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John Granen

Fall for Columbia City, Washington

In Seattle's Rainier Valley, a neighborhood enjoys its rapid rise from dumpy to desirable

by Ali Basye and Pat Tanumihardj

There's a humble, aw-shucks mentality permeating Columbia City that's hard to not be smitten with.

Friendly and proud (if also somewhat bewildered) over the sonic-speed real-estate boom in their south Seattle burg, locals are eager to pay it forward. At the movie house, owner Paul Doyle is quick to recommend a theater show down the block. A new restaurateur, unprovoked, raves about the eatery across the street.

For visitors, a simple Saturday shopping trip often extends into an evening out.

GETTING THERE

Columbia City is 4½ miles southeast of downtown Seattle. Its main commercial artery is Rainier Ave. S. between S. Alaska and S. Hudson Streets.

GO

Columbia City Cinema A funky old Masonic temple gets a 21st-century facelift: a 30-foot-wide screen showing first-run films with digital surround sound. INFO: \$8; 4816 Rainier Ave. S.; 206/721-3156.

Columbia City Farmers Market October is your last chance for heirloom apples and wild mushrooms, pasture-raised meats, and artisanal baked goods. INFO: 3-7 Wed through Oct 31; 4801 Rainier Ave.



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S.; 206/547-2278.

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Columbia City Bakery Some of the best baked goods in the city in a cheerful orange-and-mint-green shop. INFO: Closed Mon; 4865 Rainier Ave. S.; 206/723-6023.

SHOP

Columbia City Gallery Exhibits change every two months at this local artists' collective. INFO: Closed Mon–Tue; 4864 Rainier Ave. S.; 206/760-9843.

Retroactive Kids Spinning tops and Fisher-Price record players share space with kids' saddle shoes at this new-and-vintage toy-and-clothing store. INFO: 4859 Rainier Ave. S.; 206/932-3154.

DON'T MISS

Columbia City BeatWalk Live blues, jazz, world beat, and eclectic local music (Oct 5, and first Fri of every month through Dec; \$5 at participating venues along Rainier Ave. S.). Rainier Ave. S. turns into a mini Bourbon St. (minus the excessive booze and Mardi Gras beads), where a half-dozen restaurants and local businesses throw open their doors between 7 and 10 p.m.

Arrive early to grab a coveted table at neighborhood favorites such as

Columbia City Alehouse (\$; 4914 Rainier Ave. S.; 206/723-5123) or **Lottie's Lounge** (\$; 4900 Rainier Ave. S.; 206/725-0519).

[Browse our travel section for more escapes »](#)

EAT

Geraldine's Counter A mod-meets-Americana diner with comfort-food fixings. INFO: \$\$; closed Mon; 4872 Rainier Ave. S.; 206/723-2080.

Roy's BBQ Don't let the skinny digs and slim menu fool you. Flavor bursts from these smoky sandwiches. Pulled pork and beef brisket are our faves. INFO: \$; closed Sun; 4903½ Rainier Ave. S.; 206/723-



John Granen

Sift through racks of colorful duds at Retroactive Kids, the neighborhood's latest hot spot for fashionable tots.