

THE DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

UDP BOARD MEETING AGENDA

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

January 17, 2026

Happy Lunar New Year!

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

I.	Welcome & Introductions	Aaron	11:30 a.m.
II.	Public Comment	Public	11:35 a.m.
III.	Guest Speaker: North Precinct Captain George Davisson		11:40 a.m.
IV.	Approval of December Meeting Minutes	Aaron	12:00 a.m. (Vote)
V.	UDP Finance Committee Report ● <i>Acceptance of January 2025 UDP Financials</i>	Trevor	12:05 p.m. (Vote)
VI.	Governance Committee Report ● <i>UDP Board nomination: Ashley Van Dragt - Pastor, Church on The Ave</i>	Rick	12:15 p.m.
VII.	Economic Development Report & Communications	Hannah/Polly	12:25 p.m.
VIII.	Housing & Retail Legislation	Janet	12:40 p.m. (Vote)
IX.	Public Safety Committee Updates	Marcus	12:45 p.m.
X.	Cherry Blossom & Street Fair Updates	Lauren	12:50 p.m.
XI.	New UDP Business	Aaron	12:55 p.m.
XII.	Adjourn Meeting	Aaron	1:00 p.m.

UDP Board Meeting Minutes

11:30am to 1:00pm

January 20, 2026

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
Stephen Antupit – U District Resident
Emily Scully – Shultz's Bar & Grill

Darren Rose - 206 Properties
Jessie Quan – Ladd & Lass Brewing, Secretary
Miles Richardson – Audi Seattle/University VW
Paul Yunker – U District Food Bank
Jeremy Eknian – UW Real Estate
Anna Sorokina – WSECU

UDP Board Members Not in Attendance

Josh Gana – UW Housing & Food Services
Don Schulze – UDPA
Alfred Shiga – Shiga's Imports
Anson Lin – Astora Construction

Julie Blakeslee – UW Planning
Katie Betz – Urban Renaissance Group
Naomi Lewis – Luminati Labs
Maya Lu – Boba Up
Lois Ko - Sweet Alchemy

UDP Staff

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

Janet Lee – Urban Vitality Manager
Nikki Somers – Operations Manager
Polyanna Yokokawa – Marketing Manager
Phil Lloyd – Seattle CFO
Kaitlin Huffman - Seattle CFO

Guests

Shruti Shah - University Book Store
Matt Smith - Greenwood Ohlund CPA
Phil Duff - Boulder Associates

Ashley Van Dragt - Chapel on the Ave
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

Rick J. started the meeting, with a round of introductions.

Public Comment

Rick J. called for public comment, there was no public comment.

Approval of UDP Board Meeting Minutes

Rick J. introduced the December 2025 meeting minutes, asked for any questions or amendments.

Motion: Trevor P. moved to accept the December 2025 UDP Board meeting minutes.

Second: Miles R. seconded the motion.

Abstentions: Stephen A. abstained

Approval: The motion was approved.

UDP Finance Committee Update and Approval of the Financials

Trevor P introduced Matt S. with Greenwood Ohlund who gave an overview of the FY 2024 audit for the year ending on June 30, 2025. Highlights included financial statements audit and internal control over financial reporting.

Motion: On behalf of the Finance Committee, Trevor P. moved to accept the 2024 audit as presented at the January 20, 2026 Board Meeting.

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

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

Next Trevor P. provided a comprehensive narrative and high-level overview of the current financial report. Key highlights included that UDP is on course for spending appropriately, with a couple of variations which included medical expenses and the staff development budget.

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 December 2025 financials as presented at the January 20, 2026 Board Meeting.

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

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Director Report

Next Don B. offered insight into several policy issues that were bubbling up this month. These included the Washington State Legislature and a bill they were considering that would require any Washington city with more than 30,000 residents to allow residential development by-right, and in its initial form would have barred those cities from requiring ground-floor retail storefronts in those areas, even in areas where mixed-use development is already allowed. Don and Janet were working to educate legislators about the impact that this type of legislation would have on established commercial districts like the U District. Other issues raised involved BIA policies and classification at the City and State level.

