



# U District Business Improvement Area Ratepayer Advisory Board Meeting Agenda

## RATEPAYER ADVISORY BOARD

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4 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

January 30, 2025

[Zoom Meeting](#)

**Jennifer Antos**  
*Seattle Neighborhood  
Farmers Markets*

**Max Blume**  
*The Blume Company*

**Sally Clark**  
*CampusSafety,  
University of Washington*

**David Cohanim**  
*Whitefall, LLC*

**Lora Gastineau**  
*U District Resident*

**Chris Giles**  
*U District Resident  
University Plaza*

**Joe Gruber**  
*U District Food Bank*

**Mary Kay Gugerty**  
*The Evans School,  
University of Washington*

**Jeanette Henderson,**  
*UW Real Estate,  
University of Washington*

**Lincoln Johnson**  
*Student Life,  
University of Washington*

**Nikole O'Bryan**  
*Nikole O'Bryan, DDS*

**Chris Petersen**  
*Café Allegro*

**Braedyn Reed**  
*Student  
University of Washington*

**Brian Sellen**  
*American Campus  
Communities*

**Sandy Sun**  
*Compass Real Estate*

**Carolyn Thompson**  
*Neptune Building*

**Hui Tian**  
*Studio 19 Architects*

**Polly Yarioka**  
*University Presbyterian*

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. Welcome and Introductions                | Jennifer |
| 2. Public Comment                           | TBD      |
| 3. Approval of October 2024 Meeting Minutes | Jennifer |
| 4. Acceptance of the Financials             | Joe      |
| 5. 2025 Events Look Ahead                   | Lauren   |
| 6. Executive Director Report                | Don      |
| 7. Economic Development Report              | Daniel   |
| 8. Clean & Safe Report                      | Marcus   |
| 9. Marketing and Communications Report      | Polly    |
| 10. New Business                            | Jennifer |
| 11. Adjourn                                 | Jennifer |



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## Board Meeting Minutes

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

October 10, 2024

ZOOM

### **RAB Members in Attendance**

David Cohanim, Synergy Construction  
Lora Gastineau, Novell Condominiums  
Chris Giles, Resident  
Joe Gruber, University District Food Bank  
Sally Clark, UW Campus Safety  
Mary Kay Gugerty, UW Evans School  
Chris Peterson, Cafe Allegro

Polly Yorioka, University Presbyterian  
Carolyn Thompson, Neptune Theater  
Braedyn Reed, UW Student  
Lincoln Johnson, UW Student Affairs  
Brian Sellen, American Campus Communities  
Jennifer Antos, U District Farmers Market  
Jeanette Henderson, UW Real Estate

### **RAB Members Not in Attendance**

Max Blume, The Blume Company  
Nikole O'Bryan, Nikole O'Bryan, DDS  
Maria Barrientos, Barrientos / Ryan

Hui Tian, Studio 19  
Sandy Sun, Corbit Building

### **UDP Staff**

Don Blakeney, Executive Director  
Marcus Johnson, Clean, Safe & Outreach Manager  
Phil Lloyd, Financial Manager  
Daniel Lokic, Economic Development Manager

Lauren Carey, Events Manager  
Pollyanna Yokokawa, Marketing Manager  
Katy Ricchiuto, Urban Vitality Manager

Nikki Somers, Operations Manager

### **Guests Present\***

Candice Soules, Soules Properties

*\*Please note, there may have been other guests but due to the zoom format and people entering and leaving at different times, we were unable to track all guests.*

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Don led a round of introductions with the board, guests and staff and then opened the Winter UDBIA Board meeting

## **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

## **Approval of June 27, 2024 2024 RAB Meeting Minutes**

Sally called for the following motion: "The UDBIA Ratepayer Advisory Board approves the June 27, 2024 meeting minutes as presented at the October 10, 2024 RAB Meeting."

