



UDP BOARD MEETING AGENDA

12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

October 20, 2026

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

I.	Welcome & Introductions	Aaron	12:30 p.m.	
II.	Public Comment	Public	12:35 p.m.	
III.	Guest Speaker: UW Welcome Center Project Update • <i>Paul Rucker - Executive Director, UW Alumni Association</i>		12:40 a.m.	
IV.	Approval of UDP September Meeting Minutes	Aaron	1:10 p.m.	(Vote)
V.	UDP Finance Committee Report • <i>Acceptance of September 2026 UDP Financials</i>	Trevor	1:15 p.m.	(Vote)
VI.	Executive Director's Report • <i>Events</i> • <i>Staffing</i> • <i>Updates from the U District</i>	Don	1:20 p.m.	
VII.	Urban Vitality Update • <i>Summer Activation Summary</i> • <i>Comprehensive Plan Update</i>	Janet	1:30 p.m.	
VIII.	Lid I-5 Feasibility Study Update	Janet/Stephen	1:35 p.m.	
IX.	Cleaning & Public Safety Update	Marcus	1:40 p.m.	
X.	Governance Committee Report • <i>Board Documents</i> • <i>Prospective Board Member: Katherine Schiffner</i>	Josh	1:45 p.m.	
XI.	New Business	Aaron	1:55 p.m.	
XII.	Adjourn	Aaron	2:00 p.m.	



Joint UDP & UDBIA Board Meeting Minutes

12:30pm to 2:00pm

September 15, 2026

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

UDP Board Members in Attendance in Person

Rick Jones - Schooley Mitchell, Co-Chair
Aaron Hoard – UW, Co-Chair
Josh Gana – UW Housing & Food Services
Stephen Antupit – U District Resident
Katie Betz – Urban Renaissance Group
Maya Lu – Boba Up
Don Schulze – UDPA
John Hix – Seattle Vineyard Church
Miles Richardson – Audi Seattle/University VW
Paul Yunker – U District Food Bank

Jeremy Eknoian – UW Real Estate
Anna Sorokina – WSECU
Anson Lin – Astora Construction
Julie Blakeslee – UW Planning
Lois Ko - Sweet Alchemy + Elixir
Shruti Shah - U Book Store
Alfred Shiga – Shiga's Imports
Jessie Quan – Ladd & Lass Brewing, Secretary
Darren Rose - 206 Properties
Ashley Van Dragt - Chapel on the Ave

UDP Board Members Not in Attendance

Trevor Peterson – U Book Store, Treasurer

Emily Scully - Shultzzy's Bar & Grill

RAB Members in Attendance

Jennifer Antos – U District Farmers Market
Rachel Fyall, UW Evans School
Sally Clark – UW Campus Security

Chris Rauls – University Book Store
Kathleen Esnaurizar, UW Student
D'Vante Rolle, University Presbyterian Church

RAB Members Not in Attendance

Joe Gruber - University District Food Bank

Jeanette Henderson, UW Real Estate

UDP Staff

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

Janet Lee – Urban Vitality Manager
Nikki Somers – Operations Manager
Jason Cabusao - Urban Activation Specialist

Guests

Royce Morrison - University Congregational United Church Stephanie Kang - UW External Affairs

** 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 June 2026 meeting minutes, asked for any questions or amendments.

Motion: Shruit S. moved to accept the June 2026 UDP Board meeting minutes.

Second: Julie B. seconded the motion.

Abstentions: Alfred S., Jeremy E., Don S., Anson L., Anna S., and Stephen A. abstained.

Approval: The motion was approved.

Approval of UDBIA Board Meeting Minutes

Jennifer A. introduced the June 2026 meeting minutes, asked for any questions or amendments.

Motion: Chris R. moved to accept the June 2026 UDBIA Board meeting minutes.

Second: Rachel F. seconded the motion.

Abstentions: Sally C. and D'Vante R. abstained

Approval: The motion was approved.

UDP Finance Committee Update and Approval of the Financials

Shruti S. explained that UDP's fiscal year ended in June, so the spending for FY 26 is wrapped up. Shruti S. noted 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 increase in ambassadors. Shruit S. also noted that staffing expenses are under due to open vacancies that will be filled this fall.

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

Motion: The Finance Committee made the following motion: *"The UDP Board accepts the July 2026 UDP financials as presented at the September 15, 2026 joint UDP/UDBIA Board meeting."*

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

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

UDBIA Approval of Finances

Motion: Kathleen E. moved to accept the July 2026 UDP financials as presented at the September 15, 2026 joint UDP/UDBIA Board meeting.

Second: Chris R. seconded the motion

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

Governance Committee

Josh G. gave an overview and noted that the updated Conflict of Interest and Board Participation Agreements will be sent for signature to all UDP Board Members. Josh G. also offered that the 2026-2027 UDP Board and Committees are confirmed, however there are 3 vacancies which include the need of a U District resident, and arts & culture organization.

