



# WORK + LIFE

How artists, businesses, and cultural leaders are creating a vibrant, compassionate, ambitious community in Spokane, Washington.



## LIFE. WE ONLY GET ONE SHOT AT IT.

You, your employees, your kids. We each get our little chunk of space-time, so it's worth considering: *do the moments that make up these lives include enough of the stuff that matters?*

If you could live more deliberately through a change of place, and still succeed wildly, why not at least explore it? And not just in a daydreamy, grass-is-greener sort of way, but through real-life stories and a careful evaluation of place.

That's the hope for this brief report: to take a closer look at the ways people and organizations are making the most of every sane-paced, fulfillment-packed moment in Spokane, Washington.

You might know that we're a mid-sized city and the hub of a region with 30-minute access to everything that makes the Northwest legendary:

lakes, rivers, mountains — incredible, accessible natural beauty. What isn't as well known is that Spokane has spent the last decade transforming itself into an engine of community, culture, ambition, and opportunity.

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***The brief case studies that follow showcase the way people are making the most of every moment in Spokane.***

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The brief case studies that follow showcase the way people are living their best work lives in Spokane — not just homegrown Spokaneites, but transplanted West-siders and those poor non-Northwesterners who have thankfully found their way here from less amazing places.



# PEOPLE

## SANDY WILLIAMS



*It takes having a place, an infrastructure, to be able to address some of the issues that are taking place right now in terms of disparities.*

-Sandy Williams

Sandy Williams, East Central resident and editor of Spokane's only black-owned newspaper, *The Black Lens*, isn't waiting for developers to invest in her community. Inspired by the late Spokane civil rights lawyer Carl Maxey, she and a group of co-organizers are making their own plans.

This June, Williams announced plans for the Carl Maxey Center, a future hub of activities that will benefit the local black community and people of color, many of whom have historically lived in East Central. The center will house new job training programs, resources to learn about the history of African Americans in Spokane, special events, classes, and spaces for people in the neighborhood to rent for their own projects.

A smattering of other home-grown businesses have popped up on the Fifth Avenue corridor in recent years, including the just-opened Fresh Soul, a soul food restaurant that's both employer and mentorship program for the teens who work there. Williams says the area has finally mustered a critical mass of home-grown businesses, infusing the corridor with new energy. "It takes having a place, an infrastructure, to be able to address some of the issues that are taking place right now in terms of disparities," Williams says.

# PEOPLE

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## TARA LAWSON



*Like-minded people light my fire,  
and if you look here,  
you find them.*

-Tara Lawson

Tara Lawson is a newcomer from afar who has found a home within Spokane's creative scene. She's a trained designer and silversmith who creates bright, colorful clay statement jewelry through her business Ishi Studio. Her Australian-accented words are as effusive and delightful as they are expletive-riddled.

"It's like one of those scratch-and-sniff stickers when you're a kid," she says. "The creative scene in Spokane isn't so obviously in your face at first... like, oh this is just a sticker. But then you scratch it, and your little-kid mind is blown: this smells like a f---ing fantastic strawberry shortcake."

Tara's first year in Spokane has been a joyful exercise in networking and befriending as much as designing and making. She landed in Spokane as something of a compromise. After coming to the U.S. from her native Australia, her young adulthood has included a stint packed in with roommates in high-rent Seattle, then a more rural experience in a very small Washington town. In Spokane, she's finding an affordable, vital life. "Like-minded people light my fire," she says, "and if you look here, you find them. It has been wonderful to jump into it and to put my work out there."

# PEOPLE

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## JANNA AND JOHNNY



*We love the ease of life and quality of relationships we can have here.*

-Johnny Stifter

When Janna Irons and John Stifter left Southern California, the two young staff writer-editors for *Surfer* (Janna) and *Powder* (John) took a year-long adventure around the country in their customized van. They had pictured Portland, Oregon as their eventual landing spot. But while resting post-trip with family in Spokane, they noticed a few things: the accessible cost of living, a work/life balance that leaves room for true friendships; an upward trend in art, culture, food & drink; very little traffic, and incredible proximity to a variety of communities and outdoor excursions. It all added up to their ideal home base.

