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for coming  
together

...to imagine, advocate for, donate to, and be a part of Seattle's new waterfront and the new downtown that will emerge because of it. A recent *Seattle Times* editorial was titled “In Waterfront Park, the seeds of a better Seattle,” and it ended with the reminder that when we finally come together, “the city can accomplish great things.”

This is all happening on the lands and shared waters of the Coast Salish people, whose culture has thrived here for more than 13,000 years. Those of us who came later hold an inestimable debt of gratitude to the tribal partners who have been, and will always be, central to the design, culture, and stewardship of this new park.

For 13 years, Waterfront Park has taken shape in extensive collaboration with tribal leaders, elected leaders, public-sector institutions, businesses, nonprofit partners, community leaders, artists, and tens of thousands of other individuals who have weighed in and shown up to create and care for this new place to reconnect—to the water, to the mountains, to our city, and to one another.

Seattle's Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects has nurtured this collaboration and pushed forward the shared vision for Waterfront Park with openness and flexibility, a deep dedication to equity, and a tenacious commitment to excellence. In my conversations with colleagues around the country, it has become clear to me that the quality of Seattle's public-sector leadership of this project has made all the difference.

Friends of Waterfront Seattle, the City's nonprofit partner, is led by a board of directors with extraordinary vision, perseverance, and generosity. The volunteers on the Campaign Steering Committee are indefatigable fundraisers and cheerleaders for the park. And the Central Waterfront Oversight Committee has been setting and monitoring standards for maintenance, operations, and programming to ensure that this park sets a new bar for public space in our city.

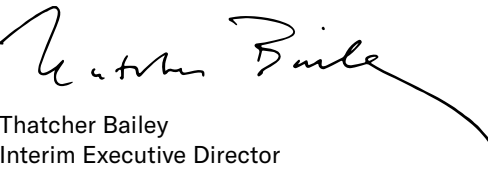
Our terrific staff has been engaging with and learning from individuals and groups from around the region to create community-driven cultural events, recreational activities, and educational opportunities that feel inclusive and safe for all people—particularly Black and Indigenous people and other people of color and underserved communities. We are deeply grateful to the 68 community partners from around the city who helped shape public program offerings on Pier 62 last year. More than a quarter million people visited the pier in 2021, enjoying free programs led by musicians, artists, teachers, and cultural organizations from across the city...or simply taking in the views.

Thanks to all of you who have visited the waterfront. You are helping to create a space that feels vital and welcoming to everyone.

We are grateful to the many partners and friends who have worked with us and with each other to make Pier 62 and the entire waterfront a safe and inclusive place: Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Historic Waterfront Association, the Seattle Aquarium, Pike Place Market, Downtown Seattle Association/ Metropolitan Improvement District, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and the Seattle Police Department. Thank you to the public safety team, who have been on site 24/7/365 to care for Pier 62 and everyone who visits. And thank you to the full-time social outreach team from Evergreen Treatment Services/REACH, who help people on the waterfront who are in distress or experiencing homelessness by connecting them to the services they need.

We are enormously grateful to all of you who have stepped up with financial contributions. Those gifts have so far added up to \$98 million to help build the park and provide ongoing care and services to the place and the people there. This is the largest philanthropic campaign for public space in Seattle's history, and your generosity is inspiring more people every day to join you to meet the \$200 million fundraising goal.

On every page of this report are the names of people and groups whose imagination, advocacy, generosity, artistry, perseverance, and love for Seattle are part of the DNA of Waterfront Park. Inevitably, the list is incomplete; many others have helped—and will help—bring this place to life and give it meaning by contributing their ideas, passion, and presence. Thank you all for honoring the many histories of our waterfront and for helping to write and tell the new stories of this place we all love so much.

  
Thatcher Bailey  
Interim Executive Director



# Voices of the South Seattle community, broadcast live

BY VALERIE SCHLOREDT

Tony Benton couldn't resist making his mark—literally—on Rainier Avenue. Last year, just as his purchase of the historic Columbia City Theater was about to close, a pipe burst under the sidewalk in front of the building. “I thought, well, I just bought it, so I'm going to put my name there,” says Tony, smiling. In the wet concrete where the sidewalk had just been repaired, he wrote his name, marking the beginning of a new life for the old theater and a new chapter for South Seattle's music, arts, and community.

