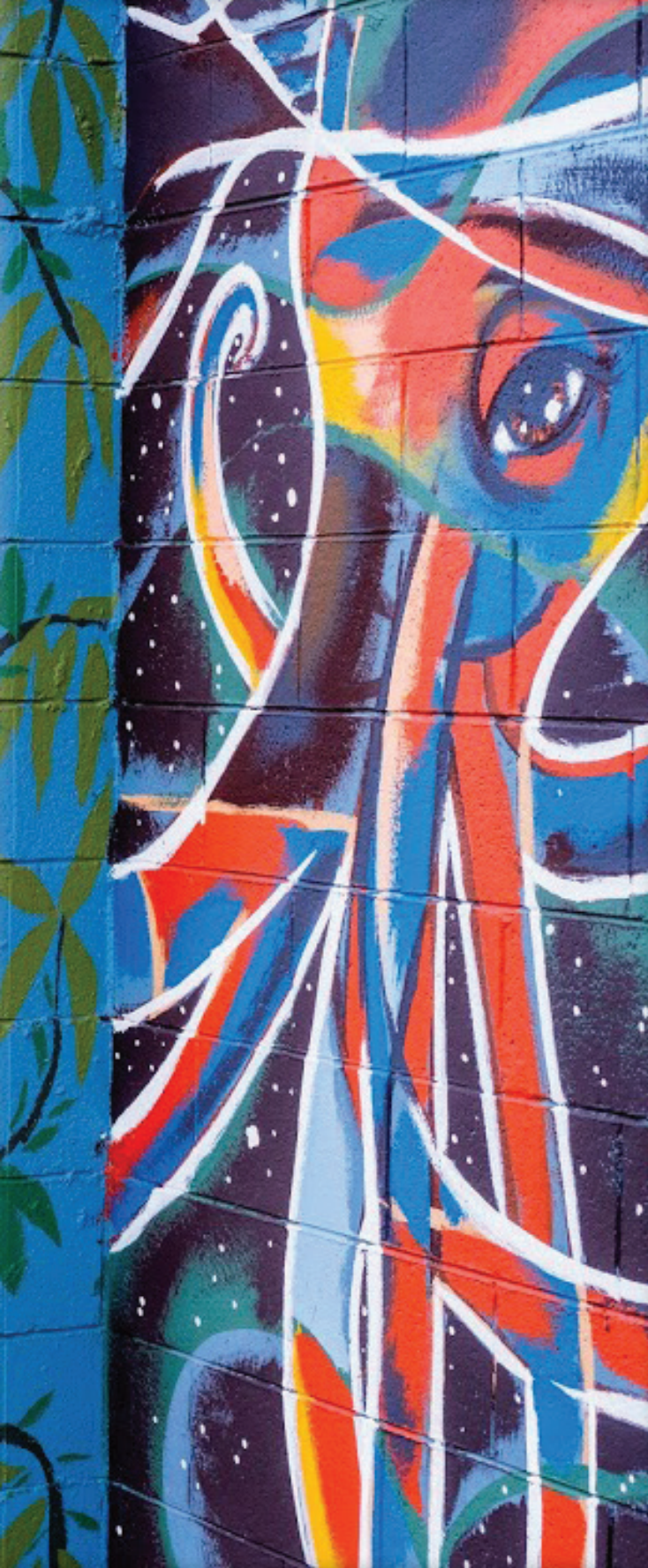
\$9,870

ANNUAL AMOUNT SPENT ON GROCERIES

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Small Business Census Builder, Regional Analysis
Dollar values rounded to the nearest ten and percentages rounded to nearest tenth.



***‘Life Enlightened’
brightens up
Spenard***



**WORDS BY SAM DAVENPORT
PHOTO BY YOUNG KIM**

A new mural is up in Spenard, spanning 60 feet across the side of Enlighten Alaska, a cannabis retail store. The painting features silhouettes of life-size creatures including a killer whale, flamingo and elephant, to name a few. The mural is titled, “Life Enlightened.”

Taylor Gallegos, a California-based artist, visited Alaska this summer with Wasteland Hop, a band from Fort Collins, Colorado. Gallegos accompanies Wasteland Hop on their tours and paints live during their shows.

Gallegos was connected to Mickey Kenney, the lead MC of Wasteland Hop several years ago. The band has toured a lot in the state with Mickey being from Alaska.

Before Gallegos came to Anchorage, he connected with Enlighten Alaska. During his time here, Enlighten treated him “like family.”

“The women at [So Thai] next door fed me a few times. People were driving by and shouting positive things all day long,” Gallegos said.

“People were stoked and it was just a really great vibe all the way through. I’m really happy to have been able to add a little color to Spenard,” Gallegos added.

More of Gallegos’ work can be seen on his Instagram, @tgfineart.



FACES OF SPENARD: NICK

WORDS BY VICTORIA PETERSEN
PHOTOS BY YOUNG KIM

Nick Carpenter wants to say thank you to Spenard.

Carpenter first came to Alaska in 2009. He followed the path of his brother, who was working in the summer fishing industry. Carpenter, who is originally from Atlanta, Georgia, quickly fell for the midnight sun.