**Motion:** David moved to accept the June 2024 meeting minutes.

**Second:** Mary Kay seconded the motion.

**Abstention:** Sally, Polly, Carolyn

**Approval:** Minutes were approved

## **Finance Committee Update and Approval of the Financials**

Joe offered an update on the UDP/UDBIA Finances. Since July 2024 spending is largely on track. Don spoke about how UDP is still catching up from a slow transition bringing the clean team in house. UDP is also still working through the DOC grant which distorts the finances. *These and other more detailed updates can be found in the finance narrative included in the October Board packet.* Joe called for the following motion: "The Board accepts the September 2024 UDP financials as presented at the October 10, 2024 UDBIA Meeting."

**Motion:** Sally moved to accept the September UDP financials.

**Second:** Lora seconded the motion.

**Approval:** The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Executive Committee Nominations**

Each year, the UDBIA nominates a new executive committee for the UDBIA. Joe, Sally, and Chris are interested in staying-on for another year as the Treasurer, Co-Chair, and Secretary, respectively. Jennifer had agreed to be Co-Chair, should the board nominate and confirm her. Mary Kay nominated the Executive Committee Members as a slate, which included: Sally Clark, Joe Gruber, Chris Giles, and the addition of Jennifer Antos into the Co-Chair position on the UDBIA Board.

**Motion:** Mary Kay moved to nominate the slate as presented

**Second:** Lincoln seconded the motion.

**Approval:** The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Executive Director Report**

Don announced that Katy Ricchiuto, Urban Vitality Manager, will be leaving the position at UDP in mid November, and has accepted a position with Transportation Choices Coalition.

Don also offered information on The International Downtown Association Conference that was held in September 2024. UDP led 3 separate tours with over 120 attendees total. Daniel and the UDP were the 2024 Pinnacle Award winner, which is the top award

Lastly, Don noted that he is working with team members, and other colleagues on updates to the BIA laws at the state level. Those include simplifying city legislation requirements, clarifying ratepayer

definition and formation, expanding the definition of services, enhancing enforcement, and clarifying formula adjustments.

### **Clean & Safe Report**

Marcus reported on the clean and safe committee, and shared that the Clean Team is transitioning to an in-house model which will be fully hired up by the end of October 2024. Currently, the clean team is a hybrid with 3 in-house and an outside contractor. The decision follows the successful acquisition of infrastructure and skills needed for an independent clean team. UDP secured a larger operations center to support its clean and safe programs. Located across from U Heights, the facility offers ample storage space, parking for staff, and room for program growth. Renovations are underway, with completion expected by the end of October 2024.

Marcus next offered a public safety update. The U District is experiencing an increase in street level drug activity, with the epicenter at 47th and University Way NE. This rise has negatively impacted quality of life and safety in surrounding areas, especially near U Heights. In response to concerns they were hearing from U District stakeholders, the Seattle City Council passed a new SODA (stay out of drug area) ordinance, designating a specific area within the U District to deter drug activity. The law aims to improve safety, and reduce drug-related challenges in the neighborhood. UDP is continuing to case conference high-impact individuals while actively advocating for more support from the City and regional partners to help address the needs of the unhoused and people caught up in the drug market. These collaborations are essential to tackling complex issues and ensuring long-term safety improvements.

### **Urban Vitality**

Katy reported on the Seattle transportation levy that was signed by Mayor Harrell in July 2024. It is a \$1.55 billion levy. Just a few of the programs that could benefit the U District include information on people streets and capital projects, neighborhood-initiated safety partnership program, neighborhood-scale traffic safety programs, bridge structural repairs, upgrades, and project readiness, as well as new sidewalks/sidewalk alternatives, a study of a highway lid over Interstate 5 between NE 45th and NE 50th Streets, and low pollution neighborhoods.

Katy discussed the \$500,000 in transportation levy to support a study of private funding for a highway lid between NE 45th and NE 50th streets. UDP applied for \$2 million in funding from the US Department of Transportation. UDP created a separate website for the project, you can check it out at [lidi5north.org](http://lidi5north.org).

