

THE U DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

UDP BOARD MEETING AGENDA

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

January 20, 2026

Fireplace Room, Floor 2, U District Partnership - 1415 NE 45th St, Seattle, WA 98105

I.	Welcome & Introductions	Rick	11:30 a.m.
II.	Public Comment	Public	11:35 a.m.
III.	Approval of December Meeting Minutes	Rick	11:40 a.m. (Vote)
IV.	UDP Finance Committee Report	Trevor Greenwood Ohlund	11:45 a.m. (Vote) (Vote)
	• <i>FY 2025 Audit Presentation</i>		
	• <i>Acceptance of December 2025 UDP Financials</i>		
V.	Executive Director Report	Don	12:00 p.m.
VI.	U District Subarea Plan Priorities	Stephen/Phil	12:05 p.m. (Vote)
VII.	Urban Vitality Updates	Janet	12:25 p.m.
	• <i>Welcome UV Intern, Erik Rayas</i>		
VIII.	Economic Development Updates	Hannah	12:30 p.m.
IX.	Clean & Safe Updates	Marcus	12:35 p.m.
X.	Events Updates	Lauren	12:40 p.m.
XI.	Governance Committee Report	Rick	12:45 p.m. (Vote)
	• <i>UDP Board nomination: Shruti Shah - CFO, University Book Store</i>		
	• <i>Prospective Board member: Ashley Van Dragt - Pastor, Church on The Ave</i>		
XII.	New UDP Business	Rick	12:55 p.m.
XIII.	Adjourn UDP Meeting	Rick	1:00 p.m.

Joint UDP & UDBIA Board Meeting Minutes

11:30am to 1:00pm

December 16, 2025

The U District Partnership, 1415 NE 45th St, Fireplace Room, Seattle WA 98105/ HYBRID

UDP Board Members in Attendance in Person

Aaron Hoard – UW, Co-Chair
Rick Jones - Schooley Mitchell, Co-Chair
Trevor Peterson – U Book Store, Treasurer
John Hix – Seattle Vineyard Church
Katie Betz – Urban Renaissance Group
Julie Blakeslee – UW Planning
Jeremy Eknoian – UW Real Estate

Don Schulze – UDPA
Jessie Quan – Ladd & Lass Brewing, Secretary
Alfred Shiga – Shiga's Imports
Paul Yunker – U District Food Bank
Maya Lu – Boba Up
Anna Sorokina – WSECU

UDP Board Members Not in Attendance

Josh Gana – UW Housing & Food Services
Stephen Antupit – U District Resident
Emily Scully – Shultz's Bar & Grill
Anson Lin – Astora Construction

Naomi Lewis – Luminati Labs
Miles Richardson – Audi Seattle/University VW
Darren Rose - 206 Properties
Lois Ko - Sweet Alchemy

RAB Members in Attendance

Mary Kay Gugerty – UW Evans School
Nikole O'Bryan – Nikole O'Bryan, DDS
Jeanette Henderson – UW Real Estate
David Cohanim – Synergy Construction

Joe Gruber – U District Food Bank
Chris Rauls – University Book Store
Sally Clark - UW Campus Security

RAB Members Not in Attendance

Max Blume – The Blume Company
Lora Gastineau – Novell Condominiums
Carolyn Thompson – The Neptune Building
Polly Yorioka – University Presbyterian Church
Brian Sellen – American Campus Communities

Chris Peterson – Cafe Allegro
Chris Giles – Resident
Lincoln Johnson – UW Student Affairs
Jennifer Antos – U District Farmers Market
Sandy Sun – Corbit Building
Hui Tian – Studio 19 Architect

UDP Staff

Don Blakeney – Executive Director
Hannah Kiburz – Economic Dev Manager
Lauren Carey – Events Manager
Marcus Johnson – Director of Clean & Safe Operations

Janet Lee – Urban Vitality Manager
Nikki Somers – Operations Manager
Polyanna Yokokawa – Marketing Manager
Phil Lloyd – CFO

Guests

Shruti Shah - University Book Store
Joe Riley - Swedish Administration
D'Vante Roll - University Presbyterian Church

Jeremy Gollyhorn - U District Partnership
Royce Morrison – University Congregational United Church of Christ

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

Welcome and Introductions

Aaron H. started the meeting, with a round of introductions. Upon completion of introductions, Aaron H. formally opened the UDP Board Meeting and Joe G. formally opened the UDBIA Board Meeting.

Public Comment

Aaron H. called for public comment. Royce M. noted he was attending to continue his interest in all things U District.

Approval of UDP Board Meeting Minutes

Aaron H. introduced the October 2025 meeting minutes, asked for any questions or amendments.

Motion: Julie B. moved to accept the October 2025 UDP Board meeting minutes.

Second: Jeremy E. seconded the motion.

Abstentions: Don S. abstained

Approval: The motion was approved.

UDP Finance Committee Update and Approval of the Financials

Trevor P. started with that UDP is largely on track for the year, however noted a few things in the budget. Spending is up, which is due to a combination of things, including UDP front loading the costs of the office renovations, as well as the front loading cash before Street Fair registration opens in December.

Note: A full financial narrative is included in each UDP Board meeting packet, speaking directly to any variances in the budget, which is approved each year at the Annual Meeting each June.

Motion: On behalf of the Finance Committee, Trevor P. moved to accept the November 2025 financials as presented at the December 16, 2025 Board Meeting.

Second: No second was required because this motion came from the Finance Committee.

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Director Report

Don B. gave a brief update on the transitions at both the City and County levels. UDP has been actively getting to know the new leaders which include Mayor-Elect Katie Wilson, along with both her transition and administration teams, Dionne Foster with the citywide council seat, and hopes to engage Erika Evans, the city attorney elect, and Girmay Zahilay, County Executive.

Next Don B. gave a few funding updates for the UDP 2026 budget. UDP received donations and support from a number of outside organizations, as well as new funding that included a federal grant for the Lid I-5 feasibility study, Seattle City Council support for both U District based homeless outreach and UDP cleaning programs. Other notable funding included City Council support for DESC to provide mobile behavioral support to U District, Ballard, and Capitol Hill, along with additional support through OED to foster BIA creation and support. Don B. called out Seattle City Councilmember Maritza Rivera's leadership in securing these funds for the U District.

