

producers here. There's so many entrepreneurial businesses in Columbus."

"I think small businesses can really bring neighborhoods back to life," Letha Pugh said. "With the addition of the smart transportation (connecting neighborhoods), I could totally see the local retail scene, the local food scene, expanding."

Shawn Battiste, the third generation to co-own and operate the family florist business Battiste LaFleur Galleria at 825 E. Long St. on the Near East Side, has watched as other storefronts have filled nearby, including a cafe, a women's clothing boutique and an upscale hair salon. Battiste, 50, believes that more small businesses and residents will move into the area in the next 20 years, continuing the revival of what historically was a thriving African-American neighborhood.

"It's a renaissance, a new birth," Battiste said.

Franklinton also is teeming with innovators, many working from the Columbus Idea Foundry at 421 W. State St., where people develop and execute ideas for new products and businesses.

Alyson Toone, 33, is pursuing plans to apply her fashion-design degree from Columbus College of Art & Design and a decade working in fashion in New York to something new. She is working to expand her "The New Homemaker's Club" blog on her AlysonJonLife.com website into a lifestyle brand selling home goods. "Like Martha Stewart with a newer voice," she said.

"Columbus is a good place for creatives who are focused on family or a lifestyle that isn't the big-