RapidRide J Line had a groundbreaking ceremony that included UDP on October 8, 2024. This is a project that will be opened approximately 2027. This bus line runs between U District and downtown Seattle, replacing route 70.

Katy gave an update on upcoming public realm improvements which include tree lighting on the Ave updates. UDP is looking for funding to replace the picnic tables on 43rd with a sturdier option. The new park at NE 43rd and Brooklyn will open next year. UDP worked with the developers and designers to make it a great addition to the neighborhood.

Katy gave an update on the NE 42nd Street project, which was created and managed by the U District Advocates Association. The project wrapped up earlier this month, and feedback given to UDP was that it had a large impact on businesses and inadequate outreach. UDP will continue to monitor the ongoing issues.

### **Economic Development**

Daniel started with the recent business openings and coming soon. New businesses include Toasted Bagel, Sweetpea's Cakes, Insomnia Cookies, Sumo Express Sushi, Bombay Express, Birrieria Pepe El Toro, Stuff in Seattle, and Solo Noodle. UDP awaits the openings of Industrious Gym, The Boulderling Project, Raising Cane's, Ancient Gaste Coffee, George's Cafe, Avole Cafe, and JIE Bakery & Tea.

Daniel shared that in partnership with OED, a retail study will kick off, which will include property owner roundtables, retail vision & consensus building, as well as a vacant space analysis. The process

### **Events Update**

Lauren gave a recap of the fall events. Chow Down 2024 brought in over 40,000 attendees. UDP was able to work with the UW first year programs, and over 9k were invited. There were 28 tent activations on the Ave, with a street closure from 41st - 45th, that included stage contests & demos by local experts.

Lauren shared SAVE THE DATE for 2025 events; Cherry Blossom in April 2025, U District Street Fair on May 17-18, 2025, and Boba Fest moving to July 19, 2025.

### **U District Media Roundup**

Polly offered a snapshot of media in the neighborhood which included the New York Times article about what to do in Seattle with 36 hours, University of Washington Magazine article about Husky Classic Rock, Eater's article about the Best Restaurants in Seattle's University District, as well as an article about the College Inn Pub will be closing. Lastly the Seattle Times' article about the U District possibly getting a public restroom, and Seattle Culture Magazine regarding Grand Illusion moving

### **New Business**

Sally asked if there was any new business but there was none. Don discussed upcoming meetings and gatherings.

### **BIA Meeting Adjournment**

Sally closed the UDBIA Ratepayer Advisory Board meeting.



## Finance Committee Report & Budget Narrative

Prepared on 11/17/24

This financial report represents the close of October financials, and four months of U District Partnership spending. The organization is on solid footing, although BIA collections for this semester are at about 91%, instead of the budgeted 95%—something the team is working with the City to improve in the months ahead, but doesn't represent a cash flow issue for the organization.

### Budget Report

Spending is largely on track, with the exception of the Clean Team, which has had an underspend on staffing related to longer-than-anticipated hiring process and an associated overspend on contract services to continue cleaning while the new staff got hired and trained up. Chowdown income was a few thousand dollars lower than budgeted, but largely offset by cost savings. Commerce Grant spending was slow moving at the outset of the financial year, but will pick up shortly as the grant concludes next spring. The numbers along the left side of the page correspond with the numbers on the budget report:

#### Income:

**444300 – BIA Income:** *BIA spending is lower than anticipated, due to underspending on staffing. This spending will pick up later this year.*

**44530 – Grants Income:** *The under collection on grants is just a timing issue. Daniel is tracking DOC grant income and spending carefully. This grant should be spent-down as planned by early next year.*

**47000 – Program Fees & Sponsorship Income:** *UDP brought in new sponsorship and supplementary income this year for the Chow Down, while bringing down the costs—which enabled the event to come very close to hitting the financial targets within a few thousand dollars. As this is the first event, UDP has a long runway to bring in additional resources in the months to come.*