UDBIA Board Nomination

Jennifer A. introduced Stephanie K. from the University of Washington - External Affairs. Stephanie K. provided an overview of her background and shared her excitement about joining the board and contributing to the team.

Motion: Jennifer A. made the following motion: *"The UDBIA Ratepayer Advisory Board accepts the nomination of Stephanie Kang to the Board for a three year term."*

Second: Rachel seconded the motion

Approval: The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Director Report

Don B. shared insights into the UDP team's trip to the 2026 International Downtown Association (IDA) conference. Attending the 2026 IDA Conference in Toronto provided valuable opportunities to connect with downtown leaders, share ideas, and learn about innovative approaches to district management. Takeaways included new strategies for placemaking and public-space activation, supporting small businesses, leveraging events to drive economic activity, and using data to measure impact. The conference also offered insight into emerging trends and strengthened connections with peer organizations facing similar challenges. We returned with fresh perspectives, practical ideas, and renewed enthusiasm for applying these lessons to the continued growth and vitality of the University District.

Clean and Public Safety Report

Marcus J. offered an overview of the public safety issues and strategies related to the 47th Street drug market. A perfect storm of thin SPD resources, properties attracting negative behavior, lack of ground floor commercial businesses, and challenging physical conditions underlie a complex ecosystem of addiction and compounding mental health issues. Marcus J. offered a look into next steps and strategies UDP and partners are taking including place-based, person-based outreach, case planning, enforcement, and encampment disruption.

Next Marcus J. offered "wins" since May 2026 which included shelter and housing for 13 of the 30 people involved in the drug market. Some care plans included permanent supportive housing, behavioral health, medical treatment, or substance abuse support. There are another dozen plus people still looking for housing, and 4 people with complex needs that remain unsolved. Marcus J. also noted that SPD has increased its focus on individuals selling drugs. Other wins include new city funding expanded for ambassador coverage, daily cleanings in the high need alleys, and added focus by the UDP Clean Team.

Urban Vitality Report

Janet L. offered an update on the U District Sub Area Plan. Since April 2026 UDP has been working with the City of Seattle, working on community engagement & technical analysis for the plan. Janet L. noted that the City released a new survey to get public feedback on policy direction.

Next Janet L. shared The City of Seattle's Office of Planning & Community Development is developing a regional center plan to guide growth in the U District over the next 20 years. Up next with Urban Vitality include a ULI workshop, public draft review, and a January 2027 vote.

Economic Development Report

Hannah K. shared a wrap up of the Summer Deals program which included 42 participating businesses from June 15th - July 31st. This program was created in response to Economic Development Committee feedback seeking greater promotion for summer activities and exposure to FIFA visitor audiences, and to bring more people to the U District neighborhood..

Events Update

Don B. gave an overview of the 2026 Seattle Boba Fest which included 29 participating businesses, approximately 13.6k visitors to the neighborhood which stayed on average 3 hours. New this year to Boba Fest included K-pop dance classes, and Boba Quest "Selfie challenge".

Next Don B. offered information on the upcoming 2026 U District Chow Down & Street Party which will take place on October 3. Currently 78 businesses have signed up to participate, along with 25 vendors, a main stage, and new this year is the Hungry Dawg Hunt—a selfie challenge that will encourage people to travel throughout the entire district! Nikki S. also made a call for volunteers for the 2026 Chow Down.

Lastly, Marcus shared information on the first ever "Find It, Sip It" event this weekend on September 20, which will include window washing, and reporting issues through the City's Fit It Fix It app.

New UDP Board Business

Rick J. called for new business, Aaron H. reminded everyone that fall move starts next weekend.

Jennifer A. call for new business from the UDBIA Board, there was none

UDP Board Adjournment

Rick J. adjourned the UDP + UDBIA Board meeting.



Finance Committee Report & Budget Narrative

Prepared on 10/8/26

This financial narrative provides a summary of The U District Partnership's financial statements from both August and September, 2026. The notes below correspond to the profit and loss statement, the balance sheet and our collections report from the City for these months.

October 2026 Budget Report

UDP is one quarter through Fiscal Year 2027 and off to a strong start. The cash balance is strong and UDP has secured several new incoming grants to deepen programmatic impact. Below is the brief summary of a few timing related variances that should resolve in the months ahead:

Income:

44430 – BIA Contract: *UDP submits monthly invoices to the city to cover BIA related spending. This is a timing issue and will resolve later this fall.*

44530 – Grants: *The City has signed a couple of new contracts with UDP that were not in the budget that was established in June. These contracts will show a variance in Grants as well as Program Expenses going forward, but will not impact the bottom line overall.*

47000 – Program Fees: *Sponsorship was higher than anticipated for Chow Down which made up for a lower-than-expected vendor turn-out which accounts for some of this variance.*

47215 – Sponsorship Income: *Sponsorship is strong so far this year, but this variance usually shifts around until Street Fair and more-or-less resolves at the end of the year.*

Expense:

60000 – Staffing Expenses: *UDP is hiring two new positions and will be working to fill the Marketing & Communications Manager position this fall, so this variance will likely persist for the foreseeable future.*

70340 – Equipment Rental: *This is largely a timing issue with invoices for Chow Down just landing this week.*

70360 – Other Program Expenses: *This is spending related to the increase in grant income seen above.*

Balance Sheet Report - September 30, 2026

At the end of September, the balance sheet showed a stable cash position, with a little more money in the bank and an uptick in receivables.