As the amazement of summertime sunshine waned into sub-freezing temperatures and snow, the brothers began working as busboys at Moose's Tooth. They lived in a hostel downtown and walked through the snow to get to work. As winter set in, Carpenter returned to the South to go to school.

"I just couldn't handle it," Carpenter said. "I was too young. I didn't want to be cold anymore."

Seven years later, Carpenter left Nashville to come back to Alaska. His parents followed suit.

While in Nashville, Carpenter began operating under Medium Build in 2015. Today, Medium Build is still Carpenter's project. He says he cooks up all the music and then the band learns the parts to play them out and about.

"I started operating under Medium Build in 2015, as just kind of like my joke bedroom

project when I was living in Nashville," Carpenter said. "I didn't want to tell people about it because I was kind of writing country, pop, bro shit. It was awful and soul-sucking."

The band, which was formed over many open-mic nights at the now-closed TapRoot, consists of Carpenter on the guitar and vocals, James Graves is the co-producer and plays guitar, James Dommek Jr. on the drums and Chad Reynvaan on bass.

"[TapRoot] is a sacred place to me," Carpenter said. "I started playing at TapRoot and I sort of just fell in love with Spenard... Spenard is great for music because it's real."

Carpenter credits Spenard, and TapRoot specifically, for helping him develop his album, "Falling Apart."

"I owe Spenard, and Anchorage, a big thank you for accepting me," Carpenter said. "Nashville... I was there for five years and it never felt like home. Whereas here, after six months people are like 'That's the guy! He lives here, he works here.' People were really accepting. I didn't have to prove myself too much, I could just be here."

Medium Build released their latest album "Roughboy" last month.

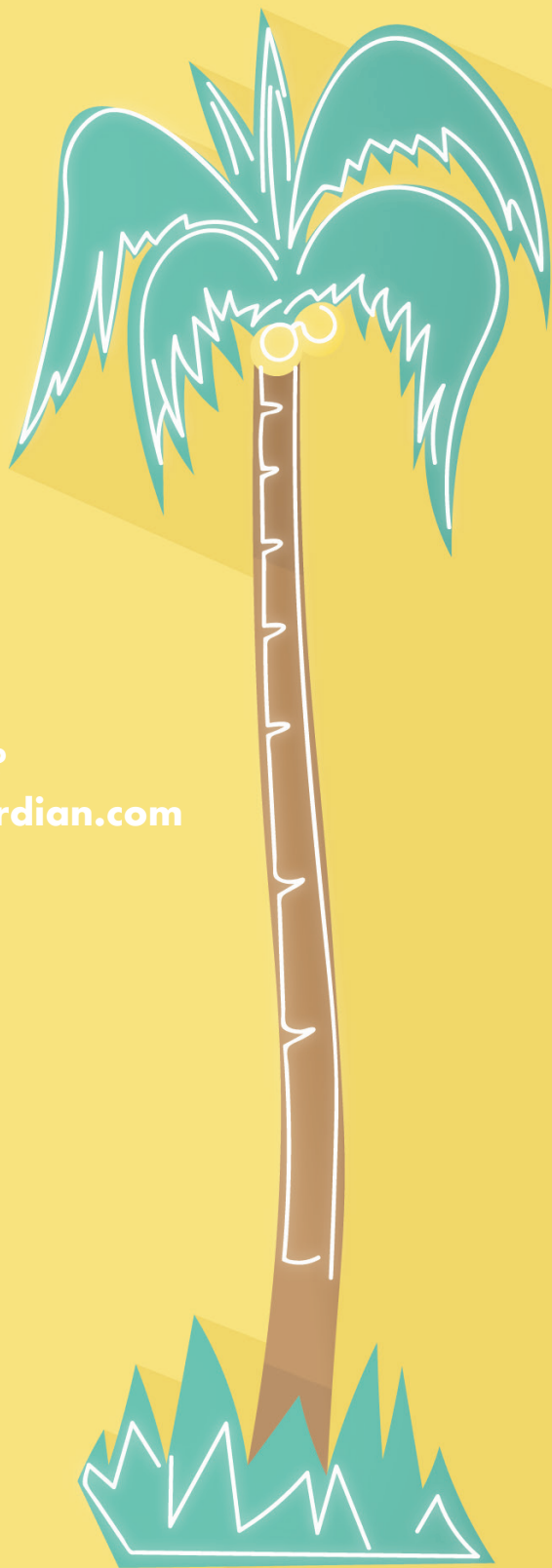


Back in my day...

WORDS AND PHOTO BY
DUKE RUSSELL

I worked at the bike shop for about 12 years. I passed here on my way home and sometimes I would stop. Later, I think it's worth mentioning that, before the awning, it was just a cube sitting alone. Then I found plans for the giant signs and other photos inside with a guy in a bow tie selling stemware. In my time, the place was pretty ghetto, but back in the '60s, it was kind of fancy. The other story I have was told to me by Bob Gillam. His dad owned the Kut Rate Kid Liquor on Fairbanks and Fireweed. His dad would send him down to the parking lot across the street from Discount Liquor and count the customers and make notes as to what was selling, then report back to his dad where adjustments would be made to next week's advertisements.

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