

From late fall 2024 through June 2025, the Spokane University District participated in an [early learning and care needs assessment](#) led by Community-Minded Enterprises in partnership with Spokane Workforce Development and local universities.

According to the Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families, an estimated 1,068 children in the 99202 zip code—where the University District is located—need childcare. The study drew on a survey of 260 individuals and five focus groups with 43 participants. Among respondents, 75% were employees in the UD and 30% were students, of whom 80% were enrolled full-time. Overall, 76% had at least one child aged 12 or younger, 9% had a child with a disability or developmental delay, and 11% were single parents.

Most respondents reported difficulty accessing childcare for all age groups, with the greatest challenge being infant care. As a result, 77% said they had to work fewer hours than desired, and 94% of students felt their academic performance suffered. Seventy percent of all respondents said there is a high need for additional childcare in the University District.

While workforce shortages and wages remain the most significant barriers to childcare development in Spokane, the siting and development of facilities also pose challenges. A new proposal from Mayor Lisa Brown seeks to address this by streamlining the siting process for childcare facilities. Currently, the City of Spokane requires a costly conditional use permit for centers in some residential zones. Mayor Brown's proposal would eliminate this barrier, allowing childcare centers in all residential and commercial zones.

If adopted, this legislation would implement [Senate Bill 5509](#), removing a significant barrier to expanding childcare access locally.

Juliet Sinisterra, CEO





Above: Excerpt from the Spokane University District Early Learning and Care Needs Assessment.

Board Focus



Brooke Kiener is the Dean for the School of Continuing Studies at Whitworth University, where she also served as Associate Provost and as a tenured member of the theatre faculty. She is a certified Gallup Clifton Strengths coach and coaches emerging leaders and start up founders in a strengths-based approach to leadership. She also holds several certificates in Design Thinking from IDEOU, including coursework in leading for innovation and creative collaboration. She is a sought-after speaker and workshop leader on topics such as strengths-based culture, mindful leadership, and avoiding burnout.

She is the creator and instructor for Elevate–Whitworth’s Leadership Certificate for Women, and a proud member of Executive Women International, Women Helping Women Fund, and the founding board chair for Spokane Arts.

Noteworthy Community Events



Hand Building a Dinner for Two in Clay

September 6

Spokane Art School presents a pottery class with Jamie Tate. This is a beginner to intermediate level class. Throughout this class, students will create two plates, two bowls, and two cups. Students will learn interesting ways to create designs in the clay and through glaze application.



State of the County

September 11

What key issues will shape Spokane County in the year ahead? What innovations are driving connection and keeping our community competitive? Connect with fellow business and community leaders, enjoy a luncheon, and hear from Spokane County Commissioner and 2025 Chair Mary Kunej. She will share key insights and highlight collaborative, innovative solutions addressing many of the challenges and opportunities facing Spokane County.





The Sea of Change within Us

September 19

Gonzaga University presents a sixty-minute performance addressing local Washington State water concerns and climate consequences through the voices of real people, combined with moving rigid structures of water images and dancing bodies.



Spokane Regional Transportation Summit

October 7

This event brings together transportation professionals, government officials, members of the business community, and more to learn about how we can work together to improve our regional transportation system.



Festa Italiana

September 20

Experience the sights, sounds, and tastes of Italy at Festa Italiana, hosted by the Spokane-Cagli Sister City Society. This downtown street celebration brings Italian heritage to life with authentic cuisine, live music, traditional games, and cultural displays that capture the spirit of la dolce vita.

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