BIA Assessment Collections

Each year, UDP budgets assuming a 95% BIA collection rate in any given year. In reality, it takes a few years to collect the entire assessment. Assessment years 2019-2024 are on track with assessment years 2025 and 2026 still catching up as delinquent assessments roll in. Looking below, you can see that two years out UDP manages to collect nearly 99% of the entire assessment, providing a small surplus that can be spent down in future years. The numbers below reflect collections through September, 2026. The most recent billing went out in June and reflects the first semester of the 2026 assessment year, which is why the numbers are smaller than the previous years.

Assessment Year*	Amount Billed	Amount Collected	Collection Rate
2019	\$ 946,505.32	\$ 940,514.37	99.37%
2020	\$ 1,215,841.04	\$ 1,203,865.60	99.02%
2021	\$ 1,271,712.04	\$ 1,252,574.05	98.50%
2022	\$ 1,325,847.14	\$ 1,302,967.85	98.27%
2023	\$ 1,596,501.52	\$ 1,566,718.54	98.13%
2024	\$ 1,760,687.52	\$ 1,715,061.83	97.41%
2025	\$ 1,826,882.56	\$1,731,381.53	94.77%
2026 (first semester)	\$946,559.88	\$ 809,833.97	85.56%

**Note: the 2026 assessment year in this chart refers to a city report on BIA collections and represents the same time period as UDP's 2027 fiscal year.*

Budget Report

The U District Partnership

July-September, 2026

Jul 1 - Sep 30 2026

	YTD Actual		YTD Budget		Variance	Annual Budget	
Income							
43400 Donations/Partnerships	\$	31,534.00	\$	30,749.99	\$ 784.01	\$	65,000.00
44430 BIA Contract	\$	557,547.11	\$	530,718.73	\$ 26,828.38	\$	2,090,875.73
44530 Grants							
44534 OED	\$	126,351.52	\$	89,000.01	\$ 37,351.51	\$	240,000.00
44535 FHA	\$	23,032.30	\$	23,032.30	\$ -	\$	600,000.00
44536 SPU	\$	6,750.00	\$	6,750.00	\$ -	\$	27,000.00
44539 SDOT	\$	20,000.00	\$	20,000.00	\$ -	\$	126,750.00
Total for 44530 Grants	\$	176,133.82	\$	138,782.31	\$ 37,351.51	\$	1,008,750.00
46400 Interest and Other	\$	37.61	\$	-	\$ 37.61		
47000 Program Fees	\$	5,060.00	\$	11,500.00	\$ (6,440.00)	\$	261,500.00
47213 Retail Sales	\$	580.40	\$	1,250.00	\$ (669.60)	\$	2,000.00
47215 Sponsorships	\$	41,499.66	\$	25,000.00	\$ 16,499.66	\$	70,000.00
Total for Income	\$	812,392.60	\$	738,001.03	\$ 74,391.57	\$	3,498,125.73
Expenses							
60000 Staffing Expenses							
60020 Payroll Taxes	\$	25,604.32	\$	27,335.73	\$ (1,731.41)	\$	111,704.35
60030 Medical Benefits	\$	27,764.32	\$	33,944.45	\$ (6,180.13)	\$	147,879.81
60040 Retirement Benefits	\$	5,978.05	\$	9,113.49	\$ (3,135.44)	\$	38,824.11
60050 Transit Benefit	\$	4,618.08	\$	3,000.00	\$ 1,618.08	\$	3,000.00
60100 Wages & Salaries	\$	277,175.45	\$	303,785.29	\$ (26,609.84)	\$	1,321,436.68
Total for 60000 Staffing Expenses	\$	341,140.22	\$	377,178.96	\$ (36,038.74)	\$	1,622,844.95
61000 Professional Expenses							
61100 Accounting Fees	\$	11,500.00	\$	12,000.00	\$ (500.00)	\$	35,000.00
61110 HR Consulting	\$	4,347.80	\$	2,499.99	\$ 1,847.81	\$	10,000.00
61120 Legal Fees	\$	2,209.00	\$	515.00	\$ 1,694.00	\$	2,000.00
Total for 61000 Professional Expenses	\$	18,056.80	\$	15,014.99	\$ 3,041.81	\$	47,000.00
62000 Office and Overhead Expenses							
62100 Rent and Monthly Parking	\$	30,098.74	\$	30,042.48	\$ 56.26	\$	121,770.08
62200 Insurance	\$	11,629.67	\$	10,600.00	\$ 1,029.67	\$	10,600.00
62300 Office Equipment	\$	2,570.79	\$	3,000.00	\$ (429.21)	\$	12,000.00
62400 Office Supplies	\$	885.77	\$	1,500.00	\$ (614.23)	\$	6,000.00
62500 Local Travel and Meetings	\$	849.80	\$	1,695.98	\$ (846.18)	\$	6,800.00
62600 Telephone	\$	1,351.94	\$	2,049.96	\$ (698.02)	\$	8,200.00
62700 Technology and Software	\$	8,737.72	\$	6,675.00	\$ 2,062.72	\$	36,400.00
62800 Dues & Subscriptions	\$	2,614.84	\$	2,100.00	\$ 514.84	\$	2,800.00
62900 Postage & Mailing	\$	48.31	\$	90.00	\$ (41.69)	\$	550.00
63100 Licenses and Permits	\$	3,842.01	\$	3,500.00	\$ 342.01	\$	21,710.00
63120 Merchandise	\$	389.50	\$	200.00	\$ 189.50	\$	1,000.00
63300 Staff Development	\$	17,629.94	\$	15,000.00	\$ 2,629.94	\$	22,000.00
63600 Banking and Service Fees	\$	371.41	\$	610.00	\$ (238.59)	\$	16,940.00
Total for 62000 Office and Overhead Expenses	\$	81,020.44	\$	77,063.42	\$ 3,957.02	\$	282,770.08

