

Seattle Redistricting Commission
City of Seattle
700 5th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124
City_Redistricting@seattle.gov

Re: City of Seattle Council Redistricting and Potential Impacts to the University District

Dear Commissioners:

We write to you today as a coalition of organizations that represent Seattle's University District and Roosevelt neighborhoods. We collectively represent nearly 45,000 residents, 48,000 students, and over 1,000 small businesses and are writing to express our concern about the recent proposed electoral maps that aim to divide our community into different council districts.

The University District is one of Seattle's most racially and economically diverse areas that is home to one of the City's fastest growing population of renters. This is why it's particularly remarkable when organizations from across the U District and beyond speak out, as many of us did earlier this summer to ensure the Seattle Redistricting Commission knew our community's vision to be one cohesive neighborhood.

Unfortunately, we came to learn this week that there is a last-minute effort to significantly reconfigure Commissioner Malaba's map with several proposals that would split the University District. This is problematic for a few reasons:

First, our community has been working together to remove unnecessary divisions (both literal and figurative) between the campus and the larger University District neighborhood through design, partnerships and collaborations. The University of Washington and its constituents are central to the function and identity of our neighborhood. These recent proposals would re-establish unhelpful divisions in our community.

Second, the proposed changes remove the campus and lump it together across a body of water with Capitol Hill, which is in conflict with the spirit of the rules that call for districts to follow '*waterways and geographic boundaries.*'

Third, these proposed changes come at the very end of a long process and ignore months of feedback from community organizations like ours. Our constituents are mostly renters, 49% of whom live below the poverty level, and they deserve equal and unfractured representation. As one of the fastest-growing communities in the city, it is imperative to have a shared vision and voice to advocate for ways to adapt to our fast changing needs in an area at high risk of displacement. Dividing our community makes this challenge much harder.

Fourth, population growth within the '*existing district boundaries*' of our Fourth District has kept pace with that of Seattle as a whole (at 21%), while other council districts experienced much more divergence, so there is no need to change our boundaries so drastically. The U District high-rise,

urban center is the driver of this rapid growth in our broader council district and deserves a requisite degree of self-determination.

We ask you to reconsider any last-minute proposed changes to Commissioner Malaba's map that would result in the division of our neighborhoods. It is imperative that the Seattle Redistricting Commission keep the U District whole in its recommended map. Specifically, we ask you to consider the U District as the area that stretches from I-5 to 25th Ave NE and from Ravenna Park and Boulevard to Portage Bay.

While we are a neighborhood with various levels of economic, social and racial diversity, we are still one interconnected community. We ask you to keep our U District community whole, particularly as we become a showcase of viable, livable, urban density for the future growth of Seattle.

Sincerely,

Don Blakeney
Executive Director, U District Partnership

Cory Crocker
President, U District Community Council

Ron Davis
Board Member, on behalf of the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association

Aaron Hoard
Interim Director of Regional & Community Relations, University of Washington

Aileen M. Langhans
Secretary, University Park Community Club

Cc: Seattle City Council