#### Expense:

**60000 – Staffing:** *Spending on staffing is behind and with Katy leaving for TCC, there may be some continued salary savings for a couple of months this fall.*

**62150 – Renovations & Repairs:** *The upgrades to the new operations center are landing this fall and will show a timing variance for a few months to come.*

**63300 – Staff Development:** *With the International Downtown Association conference in Seattle, and some discounted conference fees for the team, this is currently showing as an underspend. Team members are looking at other professional development opportunities this spring.*

**70320 – Contracted Services:** *UDP had to hire up and train the new in-house clean team. For the last few months, UDP has been incurring cleaning contractor fees, which result in a variance on the staffing and contracted services line.*

**70350 – Event Entertainment:** *With some of the community contests at the Chow Down, there was a cost savings on entertainment.*

**70360 – Other Program Expenses:** *Other event savings are showing up here, along with delayed spending on the grant.*

**70370 – Printing & Reproduction:** *New signage elements were created for the Chow Down that are reusable next year.*

### **Balance Sheet Report**

The balance sheet will continue to have some distortion from the lingering influence of the Commerce grant. The balance sheet shows a decrease in cash that is the equivalent of the deferred revenue. New reporting requirements are reflected showing UDP's office lease as a financial obligation and an unrealized asset.

### **Department of Commerce Grant**

The original \$5,000,000 grant was extended again through the end of the current fiscal year, with roughly \$400,000 left to be spent-down by UDP on programs and administration.

## The U District Partnership Budget Report October 2024

	<u>Oct 24</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>\$ Over Budget</u>	<u>Jul - Oct 24</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>	<u>\$ Over Budget</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>							
<b>Income</b>							
<b>44430 · BIA Contract</b>	145,525.79	146,380.51	-854.72	603,689.29	615,522.15	-11,832.86	1,841,566.23
<b>44530 · Grants</b>	27,514.92	41,202.59	-13,687.67	147,565.26	171,560.28	-23,995.02	521,431.00
<b>47000 · Program Fees</b>	400.00	0.00	400.00	6,060.00	10,000.00	-3,940.00	185,000.00
<b>47213 · Retail Sales</b>	35.84	83.33	-47.49	712.20	333.36	378.84	1,000.00
<b>47215 · Sponsorships</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	21,420.71	25,000.00	-3,579.29	91,000.00
<b>43400 · Donations/Partnerships</b>	2,277.00	3,166.67	-889.67	14,270.00	12,666.64	1,603.36	38,000.00
<b>46400 · Interest and Other</b>	25.89			97.11			
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>175,779.44</u>	<u>190,833.10</u>	<u>-15,053.66</u>	<u>793,814.57</u>	<u>835,082.43</u>	<u>-41,267.86</u>	<u>2,677,997.23</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	175,779.44	190,833.10	-15,053.66	793,814.57	835,082.43	-41,267.86	2,677,997.23
<b>Expense</b>							
<b>60000 · Staffing Expenses</b>	102,481.83	111,065.53	-8,583.70	385,456.04	444,262.00	-58,805.96	1,356,986.24
<b>61000 · Professional Expenses</b>	8,000.00	8,083.34	-83.34	19,000.00	19,833.28	-833.28	34,500.00
<b>62000 · Office and Overhead Expenses</b>	16,505.05	21,057.51	-4,552.46	65,598.49	68,229.92	-2,631.43	251,090.00
<b>70000 · Direct Program Expenses</b>	72,287.44	61,451.75	10,835.69	332,124.67	307,307.00	24,817.67	1,017,085.62
<b>Total Expense</b>	<u>199,274.32</u>	<u>201,658.13</u>	<u>-2,383.81</u>	<u>802,179.20</u>	<u>839,632.20</u>	<u>-37,453.00</u>	<u>2,659,661.86</u>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<u>-23,494.88</u>	<u>-10,825.03</u>	<u>-12,669.85</u>	<u>-8,364.63</u>	<u>-4,549.77</u>	<u>-3,814.86</u>	<u>18,335.37</u>
<b>Net Income</b>	<u><u>-23,494.88</u></u>	<u><u>-10,825.03</u></u>	<u><u>-12,669.85</u></u>	<u><u>-8,364.63</u></u>	<u><u>-4,549.77</u></u>	<u><u>-3,814.86</u></u>	<u><u>18,335.37</u></u>



