

First things first for a livable U District, let's tackle urgent livability and affordability concerns first!

Email by Earl Bell, Tue, Sep 15, 2015 1:07 pm

Members of the PLUS Committee:

I have lived in University Park neighborhood adjacent to the U. District for almost fifty years. This half century has undergone some hard times but until now I am one of many who held out hope that one day we might get a city administration who would know what we need and would work with us towards a goal of a community adjacent to a large university where families of diverse interests could be housed in relatively benign circumstances while enjoying the benefits of the proximity.

Towards this goal as a UW Professor of Urban Design and Planning I have worked consistently with others towards that goal but, ironically, now that we are locked together with an academic administration that seems dedicated to playing the role of political backer with public money while playing the role of master of all that happens under the cover of some sort of "grand bargain" (currently called the U. District Partnership) the goal seems farther from our reach as the effort to promote more growth than we are able to accommodate.

The City of Seattle must tackle urgent problems in the University District, including unmanageable traffic congestion, lack of parking, paucity of open space, diminished tree canopy, loss of existing affordable housing and historic buildings, along with public safety issues and a growing homeless population lacking services and shelter.

For the above reasons I endorse Livable U District's Position Statement that until existing problems are addressed, the City must set aside changes to the Comprehensive Plan that lay the groundwork for further up-zones or any further consideration of a high-rise up-zone plan for the U District.

Building higher and denser in the U District will make existing problems worse, not better, so let's put first things first, and tackle urgent livability and affordability concerns before up-zoning that may prove counter-productive to what I and others have pursued for more than four decades.

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