Lastly, Don B. offered an overview of the UDP lease expansion and office renovation.

Clean & Safe Program Report

Marcus J. gave an overview of how the City Council funding would support the UDP Cleaning Program by adding one full-time position, which will allow more capacity for special programs. Marcus J. also noted that the funding for Homeless Outreach will allow for dedicated outreach in the U District and Ballard, as well as add capacity for mental health and addiction medication distribution.

Next Marcus J. gave an update on his Public Safety Committee Meeting which took place on October 29 and included a review of the Seattle Neighborhood Impact Framework (SNIF), a discussion of the drug market activity in the neighborhood, and staff mapping. Marcus J. also gave an update on the Clean Committee walk

which happened on November 26 and included a tour of the South cleaning area. The group discussed common issues in the field. The walk offered a first hand look at the impact of the in-house team.

Marcus J. also offered an update on leaf removal which includes leaf removal across the entire district. The team has currently removed over 2,000 pounds of leaves per day during peak season, and are getting ready for snow and ice removal as needed.

Economic Development Program Report

Hannah K. started with an update from the Economic Development Committee meeting and the key priorities were filling vacant storefronts, growing business mix, and inclusive business support. A key tool that was discussed is social media to amplify one's own business and collaborate with others. There will be a business networking social event on 12/17 and the next committee meeting is 01/27/26.

Next Hannah K. gave an update on the long awaited Economic Development report which is expected out in February 2026. Primary topics for the report include recent & upcoming real estate developments, transit ridership investment, resident population growth, visitor activity, workforce characteristics, business landscape, and UW's regional and national economic impact.

Hannah K. finished with a snapshot of business recent openings and closures, openings reported in October, and coming soon openings.

Urban Vitality Program Report

Janet L. started with a recap of the U District Station Park Series that took place at 43rd & Brooklyn. Last summer, The U District Partnership launched a pilot activation program at the U District Station plaza—one of the neighborhood's Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS). The pilot built on the momentum created by the 120 dining seats added over the pandemic, and offered a chance to see how POPs can support a growing community and bring more everyday life and activity to the heart of the U District. Across 82 days of activation, UDP transformed the plaza into a reliable community gathering place, offering daily seating, cleaning, and amenities alongside 60+ hours of free programming. Neighborhood partners like Scarecrow Video and the U District Advocates brought in additional programming over the summer and into September. All in all, more than 2,000 people participated in yoga, dance, live music, and outdoor movies, and over 1,600 neighbors used the plaza informally for lunch, studying, or meeting friends. The pilot also supported a dozen local arts, culture, and small-business partners—helping more than 100 local artists reach new audiences. The pilot showed that with basic infrastructure, consistent staffing, and reliable daily operations, the station-area plaza can operate as a well-used community asset. As the organization looks ahead, the next step is to solidify funding and partnerships and to address key operational needs.

Next Janet L. gave an update about UDP's public art and signage improvements in the district. UDP recently refreshed all of the gothic kiosks with new maps and cleaner, more durable materials. Additionally, staff are now working closely with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to update the Seamless Seattle wayfinding signs to ensure they reflect current conditions as the district evolves. In parallel, UDP staff have been collaborating with SDOT on early concepts for the 2026 Mobility Hub pilot—an initiative selected for only six neighborhoods citywide. The project explores how art, lighting, and other creative interventions can make it easy, safe, welcoming, and joyful to get to, from, and wait at transit.

Janet L. also offered more information regarding the Lid I-5 project. After a long period of uncertainty about the status of federal funding, UDP received confirmation that the funding will be released, allowing the project to advance into its next phase—a formal feasibility study. Because this next phase relies on federal contracting, the timeline for releasing funds and initiating the study may take anywhere from 3-24 months. UDP is planning to coordinate with state and local agencies as this work moves forward and will continue tracking how Lid I-5 may intersect with the Subarea Plan, particularly around adjacent land use, mobility networks and long-term

public-realm planning. With so many moving parts and dependencies on other agencies, both the Subarea Plan and the Lid I-5 project currently have fluid timelines. UDP will keep the Board updated as the process unfolds and as new milestones take shape.

Janet L. gave updates on transportation & infrastructure which included SDOT will be implementing a series of separate but related projects to improve pedestrian safety and user experience in the new year. Projects include "daylighting" intersections to improve visibility by removing parking; adding scooter and e-bike corrals on streets and sidewalks; and potentially, re-evaluation of outdoor seating and dining structure locations. UDP staff will provide a more substantive project update in early 2026. And, in other good news, WSDOT completed most of the drainage scupper/inlet replacement in the southbound lanes of I-5 ahead of schedule over Thanksgiving weekend. This means that the fifth or sixth scheduled weekend-long lane reductions in December and January will no longer be needed, and the next scheduled closure will be for the northbound lanes during the weekend of Jan. 9-12, 2026.

Lastly Janet L. noted the UV Committee has been working on a document to summarize key themes and priorities for the Board to consider elevating during the Subarea Planning process that will kick off in 2026. The Committee will be presenting these priorities at the January UDP meeting for Board review and discussion.

U District Events

Lauren C. gave a quick overview on the 2025 Chow Down highlights for the UDBIA board. This included a 27% increase in foot traffic in the event area from previous years.

Next Lauren C. announced the Winter Window Walk Contest. There were 22 businesses that signed up, and 18 that fully participated. The winner of the window display contest, which is chosen by peer businesses, will receive \$1,000. There are also 2 runner-up prizes of \$500, which can be applied to a gift card to the business of their choice in the neighborhood. The winners will be announced on 12/19.

Lauren C. also highlighted the kick-off of Cherry Blossom Festival planning, which has an estimated bloom date of 03/20/26 - 04/06/26, and the 55th Annual Street Fair which will take place 05/16/26 - 05/17/26.

Communications & Marketing

Polly Y. started with an overview of the website traffic increase for the UDistrictSeattle website which has demonstrated strong growth over the past year, with significant increases in user engagement and platform activity. Performance highlights include increases in active users, page views, total events, as well as average engagement time, and combined event pages.

Next Polly Y. shared recent media coverage that featured interviews with the U District Partnership. A noted increase in general coverage since the start of the academic year has meant a spotlight on The U District Partnership's work for the student and university audiences.