“We love the ease of life and quality of relationships we can have here,” John says. “It just feels accessible and less saturated than other places, in a bunch of different ways. You can get in on the ground floor and impact change here, whether that’s in business, creative work, politically, or really whatever you want to develop. In many cities, it doesn’t feel that way at all.” Janna adds, “In previous places we’ve lived, something as simple as meeting friends for a beer at the end of a work day was not simple: you’re working long hours, sitting in traffic, everyone is so spread out. Here, you can have that experience, and have a big fun group of friends who actually see each other.”

# PEOPLE

## TRAVIS MASINGALE



*The Gateway Bridge and South Landing projects are going to change the face of downtown.*

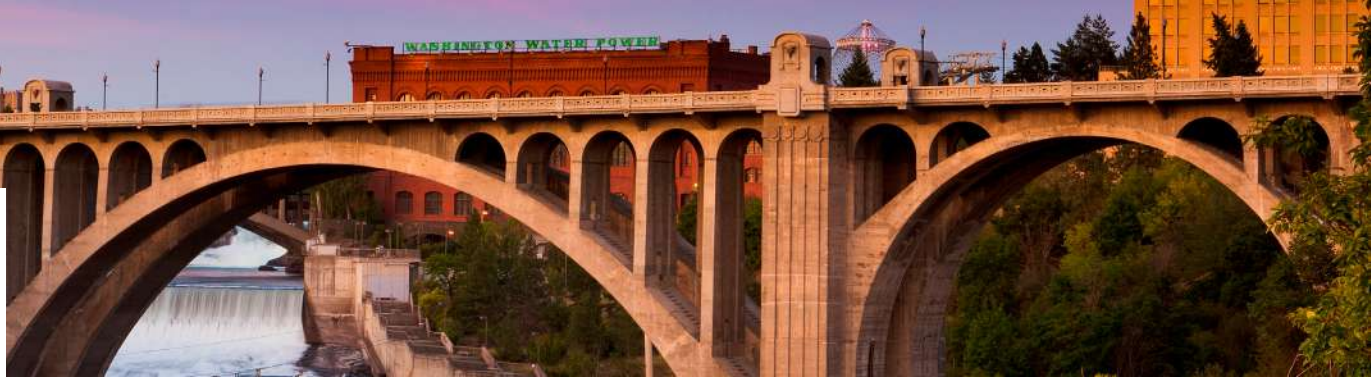
-Travis Masingale

A professor in Eastern Washington University's Visual Communication Design program, Travis Masingale has spent two decades participating in Spokane's visual arts scene. His passions include helping emerging artists and designers get their start professionally and creatively, while also instilling the importance of giving back to their community.

With EWU's VCD, Computer Science, and Electrical Engineering programs moving into the new Catalyst Building alongside top private companies, Masingale anticipates a new level of connectedness between students and industry experts — and between young professionals and the surrounding urban neighborhoods.

"The Gateway Bridge and South Landing projects are going to change the face of downtown," Masingale says. "But for our students and faculty, it radically changes the experience and opportunities. To be so close to other academic and industry experts, for shared learning, internships, guest speakers, collaboration on projects... it's a real plus."

# HEADLINING



In the last few years, word about Spokane has been getting out and making its way into the national press, where comparisons to the rolling hills of Italy and the mountainous perfection of Korea run up against discussions of incredible cultural growth and surprising affordability. Whether it's the *Washington Post*, the *LA Times* or *Outside Magazine*, we couldn't have said it better ourselves.

## America's Happy 700 | Get the ideal Korean Altitude in Spokane / Coeur d'Alene

*Washington Post*, Jan 2018



Growing Spokane, Washington  
Sheds its Sleepy City Image

*Los Angeles Times* August 11, 2018

## The Palouse, Tuscany of America

*Wall Street Journal*, May 27 2018



Cost-Conscious Buyers are Flocking to  
These 10 Affordable, Midsize Cities

*(Spokane listed #1) Realtor.com*, March 1, 2018

## Wine & Dine to Your Heart's Content in Horn-of-Plenty Spokane

*Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 2016



## Spokane, Next American Ski Town

*Powder Magazine*, December 2017



Spokane, Outside Best Towns  
*Outside Magazine*, Aug 2013