U District Subarea Plan Priorities

Stephen A. and Phil D. offered an in-depth look at The U District Subarea Plan priorities and purpose. The Urban Vitality Committee presented six priority focus areas which include protecting small businesses from displacement; investing in infrastructure that supports growth, resilience, and daily use; supporting housing diversity; improving public spaces; coordinating mobility and curb space use; and better coordinating resources to support social services.

Note: A full narrative of this U District Subarea Plan is included in the UDP Board meeting packet.

Motion: On behalf of the Urban Vitality Committee, Stephen A. requested the Board for action to continue the work on U District Subarea Plan Priorities as presented at the January 20, 2026 Board Meeting.

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

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

Urban Vitality

Janet L. announced UDP will release a Call for Artists for a temporary public-art installation at the U District LINK light rail station area. The opportunity will have a budget and seeks artist-led proposals that enhance the station area as a welcoming public space. Applications are due March 15, 2026, with installations occurring in June-July 2026.

Next Janet L. welcomed UDP Intern Erik Rayas. Erik R. will support urban vitality projects while gaining hands-on professional experience through UW's Community-Based Learning & Research (CBE) Program. Janet L. also noted that UDP is working with UW urban planning and geography class to develop neighborhood-specific data & analysis.

Lastly, Janet L. offered an update on the Revive I-5 freeway closures, along with other infrastructure updates.

Clean & Safe Program Report

Marcus J. started with a recap of the recent Public Safety Planning meeting that was held on January 15, 2026. The key topic discussed was the drug market at NE 47th St, and how to unpack the issues and the safety of this corner.

Next Marcus J. reported on the new self-watering flower baskets which will reduce staff labor costs and improve plant health. Thank you to the University Rotary Club for contributing to this pilot program.

Economic Development Report

Hannah K. gave an in-depth overview of the most recent U District business openings and closures. Hannah K. also reminded people to keep an eye out for the long anticipated Economic Development report, scheduled for release late February 2026.

U District Events

Lauren C. noted that the Cherry Blossom Festival is coming soon, and business sign up deadline is January 30, 2026. This year's Cherry Blossom Festival will include NIGHT Blossoms on March 31, so save the date.

Next Lauren C. offered an update on Street Fair planning, which will include new elements including a main stage partnership with the Neptune. She also mentioned that registration is open. The event will happen again on the third weekend in May, which is the 16 & 17, 2026.

Governance:

Rick J. welcomed Shruti Shah with University Book Store who will join the UDP Board. Shruti S. mentioned her closeness with the neighborhood and excitement to be part of the UDP Board.

Rick J. made the motion for "The Board accepts the nomination of Shruti Shah to the UDP Board of Directors for a three year term."

Motion: The motion came from the committee.

Second: No second needed.

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

Next, Rick J. introduced Ashley Van Dragt with Chapel on the Ave as a prospective board member. Ashley V. reflected on her years in the U District neighborhood and her love of the area.

Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

Don B. gave an update on the upcoming Board and Committee meetings.

New UDP Board Business

Rick J. called for new business, there was none.

UDP Board Adjournment

Rick J. adjourned the UDP Board meeting.



Finance Committee Report & Budget Narrative

Prepared on 2/9/26

This financial narrative provides a summary of The U District Partnership's financial statements as of January 31st, 2026.

Budget Report

At the time of this report, UDP has seen seven months of spending and income for FY 2026. There are some persistent variances, which include an underspend on staffing, an overspend on staff development, some income and spending variances related to a couple of unexpected city grants and some new spending on a nighttime component for the Cherry Blossom Festival. The numbers along the left side of the page correspond with the numbers on the budget report:

Income:

444300 – BIA Income: BIA income is up because UDP spending is up—primarily because of two factors. One, UDP is investing in self-watering flower baskets that will save staff time and be usable for years to come (representing a \$5,000 variance). Two, UDP is partnering with the University of Washington to host the first annual night blossom walk, which will require the rental of battery-powered lighting (resulting in a \$20,000 variance on spending, which will be covered by increased sponsorship).

44534 – OED Grants: UDP received a window-washing grant at the end of the year that wasn't expected. Also, UDP received a generous grant from the University District Rotary to support the self-watering flower baskets.

47000 – Program Fees: These fees are largely influenced by the income from the U District Street Fair and generally flow into the UDP coffers capriciously over the winter months. This variance represents a timing issue.