Governance:

Rick J. welcomed guest Shruti Shah, the CFO with the University Book Store as a prospective board member. Shruti spoke about her connection to the neighborhood and interest in the work of the UDP.

Joe G. introduced D'Vante Rolle, Director of Outreach with the University Presbyterian Church. D'Vante is being voted on as a member of the UDBIA Board, however there were not enough members to make quorum.

New UDP Board Business

Aaron H. called for new business, there was none. Don B. gave an overview of the upcoming 2026 UDP Board and UDBIA meetings in 2026, as well as the Upcoming Committee meetings.

UDP Board Adjournment

Aaron H. adjourned the UDP Board meeting.

Approval of Ratepayer Board Meeting Minutes and August Financials

Joe G. announced since there is not enough for quorum to vote on the meeting minutes and the financials, they will hold those in reserve for the quarterly meeting in March 2026.

New UDBIA Board Business

Joe G. called for new business, there was none.

UDBIA Adjournment

Joe G. adjourned the UDBIA Board meeting.

THE U DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

Finance Committee Report & Budget Narrative

Prepared on 1/13/26

This financial narrative provides a summary of The U District Partnership's financial statements December 31st, 2025.

Budget Report

UDP is half way through the fiscal calendar and other than a few variances, the finances reflect the 2026 budget. With Street Fair now selling booths, there is an influx of cash that will land in January and persist for the next few months. The numbers along the left side of the page correspond with the numbers on the budget report:

Income:

444300 – BIA Income: *Spending is up, which is due to a combination of things – UDP purchased a truck, which was a one-time expense that landed early in the year; two, UDP front-loaded the costs of office renovations that will be reimbursed (in part) by UW later in the year; and three, UDP is front-loaded some spending this year which will be offset later this winter when booth sales pick-up (already 200+ applications) This should all start to even out in Q3.*

44534 – OED Grants: *UDP received a window-washing grant at the end of the year that wasn't expected.*

47000 – Program Fees: *These fees are largely influenced by the income from the U District Street Fair which will see 80% of its income realized in the next three months. \$137,000 was collected in the last few weeks, which will show up on the next budget report.*

47215 – Sponsorship Income: *Sponsorship income is up this year so far because of a new \$20,000 partnership with Square for Chow Down.*

43400 – Donations & Partnerships: *Recent donations have landed that are showing on this report, which came in higher than expected.*

Expense:

60000 – Staffing Expense: *The organization has been fully staffed this year, with the exception of interns and part-time employees. UDP hired a part-time Event Specialist in November and a part-time intern through the University of Washington in January. The underspend in staff costs will likely be offset by our underbudgeting for medical expenses, which may land us with a variance of \$5,000-\$10,000 by the end of the year.*

61100 – Accounting: *This is a timing issue. Greenwood Ohlund is completing the audit, which will close the gap on this variance in the months ahead.*

62150 – Renovations & Repairs: Renovations early in the calendar year are contributing to this timing issue. The UW will be covering some of the costs associated with our new lease and additional space in the building.

63300 – Staff Development: This expense is related to UDP's travel to the International Downtown Association and staff training. With rising costs of hotels and travel, there is an overspend that will persist, which can be better planned for next year.

70360 – Other Program Expenses: UDP received a grant from the Seattle Office of Economic Development to support window cleaning. This was \$30,000 in unanticipated spending that is offset by income that will appear on the grant income line above.

70370 – Printing & Reproduction: This is a timing issue. Boba Fest moved to July, which front-loaded the spending on printing for guides for two out of three of our print-heavy events.

Balance Sheet Report

The balance sheet shows an increase in accounts receivable, due to the recent OED grant for window washing. Lease rights and liability have increased this year with the extension of the lease with UW.

BIA Assessment Collections

UDP has been working with the city to ensure that the budget target of 95% collections is attained. The numbers below reflect collections through November, 2025. Billing goes out in June and December, so those numbers are updated twice annually.

Fiscal years 2019-2024 are on track with the first half of fiscal year 2025 still catching up as delinquent assessments roll in. In general the average UDBIA collection rate is higher than 95% over time, generally taking a couple of years for each fiscal year to hit this target.

Fiscal Year	Amount Billed	Amount Collected	Collection Rate
2019	\$946,505.32	\$940,514.37	99.37%
2020	\$1,215,841.04	\$1,202,900.28	98.94%
2021	\$1,271,712.04	\$1,251,462.63	98.41%
2022	\$1,325,847.14	\$1,301,525.72	98.17%
2023	\$1,596,501.52	\$1,560,596.33	97.75%
2024	\$1,760,687.52	\$1,706,579.94	96.93%
2025 (½)	\$909,168.56	\$ 846,931.64	93.15%