After 20 years in commercial radio, including stints at KUBE hosting a community affairs show and at KJR covering sports, Benton started Rainier Avenue Radio in 2011. The community station now broadcasts 24/7 over the internet, providing diverse South Seattle with a program of locally relevant news, talk, and music.

That commitment to community means Benton is an ideal partner for getting the news out about Waterfront Park. If you're tuned in to Rainier Avenue Radio, you may hear Benton's voice on radio spots in English; ads in Fijian, Filipino, Spanish, or Vietnamese; or invitations to community to events at Pier 62 that range from music shows to yoga classes.

When Benton welcomes you over the threshold of the Columbia City Theater, you see that you're in a special place. The building is more than 100 years old and has hosted a century of entertainment, from vaudeville and movies to indie rock and hip-hop. Given Seattle's rapid development and soaring property prices, it's rare to step into a place that has so much unvarnished old Seattle atmosphere intact. There's a high ceiling, an exposed brick wall, and a trim bar. Follow Benton through another doorway, and you step out into a double-height theater, with galleries along the walls, a wooden floor that invites dancing, and

a gilt-edged proscenium arch over the stage. A long line of musical legends are said to have performed here, including Ella Fitzgerald and a young Jimi Hendrix.

For Benton, who grew up 10 minutes away, the theater was a high school hangout in the 1970s, when it showed kung fu movies and films with Black stars. On the wall of the theater is a framed poster from that era for “Claudine,” starring Diahann Carroll and James Earl Jones. Next to it, Benton has hung a poster commemorating Black Wall Street, the thriving business district built by the Black community of Tulsa, Oklahoma—which was destroyed in the infamous 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. “I have it there to remind me,” says Benton. It's a reminder of the localized economy a community can create and the regeneration he wants to see with Columbia City Theater at its center.

It's a major plan, both socially and logistically. The theater is much bigger than you'd guess from the street, with two glassed-in viewing rooms on the upper levels and winding halls that lead to surprising reception and rehearsal spaces. The potential for a wide variety of activities here—even held simultaneously—is enormous.

Benton's dream for the theater includes everyone in the community, so he wants to have all-ages events that young people can attend. That's not surprising given that Rainier Avenue Radio runs classes for middle and high school students in 21st-century communications skills such as app design, social media, digital analytics, photography, and, of course, broadcasting.

Renovations are planned for 2023 to make Columbia City Theater the multi-purpose, ADA-accessible, rich cultural space that Benton envisions. He spent a year looking into purchasing the building, and he made

## Tony Benton

Founder and station manager of Rainier Avenue Radio and owner of Columbia City Theater

it happen with help from the Cultural Space Agency, a cultural real estate development company chartered by the City of Seattle as a public development authority.

Benton says he didn't talk much about the property deal until it was final. Only then did he start hearing about how significant it is that, in gentrified Columbia City, the theater will be revitalized by a member of the Black community. The building evokes many important memories for locals, and there's a lot of buzz about what it can host now and in the future.

People have been coming to Benton with requests to rent the space for parties, rehearsals, and events. “The response has been amazing,” he says. Just then, a young woman knocks on the door—she's looking for a venue for a book launch. “I could go on and on about the types of opportunities that have presented themselves,” says Benton. “Because people now know that this is going to be more than a bar with a stage at the back.”

Tony Benton in the bar at Columbia City Theater.

Tony Benton coordinates Make Music Seattle, part of a worldwide celebration of free and participatory music in cities around the world held every year on June 21. It's a fitting way to mark the summer solstice—and the power of music to unite and uplift. Even during the first pandemic summer of 2020, Benton spread some musical joy around town on that date with a hybrid program of online and socially distanced events, including “tiny” marching bands along the downtown waterfront, a cappella singers in Westlake Park, and acoustic performances on Pier 62. Friends of Waterfront Seattle worked with Benton to put on Make Music Day 2022 with an all day event on the Waterfront this year.

## Thank you

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# Roots in the community, boots on the ground

BY CHAMIDAE FORD



An interview with Taylor Hoang, senior manager of external affairs at Amazon

In December 2021, Friends of the Waterfront Seattle received a generous \$5 million gift from Amazon. Spearheading and facilitating this donation was Taylor Hoang, the company's senior manager of external affairs and a longtime Seattle resident.