47215 – Sponsorship Income: Sponsorship for Chow Down came in about \$25,000 higher than anticipated, which is causing the majority of this variance.

43400 – Donations & Partnerships: Recent donations have landed that are showing on this report, which represent a \$20,000 increase in income over the projected budget.

43400 – Donations & Partnerships: This variance is attributable to a partial income related to unclaimed property in the form of uncashed checks.

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.

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.*

70340 · Equipment Rental: *UDP is renting new lighting to facilitate the night blossom walk on campus in late March—this represents a \$17,000 variance that will be covered by increased event sponsorship.*

70360 – Other Program Expenses: *UDP has purchased new water baskets that are self-watering. This wasn't in the budget, but was in-part, generously supported by the University District Rotary. The baskets will generate cost savings in staff for years ahead. UDP also 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 less cash on hand this year, but an increase in accounts receivable. Overall, assets are up a little this year. 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 December, 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	\$1,203,292.87	98.97%
2021	\$1,271,712.04	\$1,251,861.69	98.44%
2022	\$1,325,847.14	\$1,302,225.32	98.22%

2023	\$1,596,501.52	\$1,564,902.80	98.02%
2024	\$1,760,687.52	\$1,712,236.06	97.25%
2025 (½)	\$909,168.56	\$ 859,854.98	94.58%

**The U District Partnership
Budget Report**

January 2026

	Jul '25 - Jan 26	YTD Budget	\$ Over Budget	Annual Budget
Ordinary Income/Expense				
Income				
44430 · BIA Contract	1,355,070.13	1,299,476.30	55,593.83	2,165,377.94
44530 · Grants				
44539 · SDOT	1,400.00	0.00	1,400.00	0.00
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	5,000.00	0.00	5,000.00	0.00
Total 44530 · Grants	65,799.30	26,000.00	39,799.30	39,500.00
47000 · Program Fees	119,247.08	88,000.00	31,247.08	238,000.00
47213 · Retail Sales	1,226.31	2,083.35	-857.04	2,500.00
47215 · Sponsorships	74,166.81	42,416.65	31,750.16	78,500.00
43400 · Donations/Partnerships	153,699.00	133,333.35	20,365.65	150,000.00
46400 · Interest and Other	6,878.87	0.00	6,878.87	0.00
Total Income	1,776,087.50	1,591,309.65	184,777.85	2,673,877.94
Gross Profit	1,776,087.50	1,591,309.65	184,777.85	2,673,877.94
Expense				
60000 · Staffing Expenses				
60100 · Wages & Salaries	682,702.78	696,799.28	-14,096.50	1,220,513.03
60020 · Payroll Taxes	60,147.11	58,757.30	1,389.81	102,975.75
60030 · Medical Benefits	62,728.53	54,231.34	8,497.19	92,968.19
60040 · Retirement Benefits	14,321.29	18,911.99	-4,590.70	32,420.59
60050 · Transit Benefit	4,116.31	1,750.00	2,366.31	3,000.00
Total 60000 · Staffing Expenses	824,016.02	830,449.91	-6,433.89	1,451,877.56
61000 · Professional Expenses				
61100 · Accounting Fees	24,000.00	24,500.00	-500.00	32,000.00
61110 · HR Consulting	0.00	1,166.65	-1,166.65	2,000.00
61120 · Legal Fees	2,772.00	1,166.65	1,605.35	2,000.00
Total 61000 · Professional Expenses	26,772.00	26,833.30	-61.30	36,000.00
62000 · Office and Overhead Expenses				
62150 · Renovations & Repairs	26,116.16	22,166.70	3,949.46	38,000.00
63600 · Banking and Service Fees	677.01	891.65	-214.64	17,100.00
62800 · Dues & Subscriptions	2,302.72	991.65	1,311.07	1,700.00
62200 · Insurance	9,828.47	9,800.00	28.47	9,800.00
63100 · Licenses and Permits	2,499.02	3,570.00	-1,070.98	21,620.00
63120 · Merchandise	0.00	1,166.65	-1,166.65	2,000.00
62300 · Office Equipment	5,256.63	5,833.35	-576.72	10,000.00
62900 · Postage & Mailing	235.64	233.33	2.31	400.03
62100 · Rent and Monthly Parking	67,876.27	66,009.60	1,866.67	114,759.35
63300 · Staff Development	20,780.78	13,200.00	7,580.78	13,200.00
62400 · Office Supplies	4,810.31	2,916.65	1,893.66	5,000.00
62700 · Technology and Software	15,239.67	14,495.85	743.82	24,850.00
62600 · Telephone	2,421.56	1,061.65	1,359.91	1,820.00