**The U District Partnership**  
**Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison**  
As of October 31, 2024

	<u>Oct 31, 24</u>	<u>Oct 31, 23</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings			
10100 · Operating Bank Accounts			
10110 · WSECU Checking	350,856.70	736,411.57	-385,554.87
10111 · WSECU Savings	160,439.31	135,171.09	25,268.22
Total 10100 · Operating Bank Accounts	<u>511,296.01</u>	<u>871,582.66</u>	<u>-360,286.65</u>
Total Checking/Savings	511,296.01	871,582.66	-360,286.65
Accounts Receivable			
11000 · Accounts Receivable	142,865.97	160,994.97	-18,129.00
Total Accounts Receivable	142,865.97	160,994.97	-18,129.00
Other Current Assets			
12026 · Lease Rights	33,119.29	89,894.06	-56,774.77
12022 · Prepaid Expense	6,000.10	1,344.25	4,655.85
12021 · Employee Advances	-1.58	1,631.51	-1,633.09
Total Other Current Assets	<u>39,117.81</u>	<u>92,869.82</u>	<u>-53,752.01</u>
Total Current Assets	693,279.79	1,125,447.45	-432,167.66
Fixed Assets	4,606.61	11,013.05	-6,406.44
Other Assets	3,235.87	3,235.87	0.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u><u>701,122.27</u></u>	<u><u>1,139,696.37</u></u>	<u><u>-438,574.10</u></u>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	2,606.64	28,300.39	-25,693.75
Credit Cards	8,131.28	39,623.11	-31,491.83
Other Current Liabilities			
20220 · Lease Liability	33,880.56	91,046.06	-57,165.50
20210 · Deferred Revenue	338,605.69	700,500.81	-361,895.12
24000 · Payroll Liabilities	58,809.45	55,527.36	3,282.09
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>431,295.70</u>	<u>847,074.23</u>	<u>-415,778.53</u>
Total Current Liabilities	442,033.62	914,997.73	-472,964.11
Total Liabilities	442,033.62	914,997.73	-472,964.11
Equity			
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	267,453.28	234,685.26	32,768.02
Net Income	-8,364.63	-9,986.62	1,621.99
Total Equity	<u>259,088.65</u>	<u>224,698.64</u>	<u>34,390.01</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<u><u>701,122.27</u></u>	<u><u>1,139,696.37</u></u>	<u><u>-438,574.10</u></u>



## Program Reports

Winter 2025 UDBIA Ratepayer Advisory Board Meeting  
January 30, 2025

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### Fall Foot Traffic Outpaced Pre-Pandemic Levels by 34%

Expanded light rail service, new residential development, and an increase in the UW student population continue to enhance neighborhood vibrancy and visitation. With the support of the City of Seattle and Placer.ai data software, UDP has innovative tools to effectively analyze trends in foot traffic and visitation. When analyzing visitation between September 15 – October 15 in 2019, the U District experienced 3.6 million visits. Fast forward to 2024, and that number has skyrocketed to 4.6 million; an increase of 1 million visits during this month, in the last five years. [Read our report here.](#)

#### UDP Prepares to Close-out \$5M Commerce Grant

The U District Partnership is on the verge of successfully closing its \$5M+ contract with the Washington Department of Commerce, marking a significant milestone in its efforts to revitalize the neighborhood. Over the past two years, this funding has supported 140+ businesses, including the activation of vacant spaces, tenant improvement support for small businesses, and enhanced public amenities. As the final vacant space grants are on the verge of being completed, the U District continues to see tangible benefits from this investment, with thriving storefronts, increased economic activity, and a more vibrant streetscape. For more information about the grant program including interviews with recipients and photos, follow [this link](#).