**The U District Partnership
Budget Report**

December 2025

	<u>Jul - Dec 25</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>	<u>\$ Over Budget</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense				
Income				
44430 · BIA Contract	1,143,133.93	1,099,293.98	43,839.95	2,165,377.94
44530 · Grants				
44537 · DON	12,500.00	12,500.00	0.00	12,500.00
44534 · OED	33,399.30	0.00	33,399.30	0.00
44536 · SPU	13,500.00	13,500.00	0.00	27,000.00
44530 · Grants - Other	1,400.00	0.00	1,400.00	0.00
Total 44530 · Grants	60,799.30	26,000.00	34,799.30	39,500.00
47000 · Program Fees	5,301.74	50,500.00	-45,198.26	238,000.00
47213 · Retail Sales	1,283.26	2,000.02	-716.76	2,500.00
47215 · Sponsorships	63,166.81	41,999.98	21,166.83	78,500.00
43400 · Donations/Partnerships	155,370.00	130,000.02	25,369.98	150,000.00
46400 · Interest and Other	6,858.36	0.00	6,858.36	0.00
Total Income	1,435,913.40	1,349,794.00	86,119.40	2,673,877.94
Gross Profit	1,435,913.40	1,349,794.00	86,119.40	2,673,877.94
Expense				
60000 · Staffing Expenses				
60100 · Wages & Salaries	585,124.76	597,256.53	-12,131.77	1,220,513.03
60020 · Payroll Taxes	51,128.83	50,363.41	765.42	102,975.75
60030 · Medical Benefits	53,914.51	46,483.97	7,430.54	92,968.19
60040 · Retirement Benefits	12,208.13	16,210.27	-4,002.14	32,420.59
60050 · Transit Benefit	4,116.31	1,500.00	2,616.31	3,000.00
Total 60000 · Staffing Expenses	706,492.54	711,814.18	-5,321.64	1,451,877.56
61000 · Professional Expenses				
61100 · Accounting Fees	15,750.00	23,000.00	-7,250.00	32,000.00
61110 · HR Consulting	0.00	999.98	-999.98	2,000.00
61120 · Legal Fees	1,848.00	999.98	848.02	2,000.00
Total 61000 · Professional Expenses	17,598.00	24,999.96	-7,401.96	36,000.00
62000 · Office and Overhead Expenses				
62150 · Renovations & Repairs	24,078.76	19,000.04	5,078.72	38,000.00
63600 · Banking and Service Fees	541.73	849.98	-308.25	17,100.00
62800 · Dues & Subscriptions	2,192.76	849.98	1,342.78	1,700.00
62200 · Insurance	9,828.47	9,800.00	28.47	9,800.00
63100 · Licenses and Permits	2,499.02	3,560.00	-1,060.98	21,620.00
63120 · Merchandise	0.00	999.98	-999.98	2,000.00
62300 · Office Equipment	4,981.36	5,000.02	-18.66	10,000.00
62900 · Postage & Mailing	218.14	199.99	18.15	400.03
62100 · Rent and Monthly Parking	58,179.66	56,579.65	1,600.01	114,759.35
63300 · Staff Development	20,465.25	13,200.00	7,265.25	13,200.00
62400 · Office Supplies	4,535.66	2,499.98	2,035.68	5,000.00
62700 · Technology and Software	12,698.23	12,425.02	273.21	24,850.00
62600 · Telephone	1,554.24	909.98	644.26	1,820.00
62500 · Local Travel and Meetings	4,467.21	2,749.96	1,717.25	5,600.00

**The U District Partnership
Budget Report**

December 2025

	Jul - Dec 25	YTD Budget	\$ Over Budget	Annual Budget
Total 62000 · Office and Overhead Expenses	146,240.49	128,624.58	17,615.91	265,849.38
70000 · Direct Program Expenses				
70310 · Committee & Board Meetings	5,722.45	4,250.02	1,472.43	8,500.00
70335 · Program Supplies	18,363.52	18,349.98	13.54	44,550.00
70300 · Advertising	7,196.93	5,250.00	1,946.93	13,000.00
70320 · Contracted Services	273,481.21	269,200.04	4,281.17	624,450.00
70340 · Equipment Rental	18,596.00	21,000.00	-2,404.00	76,000.00
70350 · Event Entertainment	6,890.00	9,000.00	-2,110.00	26,600.00
70360 · Other Program Expenses	71,210.83	55,750.04	15,460.79	93,500.00
70370 · Printing and Reproduction	21,373.55	16,550.02	4,823.53	33,551.00
Total 70000 · Direct Program Expenses	422,834.49	399,350.10	23,484.39	920,151.00
Total Expense	1,293,165.52	1,264,788.82	28,376.70	2,673,877.94
Net Ordinary Income	142,747.88	85,005.18	57,742.70	0.00
Net Income	142,747.88	85,005.18	57,742.70	0.00

The U District Partnership
Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison
As of December 31, 2025

	<u>Dec 31, 25</u>	<u>Dec 31, 24</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings			
10100 · Operating Bank Accounts			
10110 · WSECU Checking	82,992.03	285,730.10	-202,738.07
10111 · WSECU Savings	160,957.10	160,490.27	466.83
Total 10100 · Operating Bank Accounts	<u>243,949.13</u>	<u>446,220.37</u>	<u>-202,271.24</u>
Total Checking/Savings	<u>243,949.13</u>	<u>446,220.37</u>	<u>-202,271.24</u>
Accounts Receivable	248,627.26	136,284.79	112,342.47
Other Current Assets			
12026 · Lease Rights	387,321.49	33,119.29	354,202.20
12022 · Prepaid Expense	952.35	1,000.10	-47.75
12021 · Employee Advances	0.00	-3.16	3.16
Total Other Current Assets	<u>388,273.84</u>	<u>34,116.23</u>	<u>354,157.61</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>880,850.23</u>	<u>616,621.39</u>	<u>264,228.84</u>
Fixed Assets			
15000 · Furniture and Equipment	27,334.29	16,449.57	10,884.72
Total Fixed Assets	<u>27,334.29</u>	<u>16,449.57</u>	<u>10,884.72</u>
Other Assets			
17025 · Security Deposits	8,235.87	8,235.87	0.00
Total Other Assets	<u>8,235.87</u>	<u>8,235.87</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>916,420.39</u>	<u>641,306.83</u>	<u>275,113.56</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	-329.92	-6,656.23	6,326.31
Credit Cards	7,180.33	380.86	6,799.47
Other Current Liabilities			
20220 · Lease Liability	426,412.09	33,880.56	392,531.53
20210 · Deferred Revenue	0.00	274,708.48	-274,708.48
24000 · Payroll Liabilities	51,974.11	62,584.79	-10,610.68
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>478,386.20</u>	<u>371,173.83</u>	<u>107,212.37</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>485,236.61</u>	<u>364,898.46</u>	<u>120,338.15</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>485,236.61</u>	<u>364,898.46</u>	<u>120,338.15</u>
Equity			
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	288,435.90	267,474.67	20,961.23
Net Income	142,747.88	8,933.70	133,814.18
Total Equity	<u>431,183.78</u>	<u>276,408.37</u>	<u>154,775.41</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>916,420.39</u>	<u>641,306.83</u>	<u>275,113.56</u>

To: U District Partnership Board
From: Urban Vitality Committee
Date: January 20, 2026
Subject: U District Subarea Plan

U District Subarea Plan Priorities

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to brief the U District Partnership (UDP) Board on the City of Seattle's upcoming U District Subarea Plan and to outline the **six priority focus areas** that UDP staff and the Urban Vitality Committee recommend centering in our engagement. These priorities are the result of extensive UDP strategic planning outreach to the community, committee discussions, public-realm audit findings, and retreat activities conducted throughout 2024-2025. Early clarity and Board alignment will allow UDP staff to enter the City's process with some direction and established high-level priorities from this community.