**The U District Partnership
Budget Report**

January 2026

	<u>Jul '25 - Jan 26</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>	<u>\$ Over Budget</u>	<u>Annual Budget</u>
62500 · Local Travel and Meetings	<u>4,908.48</u>	<u>3,208.30</u>	<u>1,700.18</u>	<u>5,600.00</u>
Total 62000 · Office and Overhead Expenses	<u>162,952.72</u>	<u>145,545.38</u>	<u>17,407.34</u>	<u>265,849.38</u>
70000 · Direct Program Expenses				
70310 · Committee & Board Meetings	5,763.04	4,958.35	804.69	8,500.00
70335 · Program Supplies	19,025.52	20,266.65	-1,241.13	44,550.00
70300 · Advertising	7,478.18	5,375.00	2,103.18	13,000.00
70320 · Contracted Services	312,770.83	307,241.70	5,529.13	624,450.00
70340 · Equipment Rental	36,012.77	21,000.00	15,012.77	76,000.00
70350 · Event Entertainment	6,890.00	9,000.00	-2,110.00	26,600.00
70360 · Other Program Expenses	96,220.62	62,041.70	34,178.92	93,500.00
70370 · Printing and Reproduction	21,373.55	16,758.35	4,615.20	33,551.00
Total 70000 · Direct Program Expenses	<u>505,534.51</u>	<u>446,641.75</u>	<u>58,892.76</u>	<u>920,151.00</u>
Total Expense	<u>1,519,275.25</u>	<u>1,449,470.34</u>	<u>69,804.91</u>	<u>2,673,877.94</u>
Net Ordinary Income	<u>256,812.25</u>	<u>141,839.31</u>	<u>114,972.94</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Net Income	<u>256,812.25</u>	<u>141,839.31</u>	<u>114,972.94</u>	<u>0.00</u>

The U District Partnership
Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison
As of January 31, 2026

	Jan 31, 26	Jan 31, 25	\$ Change
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings			
10100 · Operating Bank Accounts			
10110 · WSECU Checking	195,730.37	362,515.44	-166,785.07
10111 · WSECU Savings	160,977.61	160,516.17	461.44
Total 10100 · Operating Bank Accounts	356,707.98	523,031.61	-166,323.63
Total Checking/Savings	356,707.98	523,031.61	-166,323.63
Accounts Receivable			
264,183.04	142,734.23	121,448.81	
Other Current Assets			
12026 · Lease Rights	379,062.38	33,119.29	345,943.09
12022 · Prepaid Expense	952.35	1,000.10	-47.75
12021 · Employee Advances	-47.39	-3.16	-44.23
Total Other Current Assets	379,967.34	34,116.23	345,851.11
Total Current Assets	1,000,858.36	699,882.07	300,976.29
Fixed Assets			
15000 · Furniture and Equipment	27,334.29	16,449.57	10,884.72
Total Fixed Assets	27,334.29	16,449.57	10,884.72
Other Assets			
17025 · Security Deposits	8,235.87	8,235.87	0.00
Total Other Assets	8,235.87	8,235.87	0.00
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>1,036,428.52</u>	<u>724,567.51</u>	<u>311,861.01</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	18,296.40	16,865.25	1,431.15
Credit Cards	2,795.57	6,947.30	-4,151.73
Other Current Liabilities			
20220 · Lease Liability	421,706.67	33,880.56	387,826.11
20210 · Deferred Revenue	0.00	274,708.48	-274,708.48
24000 · Payroll Liabilities	48,381.73	59,156.74	-10,775.01
Total Other Current Liabilities	470,088.40	367,745.78	102,342.62
Total Current Liabilities	491,180.37	391,558.33	99,622.04
Total Liabilities	491,180.37	391,558.33	99,622.04
Equity			
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	288,435.90	267,474.67	20,961.23
Net Income	256,812.25	65,534.51	191,277.74
Total Equity	545,248.15	333,009.18	212,238.97
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>1,036,428.52</u>	<u>724,567.51</u>	<u>311,861.01</u>



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

February 17, 2026

CLEAN, SAFE & OUTREACH

Public Safety Committee

On Thursday, February 12, The U District Partnership convened a Public Safety Walk with members of the Public Safety Committee to observe conditions in the area discussed during the Committee's previous meeting. The purpose of the walk was to ground the conversation in on-the-ground conditions, identify patterns and impacts in real time, and inform future coordination and strategy discussions.