#### Celebrating Daniel Lokic

As we kick off the new year, our esteemed colleague, Daniel Lokic, has accepted a new role as the Executive Director of the Manufacturing Maritime Industrial Association. In his new capacity, Daniel will lead an organization dedicated to supporting and advocating for the maritime, manufacturing, and logistics sectors, driving long-term growth and stability for these industries.

Daniel's lasting imprint can be seen throughout the U District. Over the past five years, his work supported 140+ storefronts through the U District Vitality Grant Program, 10+ outdoor dining areas throughout the district including the blue tables at NE 43rd Street - for many people, Daniel has changed their daily experience of the U District.

### CLEAN, SAFE & OUTREACH

#### City Council Awards UDP \$25K for U District Ambassadors

In November, the Seattle City Council voted to award UDP a \$25,000 grant to expand ambassador hours in the U District in 2025. This was made possible by a Councilmember Maritza Rivera, who championed the legislation.

### **UDP Clean Team Comes In House**

Last fall, the UDP transitioned its Cleaning Program entirely in-house after years of preparation and planning. Previously, the program relied on two in-house Clean Team members supported by contractor services. With this transition, UDP hired three new Clean Team members, increasing weekly cleaning coverage from 150 to 176 hours in the neighborhood.

The expanded in-house team is now better equipped to provide exceptional cleaning services to the U District. Joining veteran team members Jeremy and Justin are new hires Tim, Yovanni, and Hayden. Together, they ensure the U District remains clean, welcoming, and vibrant.

### **Seasonal Clean Team Response**

Each fall, UDP's Clean Team focuses on clearing leaves throughout the neighborhood, primarily during October and November. This year, the team successfully removed over 10,000 pounds of leaves from sidewalks, ensuring they remain safe and accessible for the community.

With the conclusion of leaf season, the Clean Team is now preparing for potential snow and ice in the coming months. UDP maintains a sufficient supply of salt to keep the U District's busiest sidewalks free of snow and ice. In the event of substantial snowfall, the Clean Team will deploy a snow blower, procured with the generous support of the U District Rotary Club, to ensure sidewalks remain safe.

### **Homeless Outreach Update**

UDP is thrilled to welcome Dimitra Lovell of REACH as the new U District Outreach Specialist. Dimitra continues the impactful work of her predecessors, David Delgado and JJ Bartlett, in connecting individuals experiencing homelessness in the U District with vital resources.

This role, developed in partnership with REACH, has become a model for innovative service deployment in the city. Dimitra has brought fresh energy and vision to the position, redefining how the Ambassador and Outreach programs collaborate. Her efforts have further enhanced the effectiveness of both initiatives, ensuring a greater positive impact on the community.

### **Homeless Census**

UDP has resumed its monthly homeless census efforts. Previously, UDP focused on counting tents, but with fewer tents observed, the census now focuses on counting individuals. During the most recent count conducted on January 15, UDP identified 47 individuals experiencing homelessness in the neighborhood.

### **Death of King County Metro Bus Driver, Shawn Yim**

The U District community is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of King County Metro bus driver Shawn Yim, who was fatally injured on December 18th following an altercation with a passenger near NE 41st Street and University Way NE. This devastating incident has shaken the neighborhood and highlighted ongoing concerns about public safety.

Following the incident, UDP collaborated with small businesses and property owners to support the investigation, including sharing relevant information and security footage with authorities. This tragedy marked the second homicide in the U District within a matter of weeks, underscoring the urgent need to prioritize public safety. In response, UDP has worked to rally resources and provide support, highlighting the power of a close-knit neighborhood during tragic events.