A former entrepreneur, a cofounder of the Ethnic Business Coalition, and a board member at Seattle Parks Foundation, Hoang spent her childhood helping out in her parents' restaurant in Seattle's Little Saigon neighborhood. Her immersion in the tight-knit community sparked a passion for advocating for the people and city she loves.

At Amazon, a central focus of Hoang's work has been to help expand access to resources for marginalized groups.

We spoke with Hoang about her work, her life experiences, and her passion for green spaces in Seattle.

**You have done a lot of work advocating for the Southeast Asian community in Seattle. In what ways are you continuing that work at Amazon?**

My work with Amazon is really to represent Amazon in the community—to bring opportunities and resources, and to help our communities address the challenges that they may face. I came from the community, boots on the ground, and we at Amazon want to have a hyperlocal community presence. Given my background and the work that I've done with the community, I could bring that voice into Amazon and say, "The set of challenges that the Central District faces is different from what Little Saigon or Ballard or Fremont or SODO may face. We need to be flexible and willing to help our neighbors and support them in ways that work best for them—and in ways that we as a good company in this city should show up for our neighbors."

**How has your past work in the community influenced your approach as the senior manager of external affairs at Amazon?**

When I was previously running my own business and then running a nonprofit, I found that they are, in essence, very similar, especially a newly founded nonprofit. In these roles, you worry about the bottom line and where the funding is coming in. You wonder how you are going to solicit funding. Small nonprofit are very limited with their capacity.

So how I've approached the work that I do with Amazon is by making sure that I proactively reach out to the nonprofits and smaller community organizations. This way, the burden of doing the due diligence to understand their work, how they are supporting

the community, and the results that they are yielding is on me. Then I proactively ask them, "How can I support you? How can I bring more resources to you?" I find a lot of times funders rely on organizations to come to them, and then the burdens are placed on small nonprofits.

**You are a board member at Seattle Parks Foundation and an advocate for the city's parks and public spaces. What made you want to get involved in that work?**

As an avid outdoor person, I appreciate the green equitable space that I've been able to access. I think it's highly important for everybody, especially our young kids, to have access to green space. Seattle Parks Foundation is an amazing organization because they act as the fiscal agent, the administrative agent, and the advocacy agent for small community-based parks coalitions. We need to champion the little guys and make sure that what we do, whether it's at Amazon or as a board member for Seattle Parks Foundation, is equitable and is inclusive of everybody in the city.

**Why do you think having access to green space in a city is important to the health and well-being of people and communities?**

Parks are just that beautiful green, I like to say, rainbow place. When you have that opportunity to get outside and you're breathing fresh air, it is good for your mental health. These public spaces also provide opportunities for kids to run, feel safe, and play. I wholeheartedly believe that kids need that space. When you go to a park and you see people communicating with each other, people talking, it improves well-being. And I

think parks are a safe place where we, as a city, can come together, be supportive, enjoy the sun (when it is out), and just be able to take in nature and the environment around us.

**You were instrumental in securing a \$5 million gift from Amazon to help build Waterfront Park. How did you and your colleagues know this was a project you wanted to support?**

I was just the messenger that brought the whole team together. And we, as a company, knew that this was definitely something that we wanted to support. Waterfront Park is going to transform Seattle...and as a hometown company, we wanted to be a part of that history....[I]t is also important for us to get involved with improving our city and setting an example for our corporate partners to step in and do the same. Ultimately, there was no question for us whether we would get involved or not, it was just a matter of time and getting everybody together to make sure that we did it correctly.

**How do you think Waterfront Park will change Seattle?**

Waterfront Park is going to be the largest infrastructure development in our city in a long, long time. It's going to bring the community together. It's going to create new multimodal transportation opportunities for biking, walking, and ferries. I recently spoke to the Seattle Aquarium, and they're doing their own development around the park that's going to teach about sustainability and ocean life. I also love the sustainability component of the park and how they are building it in a way that protects our sea life. This park is going to be transformative, and I just can't wait.