70000 Direct Program Expenses					
70300 Advertising	\$	1,688.17	\$	3,375.00	\$ (1,686.83) \$ 10,700.00
70310 Committee & Board Meetings	\$	3,868.77	\$	3,449.99	\$ 418.78 \$ 7,500.00
70320 Contracted Services	\$	206,082.84	\$	208,284.99	\$ (2,202.15) \$ 1,284,182.79
70335 Program Supplies	\$	8,715.20	\$	10,852.00	\$ (2,136.80) \$ 36,550.00
70340 Equipment Rental	\$	550.00	\$	8,000.00	\$ (7,450.00) \$ 80,700.00
70350 Event Entertainment	\$	3,150.00	\$	3,000.00	\$ 150.00 \$ 39,600.00
70360 Other Program Expenses	\$	25,113.74	\$	12,801.99	\$ 12,311.75 \$ 53,750.00
70370 Printing and Reproduction	\$	16,798.89	\$	15,225.00	\$ 1,573.89 \$ 34,350.00
Total for 70000 Direct Program Expenses	\$	265,967.61	\$	264,988.97	\$ 978.64 \$ 1,547,332.79
Total for Expenses	\$	706,185.07	\$	734,246.34	\$ (28,061.27) \$ 3,499,947.82
Net Operating Income	\$	106,207.53	\$	3,754.69	\$ 102,452.84 \$ (1,822.09)
Other Income					
Lease Amortization Offset	\$	702.66	\$	702.66	\$ - \$ 2,810.64
Total for Other Income	\$	702.66	\$	702.66	\$ - \$ 2,810.64
Other Expenses					
Net Other Income	\$	702.66	\$	702.66	\$ - \$ 2,810.64
Net Income	\$	106,910.19	\$	4,457.35	\$ 102,452.84 \$ 988.55

Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison

The U District Partnership

As of Sep 30, 2026

	Total		
	As of Sep 30, 2026	As of Sep 30, 2025 (PY)	\$ Change (PY)
Assets			
Current Assets			
Bank Accounts			
10100 Operating Bank Accounts	0.00	0.00	0.00
10110 WSECU Checking	116,872.26	-5,990.20	122,862.46
10111 WSECU Savings	161,107.95	127,526.02	33,581.93
Total for 10100 Operating Bank Accounts	\$277,980.21	\$121,535.82	\$156,444.39
Total for Bank Accounts	\$277,980.21	\$121,535.82	\$156,444.39
Accounts Receivable	\$315,288.22	\$258,724.16	\$56,564.06
Other Current Assets			
12021 Employee Advances	\$0.00	-350.99	350.99
12022 Prepaid Expense	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
12026 Lease Rights	282,989.50	412,098.82	-129,109.32
QuickBooks Tax Holding Account	17,688.00	0	17,688.00
Total for Other Current Assets	\$301,677.50	\$412,747.83	-\$111,070.33
Total for Current Assets	\$894,945.93	\$793,007.81	\$101,938.12
Fixed Assets	\$67,129.38	\$53,919.67	\$13,209.71
Other Assets			
17025 Security Deposits	8,235.87	8,235.87	\$0.00
Total for Other Assets	\$8,235.87	\$8,235.87	\$0.00
Total for Assets	\$970,311.18	\$855,163.35	\$115,147.83
Liabilities and Equity			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	\$51,676.94	-\$6,390.05	\$58,066.99
Credit Cards	\$2,996.02	\$13,940.14	-\$10,944.12
Other Current Liabilities			
20220 Lease Liability	357,026.68	440,528.35	-83,501.67
24000 Payroll Liabilities	\$64,746.41	\$52,647.55	\$12,098.86
Total for Other Current Liabilities	\$421,773.09	\$493,175.90	-\$71,402.81
Total for Current Liabilities	\$476,446.05	\$500,725.99	-\$24,279.94
Total for Liabilities	\$476,446.05	\$500,725.99	-\$24,279.94
Equity			
32000 Unrestricted Net Assets	386,954.94	288,435.90	98,519.04
Net Income	106,910.19	66,001.46	40,908.73
Total for Equity	\$493,865.13	\$354,437.36	\$139,427.77
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$970,311.18	\$855,163.35	\$115,147.83