Context

Seattle's Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD) will launch the U District Subarea Plan process in early 2026. Subarea plans translate the citywide Comprehensive Plan into neighborhood-specific strategies for land use, housing, mobility, public space, climate resilience, and economic development, resulting in adopted City policy that guides growth for the next 20+ years. Typical components include community visioning, technical analysis, regulatory recommendations, and identification of priority capital projects.

This work fits within a long lineage of planning for the U District, including the [U District Economic Development Strategy](#) (2013), the [U District Urban Design Framework](#) (2013), [U District Green Street Concept Plan](#) (2015), [U District Parks Plan](#) (2015) and the [2017 rezone](#) which resulted in [additional planning commitments](#) to the neighborhood including the [U District Neighborhood Design Guidelines](#) (2019). All share a common vision: creating a lively, walkable, transit-oriented urban center; and sustaining strong collaboration among the City, UW, and the community.

The Subarea Plan, however, carries a different level of authority and impact than previous neighborhood plans. While earlier efforts were largely programmatic or design-oriented, a Subarea Plan consolidates land use, mobility, housing, equity, climate, open space, and implementation phasing into a single governing framework with regulatory authority under the Growth Management Act. It has the ability to establish the next generation of zoning tools; streetscape, design standards, level of service standards; city policies, levels of service, and capital-project priorities. For example – while the 2013 U District Economic Development Strategy identified actions to support business-district vitality—the upcoming Subarea Plan can pair policies with regulatory implementation tools, infrastructure planning, and long-term investment strategies. As such, it represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to guide how the district evolves through 2047.

Additionally, the U District's new designation as a Regional Center widens the geographic and policy scope of this planning effort. The Subarea Plan will extend beyond what is typically considered the U District neighborhood boundaries (see *Appendix A*) to include areas such as the University Village shopping center. It will require stakeholders to think holistically about the district rather than centering solely on The Ave as many past plans have done. As a Regional Center, the plan must also respond to a broader and more interconnected set of community pressures: rapid development, transit-oriented growth, small-business stability, public-realm performance, safety and social-service needs, shifting travel patterns, and climate resilience.

To coordinate across this broad range of topic areas, OPCD's four-phase process stretches from late 2025 through 2027:

- *Phase 1: Scoping & Existing Conditions (Q3–Q4 2025)*
- *Phase 2: Early Engagement & Policy Development (Q1–Q3 2026)*
- *Phase 3: Draft Plan Production & Feedback (Q4 2026–Q2 2027)*
- *Phase 4: Final Plan & Adoption (Q3–Q4 2027)*

In practice, timelines often shift as long-range planning projects move through the initial scoping and draft plan production phases. UDP staff will track the City's progress and keep the Board updated as the schedule evolves. Early alignment on Board priorities will position UDP staff to enter the subarea planning process in 2026 with a clear understanding of what community goals are most important to elevate during scoping, alternatives, and draft policies.

Six Key Priorities

Based on committee discussions, recent neighborhood analyses, stakeholder input, and alignment with UDP's mission, vision, and values, the Urban Vitality Committee recommends emphasizing the following **six priority areas** during the Subarea Plan process.

1. Protect small businesses by preserving the high-concentration of small commercial spaces and preventing displacement. The U District's ground-floor commercial spaces are one of its key assets. Yet rising rents and redevelopment pressures are displacing small businesses and replacing diverse storefronts with fewer, often larger and more homogenized retail spaces across the city. This trend limits pathways to local prosperity, cultural expression, and community vibrancy. Preserving the U District's dense and diverse commercial district will require a coordinated effort and may involve revisiting prior work, including the 2017 rezone economic analysis and the strategic planning that preceded UDP, both of which identified the district's distinct business needs and potential incentives.

Beyond redevelopment pressures, many businesses face daily challenges such as theft, aggressive behavior, and illegal street vending that directly affect safety and economic viability. Through the Subarea Plan, strategies should be explored to address commercial affordability while preserving the density of commercial activity central to the neighborhood's identity. These strategies could include land-use incentives that require minimum ground-floor commercial square footage; neighborhood-specific development bonuses such as transfer of development rights; protections for legacy businesses; and coordinated approaches to safety, management, and enforcement. UDP's ongoing work tracking the loss of small commercial spaces and supporting business transitions during construction provides real-time insight to inform these recommendations.

2. Invest in infrastructure that supports growth, resilience, and daily use. Many businesses still lack reliable, modern infrastructure—such as high-speed internet, efficient solid-waste service, adequate electrical or water capacity, and functional alleys—even as streets are repeatedly disrupted by utility upgrades tied to new, dense development. While these investments are necessary, utility planning is often driven by individual permit applications rather than a coordinated, district-scale approach aligned with long-term zoning capacity and growth. Responsibility spans multiple departments and providers—including Seattle Public Utilities, the Office of Economic Development, Seattle Department of Transportation, and private utilities—each playing an important role, but without a unified framework to align investments and service delivery.

The Subarea Plan should provide that coordinating framework by aligning roles and priorities across partners and advancing strategies such as district energy and waste-management systems, alley modernization, expanded loading zones, and updates to broadband franchise agreements. UDP is already advancing related work, including alley assessments and collaboration with solid-waste providers that will directly inform planning recommendations.

3. Support housing diversity to meet a wide range of community needs. Escalating land costs and limited buildable area continue to constrain affordable and workforce housing production, even as zoning changes aim to increase overall supply. To be effective, future housing policies must be grounded in real market conditions and an understanding of how demand will evolve over the next decade. This includes examining projected demographic shifts, household composition, and affordability needs, as well as the role of the University of Washington’s student housing development program and its interaction with the private housing market.

There is a need for more affordable and family-sized housing. The neighborhood would benefit from larger units that can support multigenerational households, long-term residents, and a broader mix of incomes—so the U District can remain livable for people at all stages of life, not just students. In addition to affordability, accessibility and universal design elements should be incorporated into planning for the future. The Subarea Plan should examine inclusionary housing tools, innovative development models, partnerships with mission-driven housing providers, opportunities to re-purpose and/or reclaim public or institutional land, and strategies to encourage a wider range of unit sizes. UDP’s collective experience with student housing trends, workforce housing needs, and redevelopment patterns provides a strong foundation for shaping these policy conversations.