The walk focused on the blocks surrounding NE 47th Street and University Way NE. Participants observed ongoing open air drug market activity, including large groups congregating in connection with that activity. These conditions continued to generate secondary impacts, including litter and visible disorder, affecting nearby businesses, residents, and adjacent public spaces.

Participants also noted environmental and physical conditions that contribute to the persistence of these issues. These included limited lighting in certain areas, alley conditions that facilitate concealment and congregation, and a lack of clear activation or positive use in some public right-of-way spaces. The group discussed how these physical conditions intersect with public safety challenges and influence behavior. The walk reinforced themes raised during the prior Public Safety Committee meeting, including the need for clearer coordination among stakeholders, the importance of aligning outreach and enforcement strategies, and the role that physical improvements may play in supporting longer term stabilization. The walk was intended as an initial step to ensure shared understanding before engaging in broader interdepartmental or elected official discussions.

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.

DATE OF COUNT	NO. OF PEOPLE
02/11/2026	34
01/14/2026	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

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 34 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.

*Counts over 50 are bolded.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2026 U District Economic Report

The long-awaited U District Economic Report will be unveiled at The U District Partnership's upcoming board meeting. Developed collaboratively by Hannah Kiburz (Economic Development Manager), Pollyanna Yokokawa (Marketing & Communications Manager), and Don Blakeney (Executive Director), the report tells the exciting story of the U District's recent growth through a blend of qualitative and quantitative data. Topics include increased visitor activity, investments in transit, new businesses, unprecedented real estate development, residential demographics, and the economic impact of the University of Washington.

The report will be produced as a printed booklet for distribution to media and other interested audiences and will also be available on the UDP website, udistrictpartnership.org.

U District Business Openings & Closures

Openings:

- Elixir
- Raising Cane's
- Mina's Matcha
- Alley Cat Bar
- Grean Matcha
- HAVN
- Pudgy Pho

Under New Ownership:

- Red Light Vintage

Closures:

- Dippy Fun
- Four Corner's Frames

Upcoming Openings:

- Planet Fitness
- Sinner's Pizza
- Lillie's Soulful Plate
- Tonight We Race



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Launching the Marketing Plan for the U District Economic Report

In tandem with the launch of the U District Economic Report, Marketing & Communications will execute a comprehensive outreach plan to amplify the report's key findings and showcase the neighborhood's economic vitality.

- **Media campaign:** A targeted media campaign will engage local business journalists, real estate reporters, and neighborhood beat writers to generate coverage of the report's most compelling data.
- **Digital & Print Distribution:** The report was designed with Keith Russell Design and will be available in both print and digital formats. Print copies will be distributed to key stakeholders including media partners, elected officials, major employers, developers, and business owners. The digital version will be hosted on udistrictpartnership.org as a downloadable PDF.

- **Speaker's Bureau:** A speaker's bureau will be developed to support messaging on categorized data, leverage existing relationships and partnerships; many of which participated in sharing data for the report.
- **Visual Assets:** A fresh catalog of neighborhood photography was produced by the creative team at Thread Theory Creative to capture the U District's current energy and transformation. These images support both the report narrative and ongoing marketing materials.