Program Reports

UDP Board of Directors

October 20, 2026

PLACEMAKING & URBAN VITALITY

Summer Station Park Activation

The U District Partnership's Station Park activation pilot concluded its second season with a final dance class and celebrity look-alike contest at the October 3 Chow Down & Street Party. Thanks to the hard work and talents of Jason Cabusao:

- Average dance class attendance grew from 12 to 23 attendees per event this year, and
- Over 16.5% of attendees were repeat attendees. While the majority of attendees came from the Seattle area, some people came from as far as Bothell, Carnation, Kent, and Puyallup.



Public Art at the U District Station

The U District Partnership is partnering with the Seattle Department of Transportation and Sound Transit to bring public art to the U District, in and around the U District Light Rail Station. [The artists](#) that have been selected as a part of SDOT's [Community and Mobility Hub program](#) plan to install their artwork in early November. In the meantime, one of the Mobility Hub artists - Christy Caravaglio - held a public weaving demonstration at the U District Light Rail station during the U District Chow Down & Street Party. She engaged transit riders in a large, public weaving project and gave out portable weaving kits for bus and light rail riders to use while waiting for a bus.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING & POLICY

Comprehensive Plan Takes Shape with U District Input

As a part of the ongoing effort to develop the U District Sub Area Plan, the City of Seattle recently closed an online survey in conjunction with several public events where they obtained feedback on neighborhood issues and priorities. To dive deeper into some of the issues around growth, The U District Partnership's Urban Vitality Committee has entered into a collaboration with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to further develop policy solutions for the U District that can be incorporated into the Subarea Plan. The ULI Northwest Leadership Cohort (which includes about 30 members) will spend a full day focusing on policies to support the diversity and viability of independent businesses, cultural organizations, and community-serving uses as the neighborhood continues to grow.

UDP Prepares to Release Lid I-5 North Feasibility Study RFP

The Lid I-5 Feasibility Study is on track to complete its first two milestones this month:

- **Project Organization** UDP staff and the Lid I-5 committee members have developed project and committee charters to define roles and responsibilities, governance structure, meeting cadence, and decision-making framework for working with state & local agencies, as well as a multi-disciplinary consultant team and multiple boards and committees.
- **Project Staffing** Ashlen Olmsted will join the UDP team on October 27, 2026 as the new Lid I-5 Project Coordinator. She will support feasibility study administration, coordination, and day-to-day management.

The next two milestones are related to procurement and community engagement. The procurement process will kick off with the RFP going live in mid-November, and conclude with consultant team selection in February 2027. Community engagement will begin with the formation of a volunteer Community Advisory Panel (CAP) which will begin recruitment in Q1 of 2027.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

UDP is Hiring a Program Coordinator

UDP is hiring a Program Coordinator to support a range of economic development, placemaking, and neighborhood programming. Reporting to the Economic Development Manager, this role will work across the organization while taking on significant responsibilities related to business data, neighborhood conditions tracking, stakeholder engagement, and events. Specific projects will include maintaining UDP's Business Landscape Database, coordinating business and vendor communications for events and small business promotions, and supporting community engagement and other organization-wide initiatives.

The ideal candidate will be organized, curious, self-directed, and energized by community-based work, with an interest in economic development, placemaking, urban planning, and the small businesses and people that make the U District unique. The position is designed for someone who enjoys variety and wants exposure to the many facets of neighborhood-based economic development and urban place management.

UDP is accepting applications through October 23. More information about the position and application process can be found [here](#) on UDP's website. Board members are encouraged to share this opportunity with people in their networks who may be a good fit and encourage them to apply.

Grand Illusion Cinema is Coming to the Varsity Theater

The closure of the Varsity Theater earlier in 2026 was a major loss for the neighborhood, which has seen several theaters close in quick succession, including the Grand Illusion Cinema's former home on The Ave. Following months of uncertainty and collaboration among the property owner and prospective tenants, we are excited to see the news become final and public that the Grand Illusion Cinema has signed a lease to plant new roots in the Varsity Theater space.

The U District Partnership has been engaged throughout the process, watching the opportunity take shape over many months. The UDP team toured the space with brokers and potential tenants, stayed in touch with the Grand Illusion Cinema and property owner as the deal developed, and followed the conversations around the future of the space. The Grand Illusion team hopes to open later this year, keeping this space connected to the arts, culture, and community that have long made the U District a cultural hub for north Seattle.