4. Improve public spaces and essential facilities to foster belonging. The U District’s growing population continues to lack sufficient access to everyday facilities such as parks, open space, and public restrooms. In 2015, the University of Washington funded the development of a U District Parks and Open Space Plan—adopted by the City following an extensive public outreach process led by MAKERS—but little implementation has occurred to date. While the district has seen the development of Fritz-Hedges Waterway Park, the Subarea Plan presents an opportunity to revisit and update this adopted framework, assess future demographic and recreation-demand growth, and prioritize additional phased investments. The federal investment in a feasibility study to explore the potential

for a lid over Interstate 5 in the U District is another opportunity to be explored and planned for in the Subarea Plan.

Underused assets—such as the waterfront, mid-block connections, and key plazas—could be more designed and funded to be more actively programmed. Potential Subarea Plan strategies may include new public spaces, shared-street pilots, POPS enhancements, restroom facilities, and waterfront improvements, paired with public-realm safety upgrades such as improved/consistent lighting, updated urban design guidelines and coordinated enforcement so that families, students, and visitors feel comfortable spending time in the district, especially in the evening. UDP's current public-realm efforts—including tree lighting, plaza activation and maintenance of outdoor dining tables and wayfinding—offer practical insight into existing gaps and near-term opportunities.

5. Coordinate mobility and curb space use to support a diversity of access, safety and connectivity. The U District's transportation needs are shaped by the intensity of activity within a compact geography. High-frequency transit, round-the-clock use, dense intersections, and a concentration of over 350 groundfloor businesses (including 160 restaurants) place sustained pressure on streets, sidewalks, and curb space—amplifying conflicts among pedestrians, transit riders, cyclists, deliveries, and drivers.

As a result, the district requires improvements across the mobility network: upgraded and better-integrated transit infrastructure, clearer pedestrian wayfinding, safer intersections, completed north/south and east/west bike connections, and better management of loading, parking, and micromobility. Potential Subarea Plan proposals could include a commercial overlay to specify curb-space reallocation, flexible use of remaining parking areas and covered bus stops, connected bike corridors, improved wayfinding, and connections to regional mobility hubs. UDP's work on bike corrals, alley load zones, parking, and wayfinding provides important real-world data to guide these recommendations.

6. Better coordinate resources to support social services and safety strategies. A recurring concern related to identity and experience is the need for better-integrated planning and investment in human services and public safety. While the Urban Vitality Committee will focus on the infrastructure and planning priorities outlined above, UDP and its partners will continue to engage with local government and nonprofit service providers to support Seattle's fastest-growing neighborhood—ensuring adequate resources, dedicated service levels, and the public health, safety, and human-services infrastructure needed to thrive over the coming decades.

Across all these priority areas, the committee also stresses the importance of protecting and strengthening the U District's unique identity—its cultural vibrancy, small-business ecosystem, academic and arts presence, and walkable urban character—as redevelopment accelerates. Committee members emphasized that building design and ground-floor use are cross-cutting factors influencing small-business vitality, safety, mobility, public-space success, and neighborhood identity. The Subarea Plan is a key opportunity to align zoning, design standards, and incentives so that new development consistently contributes to an active, welcoming, and cohesive street-level experience.

While these six priorities reflect areas of strong alignment that emerged through the Urban Vitality Committee's discussions, public-realm audit, retreat activities, and iterative review of draft materials, Committee members also provided additional comments and issue-specific ideas that are documented separately and will be tracked by UDP staff and the committee throughout the Subarea Plan process, with the intent of elevating them at appropriate points during scoping, engagement, and policy development.

Next Steps

The Urban Vitality Committee emphasized that strong communication, transparent information-sharing, and ongoing relationship-building with City partners, residents, UW, businesses, and other community stakeholders will be essential for participating effectively in the subarea planning process. To ensure that UDP's priorities are considered early in the Subarea Plan process, staff will work with the UDP Board towards the following milestones:

- **January 20, 2026 - *Scoping Priorities*** The Board will review the recommended priority areas and confirm UDP's core goals heading into the City's scoping phase. Staff will integrate Board guidance into briefing materials while continuing coordination with UW, community, and City departments.
- **February/March 17, 2026 - *Public Engagement Strategy*** Staff will provide updates on the City's engagement approach, early scoping topics, and the schedule for Phases 1 and 2 of the Subarea Plan. UDP will work to ensure community voices are well-represented throughout.

As specific proposals begin to emerge through the community engagement and policy development process, the Urban Vitality Committee will provide the Board with a short analysis (see example in *Attachment B*) of specific proposals that relate to the six priority topic areas. Board input will likely be needed at three key milestones:

- Public visioning (mid-2026)
- Release of the Public Review Draft (early 2027)
- Review of the Final Plan prior to City Council adoption (late 2027)

While the Subarea Plan will influence the district's long-term land use, mobility, housing, and public-realm framework, the Urban Vitality Committee also noted that it is not the only path for impact. UDP will continue advancing improvements through ongoing programs and partnerships to meet near-term community needs alongside the multi-year planning effort.

Attachments

- [Attachment A. Regional Center Map](#)
- [Attachment B. Sample Issue Matrix](#)

Attachment B. Sample Issue Matrix

The example provided here is a sample of the concise analyses the Board will receive as specific Subarea Plan proposals begin to surface. The issue matrix below is a decision-support tool that helps UDP assess emerging proposals against its priority areas and anticipate potential benefits, risks, and community impacts.

Issue	Relevance <i>Are the constituencies impacted by this issue primarily U District constituencies? Does this issue primarily, uniquely or exclusively impact the U District?</i>	Role <i>Are other organizations working on this? Should the UDP lead on this issue, or is it more appropriate to support the work of another organization?</i>	Impact <i>Can we make a difference? Where does this fit when compared to our other priorities?</i>	Risks <i>What is the potential fallout from taking a position? What is the potential fallout from not taking a position? Is there general consensus among our constituencies on this issue?</i>
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Appendix A.

U District Subarea

These maps illustrate how the **U District Neighborhood** (left) differs from the **U District Subarea** (right), which will form the basis for the City of Seattle's upcoming Subarea Plan.