## URBAN VITALITY

### **Federal Government Awards \$1.5 Million to Fund Lid I-5 Feasibility Study in the U District**

The U District Partnership is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded \$1.5 million as a recipient of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program. The funding will allow UDP and the Lid I-5 North Coalition to explore the feasibility of lidding Interstate 5 between NE 45th and 50th Streets in Northeast Seattle. The award was announced from the office of Senator Patty Murray on January 13 and was shared out as a press release from The U District Partnership the same day to local and national media.

Led by UDP and the Lid I-5 North Coalition, the project will conduct an engineering and programmatic feasibility study, in addition to a community visioning process that investigates ways to reconnect Northeast Seattle neighborhoods. This is the second Reconnecting Communities grant to be awarded to a Seattle project—the first of which was the Lid I-5 project in downtown Seattle. More details to follow as details of the grant are shared with The U District Partnership.

### **Seattle Transportation Levy – Keep Seattle Moving Passes**

In November, Seattle voters approved a ballot measure to invest in a variety of transportation projects across the city, including road and bridge repairs, expansion of bike lanes, and upgrades to pedestrian facilities. While the levy will fund approximately 30 percent of the Seattle Department of Transportation's budget, it includes several key investments that will benefit the U District:

- **University Bridge Maintenance and Seismic Upgrades:** Critical funding will go toward maintaining and upgrading the aging University Bridge, which serves as a key connection between the U District and the rest of Seattle. Seismic retrofitting and structural repairs would ensure the bridge remains safe and functional, especially as traffic and population grow in the area.
- **People Streets and Public Spaces:** The levy allocates \$57 million to enhance business and commercial districts through the "People Streets & Public Spaces" initiative, focusing on improvements in lighting, seating, and pedestrian access. Additionally, the levy supports "Neighborhood Street Improvements," allowing community members to co-create projects that address local needs, particularly in underinvested areas, resulting in safer and more inclusive public spaces.
- **NE 42nd Street Green Street Project:** Levy funds will be allocated to advance the development of NE 42nd Street into a "green street" to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety. This project will create more green space, improve walkability, and prioritize non-motorized transportation, especially in the busy corridor between the University of Washington campus and U District Station.
- **Sidewalk and Pedestrian Infrastructure Upgrades:** Levy dollars will be eligible to target crucial sidewalk repairs and curb ramp installations, particularly in high-foot-traffic areas like University Way NE and near the U District light rail station. Enhanced crosswalks and improved lighting would make the area safer for pedestrians, especially students, seniors, and people with disabilities.

- **Lid I-5 Feasibility Study:** The levy allocates funding for a feasibility study of a potential lid over I-5 between NE 45th Street and NE 50th Street. This project aims to reconnect the neighborhood with green space, reduce noise pollution, and offer new opportunities for public amenities and/or housing while improving safety around the highway.

More information about the 2024 Seattle Transportation Levy can be found on the Seattle City Council’s [website](#).

### UDP Seeks Urban Vitality Manager

The U District Partnership is now accepting applications for an [Urban Vitality Manager](#)! We are seeking candidates who bring a unique blend of subject matter expertise, curiosity, and a passion for community engagement. And who thrive on building meaningful relationships with residents, businesses, organizations, and property owners. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, with priority given to applications received by Monday, February 3, at 5pm.

## MARKETING

### Seattle Magazine Says “The U District Hums with Energy”

This month, Seattle Magazine offered up a friendly hat tip with a great feature on the U District. [From the article:](#) *“Been to the University District lately? The neighborhood centered around the University of Washington is one of the city’s most vibrant and eclectic. Think youthful energy, diverse population, and a mix of culture and academia. Currently in post-pandemic flux, the U District is a stimulating change of scene.”* Businesses featured in the article included University Book Store, Magus Books, Bulldog News, Big Time Brewery, Cafe Solstice, Cafe Allegro, Red Light Vintage, Burke Museum, The Henry, Meany Center for the Performing Arts, and Grand Illusion Cinema.