U District Business Openings & Closures

Recent Openings:

- Ino Hair Studio
- Bite Theory
- Mikiya Wagyu Shabu
- Hazy Vintage
- Win Feng Noodles
- Oat Bar

Recent Closures:

- Bollywood 360

Upcoming Openings:

- Planet Fitness
- Rainier Books & Games
- Me Pho
- Mayuri Market
- Grand Illusion at the Varsity Theater
- Moka & Co

CLEANING & PUBLIC REALM MAINTENANCE

Find-It/Sip-It Community Clean-Up Recap

On September 20, UDP hosted its first-ever Find-It/Sip-It Community Clean-Up, bringing volunteers together to identify and report public-realm issues throughout the U District.

Participants submitted hundreds of reports through the City of Seattle's Find It, Fix It app, documenting graffiti, overflowing trash, damaged infrastructure, and other conditions requiring City attention. Volunteers also cleaned more than 20 storefronts throughout the neighborhood.



Following the cleanup, participants gathered at Big Time Brewery for pizza and refreshments. UDP thanks Amazon for sponsoring the event and helping make the inaugural Find-It/Sip-It a success.

Improving U District Alley Conditions

The U District's unique combination of older buildings and high-concentration food service businesses results in an extraordinary amount of solid waste being stored in the alleys flanking University Way. For years this has caused issues with some businesses not having sufficient service and waste management contractors not being able to keep up with the volume—or the inevitable illegal dumping or contaminated waste that accumulates.

The U District Partnership has continued to advocate to the City (both with Councilmember Rivera, and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Director Andrew Lee) to expand cleaning services in the U District's most heavily impacted alleys. Starting last month, SPU launched a new seven-day-a-week cleaning schedule in priority locations to address these concerns. The increased service has produced noticeable improvements in alley conditions, particularly in areas that had historically experienced persistent garbage, loose debris, and overflowing containers. Recent container adjustments, pressure washing, and more frequent servicing have also contributed to cleaner and more manageable conditions.

While the improvements have been significant, consistency remains an issue. UDP has observed several instances in recent weeks where scheduled service appears to have been missed, allowing conditions to deteriorate quickly. Bulky items also remain a recurring challenge, as furniture and other large dumped items

are often not removed the same day they are reported. UDP continues to conduct regular alley walkthroughs and communicate directly with SPU and Recology regarding missed service, bulky-item removal, and other operational issues. The organization will continue advocating for dependable daily service and faster response to conditions that significantly impact cleanliness and pedestrian access.

Seasonal Operations Changes

October marks the conclusion of several of UDP’s seasonal programs. The annual flower basket program is wrapping up, along with the daily outdoor dining setup at NE 43rd Street and at the park adjacent to the U District Light Rail Station. The blue “U District” tables that The U District Partnership brought to NE 43rd Street last year will remain in place, but without umbrellas for the next few months as the organization transitions into fall and winter operations. Leaf removal season is also beginning, and the UDP Clean Team will increasingly shift its attention toward leaf removal and maintaining clear sidewalks and pedestrian areas throughout the district.

PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE

Visible Homelessness in the U District Down 37% Since August

The U District’s visible unsheltered population dropped from a 2026 high of 97 people in late August to 61 at the end of September—representing a 37% decline in about a month. This number is still well below the pandemic-era peak of roughly 150, though still above this year’s winter low of 34 in February and last year’s overall average.

UDP ambassadors conduct a regular census of the visible unsheltered population, documenting people staying in doorways, alleys, vehicles, encampments, and other locations using a consistent methodology. That data guides the work of service providers and UDP’s Homeless Outreach Coordinator, Brad Mills, whose position is made possible by City funding secured by District 4 Councilmember Maritza Rivera.

01/14/2026	46
02/11/2026	34
03/11/2026	41
04/09/2026	46
04/23/2026	84
05/06/2026	71
05/29/2026	60
06/04/2026	81
06/17/2026	76
07/01/2026	70
07/15/2026	65
07/29/2026	80
08/12/2026	85
08/26/2026	97
09/09/2026	75
09/24/2026	61

Dismantling the Entrenched Drug Market between NE 47th Street and U Heights

Over the past several months, UDP and its partners have made meaningful progress disrupting the entrenched drug market around NE 47th Street and University Way NE. After new perimeter fencing went up at Christ Episcopal Church and outreach workers sustained engagement with people in the area, the concentration of activity that had persisted at the corner for years dispersed quickly.

UDP anticipated the activity would shift rather than disappear. Working closely with ambassadors, REACH, the Unified Care Team, Seattle Police Department, Seattle Parks and Recreation, U Heights, and other partners, UDP has been able to track where people are relocating and continues to work to prevent a new concentrated drug market or encampment from taking hold.