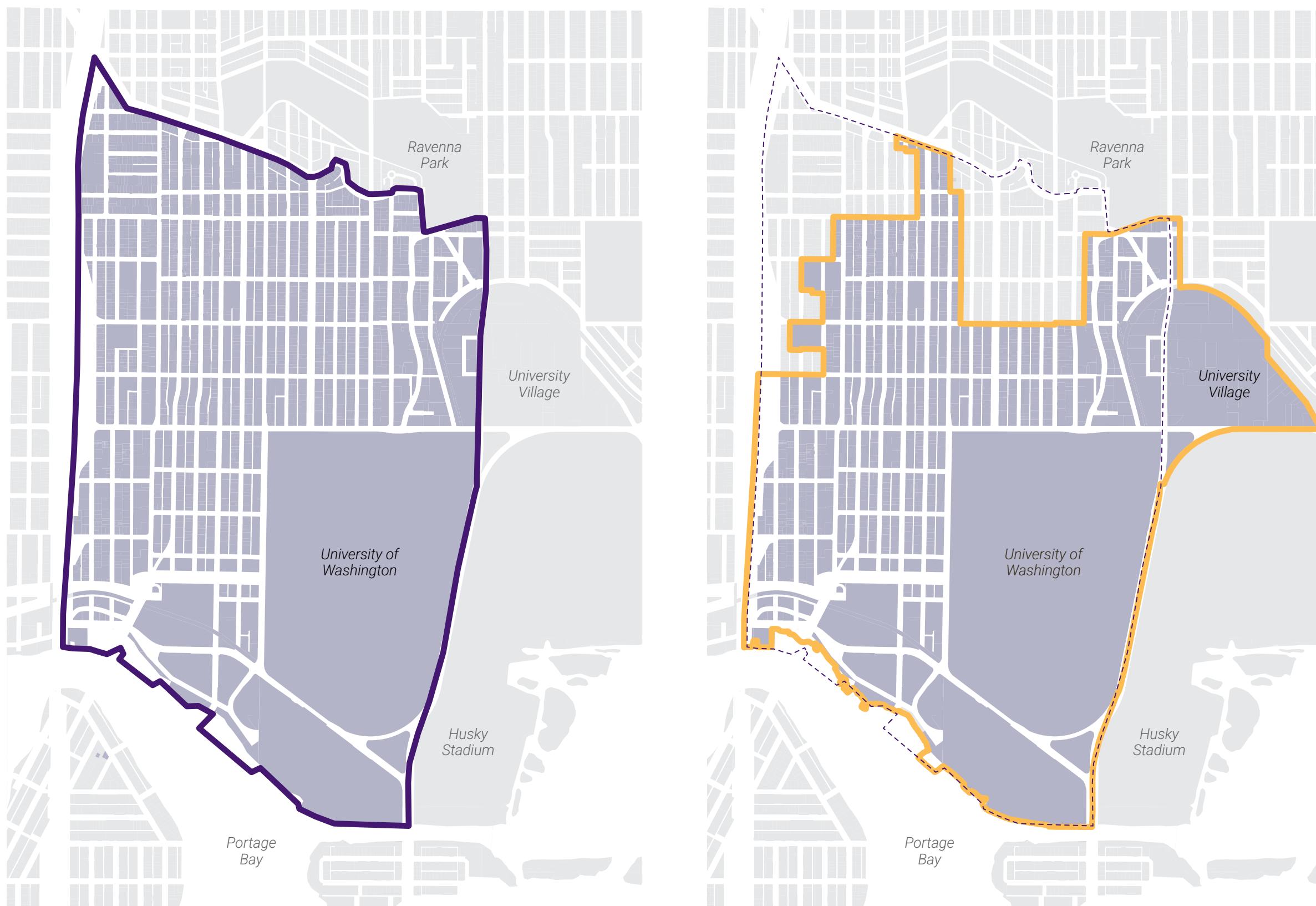
Because the U District Subarea boundary includes additional areas—such as University Village—the population, housing, and employment figures differ slightly, as shown in the table below.

NEIGHBORHOOD	SUBAREA
Population	35,600
Housing Units	15,900
Employment	32,388

0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile

■ U District Neighborhood Boundary
■ U District Subarea Boundary

Data Sources: City of Seattle (2024), Puget Sound Regional Council (2023)



Data Sources: City of Seattle (2024), Puget Sound Regional Council (2023)



Shruti Shah

Shruti Shah is an experienced financial leader with over ten years of progressive experience across a range of industries. For the past 3.5 years, she has served as the Chief Financial Officer at the University Book Store, where she oversees the accounting and IT departments and supports strong operational and financial performance. Previously, she worked at a government-funded nonprofit in British Columbia, managing more than \$100 million in public funding. She brings strong financial acumen, a strategic mindset, and a proven ability to lead teams and navigate complex environments. Outside of work, she's an avid pickleball player and has a growing interest in real estate investment opportunities, particularly as ADU regulations continue to evolve across King County neighborhoods.



Ashley Van Dragt - Prospective UDP Board Member

Ashley Van Dragt serves as the pastor of Church on The Ave and is also the program director for Friday Feast, one of the longest-running soup kitchens in Seattle, located on The Ave. Ashley has previously served on the ROOTS board and is currently a member of the school commission for the local Catholic school her children attend. She enjoys serving the community, creating spaces for connection, and frequenting the cafes and eateries on The Ave. Ashley is a parent of two boys (ages 10 and 8) and in her spare time, she can be found with her kids on youth sports sidelines, gardening, or reading.



Program Reports

UDP Board of Directors

January 20, 2026

CLEAN, SAFE & OUTREACH

Transition to Self-Watering Flower Baskets in 2026

The U District Partnership will be piloting a self-watering flower basket system in 2026 that aims to improve plant health while reducing long current labor demands on the Clean Team.

For many years, staff have manually watered approximately 75 hanging flower baskets seven days per week throughout the spring and summer season. This work required roughly 21 staff hours per week from May through October. During periods of extreme heat, extra watering was required to avoid plant loss and pest infestations.

To address these challenges, UDP has ordered 75 self-watering flower baskets designed to retain moisture for multiple days. Once installed, watering frequency will be reduced from daily service to approximately three days per week. This change is expected to save an estimated 312 staff hours per season, allowing the Clean Team to redirect time toward additional cleaning and public realm maintenance while improving the consistency and appearance of the baskets.