### More U District News Highlights

- [KUOW features UDP grant award for Lid I-5 feasibility study](#)  
The movement to lid I-5 has been gaining steam in Seattle. Don Blakeney interviewed regarding the \$1.5M federal grant award to assess covering the freeway between NE 45th and 50th streets.
- [NYTimes lists Saint Bread as one of the top bakeries in the U.S.](#)  
Congratulations to Yasuaki Saito and the team at Saint Bread! In December, Saint Bread was recognized on The New York Times list of 22 of the Best Bakeries Across the U.S. Right Now.
- [UW Magazine features University Book Store’s 125th Anniversary](#)  
Turning 125 in January and now celebrating 100 years in its current location, University Book Store has served the local community in myriad ways beyond textbooks and sweatshirts.

### Email Metrics Show Above Average Engagement

The U District Partnership has sustained a growing email list over the past four years, with an above-market average open rate and click rate across newsletter, event, call-to-action, and other marketing announcement campaigns.

All Time: December 2020 - November 2024	Average Open Rate: 40.5%	CTR: 4.4%
<b>Past Year: November 2023 - November 2024</b>	<b>Average Open Rate: 44.5%</b>	<b>CTR: 4.4%</b>
<i>Nonprofit Industry Benchmark</i>	<i>Average Open Rate: 40.04%</i>	<i>CTR: 3.27%</i>
<i>Professional Services Benchmark</i>	<i>Average Open Rate: 32.7%</i>	<i>CTR: 3.04%</i>



## EVENTS



### First Winter Window Walk & Study Break Celeb

Over 20 ground-level businesses decorated their windows for the first Winter Window Walk & Study Break from December 6-15, 2024. Participating businesses adorned their storefronts with impressively painted windows, warm lighting, and festive crafted retail displays. Competing for \$1000 cash prize and a second prize of \$500 to a neighborhood business of their choice, participating businesses voted for each other; choosing Gargoyles as the first place window and Davis Optical as second place window. Congratulations to all participating businesses!

The promotion also partnered with OKAPI Reusables, a borrow-a-cup program that provides high quality reusable travel mugs that customers can grab and enjoy. The U District Partnership supported OKAPI in adding three new businesses to the program, making for a total of five OKAPI member businesses in the U District. Between the December 6-15 promotion, all five participating businesses offered \$1 coffees or specialty drinks – thank you to Bulldog News, Sweet Alchemy Ice Creamery, Sip House, Poindexter Coffee, and Cowen Park Cafe.





## Cherry Blossom Festival Marks the Start of Spring - Business Invited to Sign Up by January 30

The fourth annual [U District Cherry Blossom Festival](#) returns this spring in alignment with peak bloom of the historic cherry blossom trees on the University of Washington campus. Estimated dates are mid-March to mid-April. U District businesses are invited to sign up to participate with a cherry or blossom-themed food, drink, or retail special—sponsorship opportunities are also available!

Register your business by Thursday, January 30, 2025: [udistrictpartnership.org/events/business-participation/](https://udistrictpartnership.org/events/business-participation/)

The Cherry Blossom Festival window decorating contest is also returning this year—expanding to offer three prizes! Interested businesses must select they are participating in the contest on the registration form. Grand prize is \$1000 cash, and two runners up will receive \$500 to the U District business of their choice.

Change to note: the Seattle Cherry Blossom Run, operated by Rivalry Events, will be moving its 5K, 10K, and Half-Marathon course from its usual route through the UW campus to Seward Park this year.

## U District Street Fair Returns May 17-18, 2025

Vendor registration opened in mid-December for the 54th celebration of the [U District Street Fair](#). Over 300 applications have been received to date, with 150 processed and approved during the first round of jurying in January to fill the available 300 spaces.

Music and entertainment slots are being filled now. Interested artists are invited to reach out to Event Manager Lauren Carey.



## Seattle Boba Fest Jumps to New Summer Date – July 19, 2025!

The fourth annual [Seattle Boba Fest](#) is making its move from April to July this year; making use of warmer weather as the U District continues to build excitement for the robust bubble tea offerings of the neighborhood. Registration for participating businesses will open later this spring.