Directly following the fence going in, U Heights Park saw a major uptick in homeless and drug activity which causes issues for their resident organizations that largely cater to children and youth. UDP immediately began coordinating with U Heights and City partners to address this activity. Because enforcement pressure that SPD applies can make it harder for service providers to stay in contact with clients, ambassadors are helping outreach partners keep track of individuals as they move, so care plans and connections to services aren’t lost.

UDP has also temporarily increased Ambassador staffing, adding daytime coverage and expanded weekend morning patrols. This city grant-funded increase was made possible by City Councilmember Maritza Rivera and the Office Economic Development and will continue for the next few months, helping UDP monitor emerging problem areas and keep City partners informed. This work builds on case conferencing led by UDP's REACH Neighborhood Care Coordinator, Brad Mills. Individuals chronically connected to the NE 47th Street ecosystem continue to receive individualized outreach and service planning through UDP, REACH, LEAD, and other providers.

UDP will host a **Clean and Safe Committee** meeting on **October 29 from 3:30–5:00 p.m.** to discuss these issues in more detail, including conditions at U Heights Park, Ambassador deployment, and coordination with City partners. Board members and community stakeholders are encouraged to attend.

Late-Night Emphasis Patrols

Each fall and winter, as students return, UDP adds a late-night Ambassador shift on Fridays and Saturdays to monitor nightlife in the U District. This month, Ambassadors patrolled from **10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.**, watching for emerging public safety concerns. Since Flowers Bar & Restaurant closed, late-night businesses have largely operated with fewer safety issues. Most of the Ambassadors' time went instead to responding to graffiti and monitoring tagging crews around the neighborhood. UDP will keep an eye on late-night conditions and can bring back the emphasis patrols if needed.

EVENTS

U District Chow Down & Street Party Returns

The U District Partnership hosted its 6th Annual Chow Down & Street Party to welcome back students and invite Seattleites to sample the culinary diversity that the U District has to offer. 78 participating businesses offered up a range of delicious \$2 bites and sips while local musicians and performers brought the Chow Down Main Stage and University Way to life with Jazz, Hip-Hop, Taiko Drumming, K-Pop and even a BTS lookalike contest. The Ave was packed end to end with tens-of-thousands of neighbors, students, and visitors from across Seattle, all eating, dancing, and discovering what makes this community special. Lots of coverage helped get the word out in advance of the event from outlets including: [Secret Seattle](#), [The Stranger](#), [The Daily](#), [My Northwest](#), [Parent Map](#), [Wallyhood](#), [Slurp Station](#).



MEDIA COVERAGE

Grand Illusion Cinema is Coming to the Varsity Theater

After several theater closures in quick succession, including the Varsity earlier this year, the Grand Illusion Cinema has signed a lease to bring new life to the Varsity Theater space, a move UDP supported throughout by touring the space with brokers and prospective tenants and staying connected with the Grand Illusion team and property owner. Several media outlets have covered this news:

KUOW | [What will it take to save our favorite small cinemas?](#)

Seattle Times | [Seattle's Grand Illusion Cinema to take over Varsity Theatre](#)

KIRO News | [Grand Illusion Cinema provides update on move into U-District's Varsity Theater](#)

Puget Sound Business Journal | [Grand Illusion Cinema secures new home in U District's Varsity Theatre](#)

The Registry | [Grand Illusion Cinema Signs 10-Year Lease at Seattle's Historic Varsity Theatre](#)

U District Businesses in the News

[Edge of the Circle Books offers a magical customer experience](#)

Seattle Times | **Edge of the Circle Books**, owned by Robert Anderson since 1995, is highlighted for its welcoming, customer-first approach and wide selection of books, tarot decks, and ritual supplies.

[After 34 years and more than 150,000 movies, Scarecrow Video's longtime buyer retires](#)

Seattle Times | **Scarecrow Video's** longtime buyer Mark Steiner retired in September after 34 years, having grown the store's collection from 1,000 titles to over 156,000, with Joel Fisher taking over the role.

[This Beloved Seattle Farmers Market Has Drawn Saturday Crowds For Its Fresh Bread And Pastries Since 1993](#)

Fast Food Club | Open since 1993, the **University District Farmers' Market** draws up to 70 vendors every Saturday from 9 AM to 2 PM, with fresh bread, local cider, and produce a short walk from the light rail station.

[Small Business Spotlight: Elixir](#)

Intentionalist | UDP Board member, **Lois Ko**, has built her career around dessert through **Sweet Alchemy**, opened **Elixir** this year to give the U District a late-night third space to gather and build community off campus.

[You can slurp hand-pulled noodles at this low-key Seattle shop](#)

Fast Food Club | U District favorite, **Xi'an Noodles** is highlighted as a cozy place to slurp some of Seattle's best hand-pulled noodles this fall.

[More Than A Cup Of Coffee: Pack The House Spotlights Seattle's Black-Owned Coffee Shops](#)

Seattle Medium | Seattle's coffee culture is being shaped by Black-owned shops in the U District: **Solomon Dubie's Avole Coffee**, **Efrem Fesaha's Boon Boona Coffee**.