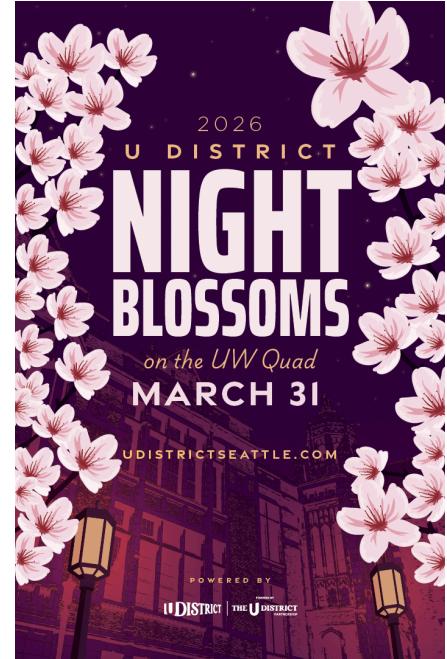
EVENTS

Fifth Annual U District Cherry Blossom Festival

The fifth annual U District Cherry Blossom Festival returns this spring with over 90 participating businesses! Restaurants, shops, entertainment venues, hotels, and more are all offering cherry and blossom-themed specials or perks during the festival dates. The festival dates will align with peak bloom of the historic trees on the UW Quad. Estimated dates are approximately March 20-April 5, 2026.

New this year! The U District Partnership will be encouraging people to experience the blossoms & the neighborhood with a special weeknight 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.

The anticipated Cherry Blossom Window Contest also returns with window designs bringing spring to the streets of the U District. Local businesses are encouraged to decorate their windows in Cherry Blossom themes. The winning business will receive \$1000 and two runners up will receive \$500 to the U District Business of their choice. Winners are chosen by the businesses who decorate their windows.



U District Street Fair Returns May 16 & 17

The U District Street Fair returns for its 55th celebration on Saturday, May 16 and Sunday, May 17. The U District Partnership launched applications on December 1, with over 330 applications received to date and 206 accepted. Local business applications and extended dining areas will begin in early March.

The Street Fair poster design contest returned this year with high-quality artist submissions. The 2026 winning design was submitted by artist Jordan Mason and contains hand-carved iconography that speaks to the unique experiences of the U District Street Fair.



PLACEMAKING & URBAN VITALITY

Advocacy & Policy Engagement

January was a busy month for elevating community priorities. During the 2026 Washington State legislative session, UDP staff coordinated with other Seattle commercial districts to share small business perspectives on SB 6026, which prohibits ground-floor retail requirements in commercial or mixed-use zones. While the bill is intended to provide additional flexibility for redeveloping underutilized areas into housing, removing ground-floor requirements can have unintended consequences for small business ecosystems that rely on

shared infrastructure and a concentration of active storefronts to thrive. Through multiple rounds of revision, the bill now includes key amendments exempting existing commercial areas. Staff will continue to monitor implementation and maintain relationships with policymakers as the legislative process advances.

In addition to state-level engagement, UDP staff also spent time connecting with newly elected city officials, policy staff, and neighborhood leaders through transition committees and policy roundtables focused on transportation, displacement, and affordability. These efforts were informed by the Urban Vitality Committee's work to distill key priority focus areas and the UDP Board's approval of those priorities, which provided clear and consistent guidance on U District needs and tradeoffs. Community members interested in deeper engagement are encouraged to join the Urban Vitality Committee to help inform ongoing discussions and future priorities.

Transportation & Infrastructure Updates

The region's transportation system is set to receive two key upgrades in the coming month that make it easier and more convenient to use. Tap-to-pay fare options launched on February 2 for the RapidRide G Line and are expected to expand systemwide by the end of the month. This removes one of the most common barriers to transit use – needing to locate, purchase, and reload a separate ORCA card - and allows riders to board by simply tapping a credit or debit card, smartphone, or wearable.

Light rail service is also reaching a major milestone. Riders will be able to travel from downtown Seattle to an outdoor concert at Marymoor in just 29 minutes with the Line 2 connection to the Eastside opening March 28. Also starting March 28, Sound Transit will pilot an overnight bus service between SeaTac Airport and downtown Seattle which will run every 30 minutes from 12:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. This pilot is intended to provide a reliable late-night transit option for travelers, airport workers, and others when light rail is not operating.

In other transportation news, WSDOT crews are continuing to make steady progress on the Ship Canal Bridge and northbound travelers should continue to expect ongoing delays. To support mitigation efforts during the Revive I-5 project, King County Metro is again providing free \$25 ORCA cards to University District businesses to help offset travel impacts. Please reach out to UDP staff if you would like to receive free ORCA cards; priority will be given to those who have not yet received them.