Installation is scheduled to take place after the University District Street Fair to accommodate space constraints for booths. At the end of the season, the baskets will be removed, returned to the grower, and stored for replanting and reuse. The system is designed for a lifespan of at least ten years, allowing this improvement to deliver ongoing operational efficiencies and visual enhancement for years to come.

UDP would like to thank the University District Rotary for their support of this pilot project. Their investment in the initial 25 baskets has helped bring self-watering baskets to multiple blocks in the heart of the U District and supports a visible, long term improvement to the neighborhood's public realm.

Public Safety Committee

The U District Partnership convened a Public Safety Meeting on January 15 that primarily focused on the drug market affecting several blocks around NE 47th Street. The goal of the meeting was to establish a shared understanding of persistent challenges in the area, including open air drug market activity, public safety impacts, solid waste mismanagement, streetscape deficiencies, and economic development concerns. UDP outlined observed conditions and documented impacts based on daily on the ground presence, stakeholder outreach, and coordination with public agencies.

During the meeting, UDP summarized work completed to date, including Ambassador observations, coordination with the Seattle Police Department, engagement with property owners and businesses, and exploration of potential physical environment improvements. The group then had an open conversation about potential interventions and strategies that could improve public safety in that area. Community input from that discussion will guide how the UDP moves forward with their efforts to improve conditions. Anyone interested in joining this conversation should reach out to Marcus Johnson.

Monthly Homeless Census

UDP conducts a monthly homeless census to track changes in the unsheltered population and guide outreach and case conferencing efforts. The census uses the same method each month so trends can be monitored over time.

A dedicated census shift is assigned every month to document individuals in doorways, alleys, vehicles, encampments, and other known locations. Counts are recorded by location, number of people, structures present, and whether individuals are known to Ambassadors.

The most recent census (shown in green below) identified 46 individuals living unsheltered in the U District. The highest count recorded was in 2021, at 150 people living outside. This information helps guide outreach priorities and supports coordination with City departments and service providers throughout the month.

DATE OF COUNT	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
01/14/2025	46
12/10/2025	32
10/15/2025	37
09/04/2025	83
08/06/2025	48
07/24/2025	79
07/02/2025	62
06/11/2025	68

*Counts over 50 are bolded.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

U District Economic Report

Beginning last fall, Hannah, Polly and Don have been working closely together to produce a 2026 U District Economic Report, which will be released in mid-February. The report aims to tell the story of the U District's economy, giving a snapshot in time of the recent development, resident and small business growth in the area. The report will be printed into a booklet that can be distributed to media and interested parties. It will also be available on the UDP website.

U District Business Openings & Closures

Closures:

- Varsity Theater
- Angkor Wok
- Ave Smoke and Vape
- ThreadsOhSix

Upcoming Openings:

- Elixir (frmr Oasis space)
- Raising Cane's (early 2026)
- Planet Fitness (frmr Petco space)
- Mina's (frmr Lulumiere space)
- Sinner's Pizza (frmr Supreme Pizza space)
- AT&T (in Trailside Living building)

PLACEMAKING & URBAN VITALITY

Transportation & Infrastructure Updates

Finally, the Revive I-5 freeway closures have begun again! Express lanes will run northbound only 24 hours a day for all Revive I-5 lane reductions and closures in 2026. Those traveling to or through Seattle may experience traffic delays as the express lanes will not run southbound like they typically do during the morning hours. Northbound lane work is intended to continue through the end of the year.

Call for Artists Launches in January

UDP will release a Call for Artists this week for a temporary public-art installation at the U District LINK light rail station area. The opportunity includes a project budget of up to \$15,000 and seeks artist-led proposals that enhance the station area as a welcoming, engaging public space. Applications will be due March 15, 2026, with artist selection anticipated in spring 2026. Installation is expected to occur in June–July 2026, with an installation period of approximately one to three months.

Welcome Erik Rayas, Urban Vitality Intern

The U District Partnership continues to strengthen its partnership with the University of Washington through student learning and applied research collaborations. This month, the team welcomed a new intern, Erik Rayas, who will support urban vitality projects while gaining hands-on professional experience through UW's Community-Based Learning & Research (CBE) Program. UDP is also working with a UW urban planning and geography class to develop neighborhood-specific data and analysis that will inform planning, advocacy, and place-based decision-making in the U District.

Subarea Planning to Ramp-Up in 2026

The UDP Urban Vitality Committee has prepared a presentation and update on the comprehensive plan and subsequent sub-area planning process for the January UDP Board meeting. Over the last six months, the Urban Vitality Committee has been working hard to gather, digest, and discuss community feedback, committee discussions, and public realm audit findings from 2024-2025. This feedback has informed recommended priority topics for the UDP Board and staff to focus their engagement with the City's subarea planning process. Receiving early clarity and Board alignment on priority issue areas will help to shape UDP staff work as they enter the City's process by providing high-level direction and priorities from the community.

EVENTS

Winter Window Walk & Contest (December 5-14)

Winners: 1st Place: Woolly Mammouth, Runners Up: Danaca Designs & Bierierria Pepe El Toro

In December, The U District Partnership hosted the second annual Winter Window display competition—a promotion that aims to create a friendly competition while beautifying the neighborhood. This year, nearly 20 local businesses opted to compete. The winner, as voted by their fellow competitors, received \$1000. Two runners up each received \$500 to a U District business of their choice.



U District Cherry Blossom Festival (Spring 2026)

Sign-up is open now for the annual [U District Cherry Blossom Festival](#). Dates for the festival typically fall between mid-March and early-April. Estimated dates March 20-April 5, 2026.

This year, The U District Partnership will be encouraging people to experience the blossoms with a special

evening activation, up-lighting the cherry blossom trees during peak bloom. Wander the romantic pink blossoms after dining on your cherry blossom-themed dinner in the neighborhood. Tentative date is Tuesday, March 31.

U District Street Fair (May 16-17)

Booth sales and planning for the 55th annual U District Street Fair launched on December 1, with over 230 applications received to date. The Street Fair poster design contest returned this year with high-quality artist submissions! Look forward to the winning poster design being announced in February.