Development Projects in the U District

[Ready for the UW's fall term, 43 U District units open near freeway](#)

Daily Journal of Commerce | UDP Board Member, **Anson Lin** of **Astora Construction** opened a new seven-story, 43-unit apartment building, just in time for the school year, geared toward University of Washington students.

[Student housing could replace fire-damaged buildings on the Ave](#)

Puget Sound Business Journal | A new six-story 155 room student housing building is being planned for the heart of the Ave where two older mixed-use buildings will be demolished. The project would include small ground-floor retail spaces to fit the character and demand of the neighborhood.

[U District building changes hands](#)

Daily Journal of Commerce | The 1928 Kalberg Building at 4517 University Way N.E. sold this week for \$3 million to DLH R&D LLC, doubling the Bellevue sellers' 2003 purchase price.

[23 U District units sell for over \\$3M](#)

Daily Journal of Commerce | A Bellevue investor's Twin Sized LLC bought the 23-unit, 1926 apartment building at 5003 15th Ave. N.E. this week for about \$3.1 million (roughly \$135,630 per unit), from a family group that had owned it for decades.



2026 U District CHOW DOWN & Street Party



THANK YOU

for joining us in bringing back the sixth annual U District Chow Down & Street Party! Together we helped this event return in full force on October 3, 2026 with about **22,000** visitors coming to celebrate the neighborhood and welcome over 9,000 new UW students to the U District.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Using cellular phone data and on-site event surveys, the event attracted an engaged audience ready for Seattle's favorite food walk experience. Survey respondents identified themselves by the following demographics.

30K -

15K -



About
22K
visitors

Placer.ai



Attendee ages
were predominantly

59%

18-24 years old

28%

25-34 years old



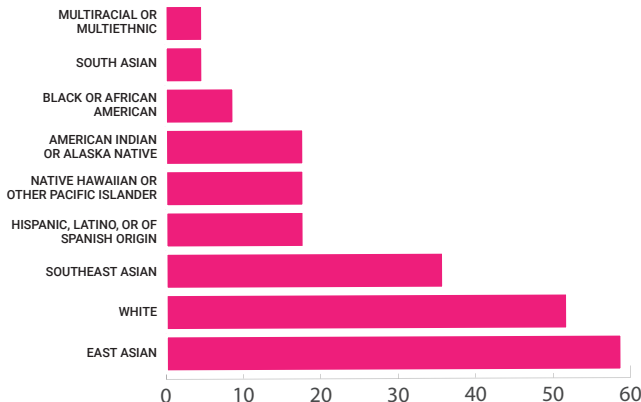
Average stay
was nearly

3 hours or
152
minutes

64% 
of respondents
identified as women

58.5%
of attendees were
UW Students

68%
attended with friends
26.6%
attended with family
or spouse



75%

75% of respondents traveled from outside of the U District to the event.

EARNED MEDIA & EXPOSURE

theStranger

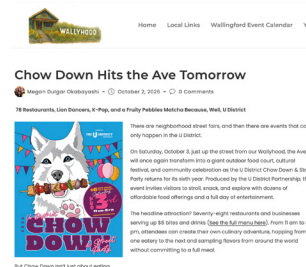
Menu

EVEROUT

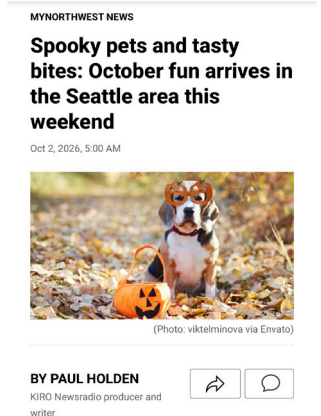
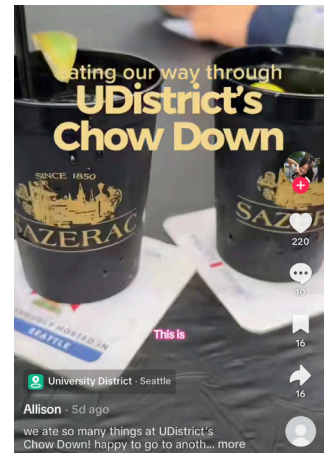
**The Best Bang for Your Buck
Events in Seattle This Week-
end: Oct 9-11, 2026**

ACES, Turkfest, and More Cheap & Easy Events
Under \$20

BY EVEROUT STAFF
October 9, 2026 10:45 am



Take yourself on a self-guided food tour of the neighborhood this Saturday at the annual U District Chow Down & Street Party.





"It was SO MUCH fun!!! Thank you!"



"This was a great experience to enjoy with friends and family along with the community alike! I will be back next year!"



"The hungry dawg hunt and trying new foods and locations nearby have been my favorite part of the U District Chow Down 2026!"



"U-District has amazing food! I've been here a year and didn't know about half of these places!"

"My favorite!!! I love doing chow down"