Mak Fai Kung Fu Club's lion dance for Lunar New Year 2022. PHOTO BY ADAM LU



Dozens of people of all ages attended Bollywood dance classes in 2021. PHOTO BY TOSIN ARASI



Joyas Mestizas performs at the Día De Muertos Celebration in 2021. PHOTO BY ADAM LU



The mini soccer field on Pier 62 has been a big hit with kids and families since it was added in 2021. PHOTO BY ADAM LU

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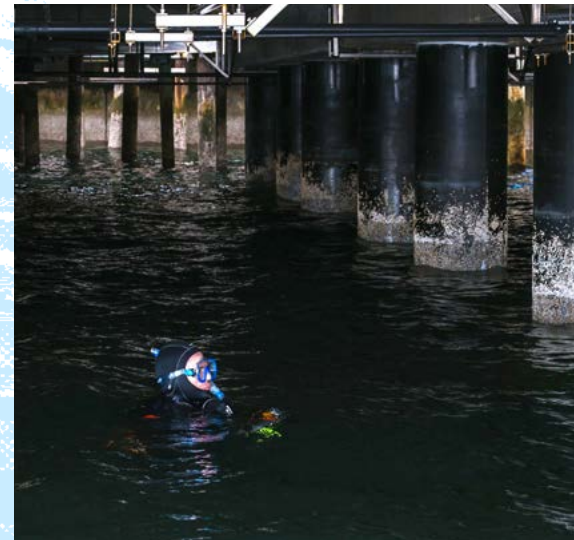
# Transforming the waterfront—again, but better

BY VALERIE SCHLOREDT

**Jennifer Ott**, historian with HistoryLink  
**Jason Toft**, principal scientist at UW's School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences



Jennifer Ott leads a history-focused walking tour along the downtown waterfront.  
 PHOTO BY SUNITA MARTINI



Jason Toft conducting research under Pier 62. PHOTO BY SUNITA MARTINI



Jason Toft and his team of UW scientists.  
 PHOTO BY SUNITA MARTINI

On a cool, clear afternoon in March, environmental historian Jennifer Ott is on Seattle's waterfront, leading a tour group and evoking a vision of the past. Gesturing toward Western Avenue, she explains how steep hills once rose abruptly there, forming the water's edge. That was when the area was inhabited only by the Coast Salish people, who maneuvered along the shoreline in canoes and fished the waters of what we now know as Elliott Bay.

Not long after outside settlers arrived in the 1850s, they initiated an ambitious, sometimes chaotic transformation of the shoreline. Ott shows the group old photos of the long, wide piers and railway tracks that shipping firms, timber barons, and industrialists built in layers of construction, destruction, and reconstruction over many decades.

The tour Ott is leading, hosted by HistoryLink and Friends of Waterfront Seattle, is not just for tourists. This group also includes longtime residents and newish arrivals from all points of the compass. Some have spent a lifetime in Seattle without realizing how much of the waterfront is the product of human engineering—including the ground beneath their feet as they walk north along Alaskan Way toward Pier 62. This is all infill, created by regraded hills and vast amounts of dirt (and other things) dumped into the harbor to build up land for streets, warehouses, and businesses.

What held all that infill in place was Seattle's first seawall, constructed in stages from the 1910s through the 1930s. Despite additions and improvements over the decades, it was in dire condition by 2013, when work began on its replacement. Ott points out the location of the seawall beneath the sidewalk as the tour group walks around traffic cones and fencing that are part of ongoing construction and landscaping for the new Waterfront Park.

The new seawall, completed in 2017, was designed with careful consideration of both human activity and the natural environment. Environmental scientists from the University of Washington who had done seawall research since the mid-2000s were brought in as advisors during the planning process. They included Jason Toft, a principal scientist on the Wetland Ecosystem Team in the UW's School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences.

"It's been really great, working together with people of different specialties," Toft says. We're ecologists, scientists—and early on in the process we found ourselves in meeting rooms with engineers and city planners. And we were like, okay, if we're going to pour concrete on a new seawall, can we do it in a more eco-friendly way?"

The old waterfront was held in place by a straight wall, with overshooting piers. That wasn't the best environment for the marine

species, like Chinook salmon, that were abundant here before settler colonization and industrial development.

Toft and his colleagues knew that when young salmon migrate seaward from their inland hatching tributaries, they stick close to shallow water near shore and steer clear of shadows under piers, where they can't see well enough to feed on the small invertebrates that make up most of their diet. The new seawall design mimics natural shallow-water habitat, with a "bench" in the wall, not far from the surface. Post-construction research has shown that this has improved habitat for juvenile salmon, increasing feeding behavior and dispersion along the shoreline.

"The seawall face itself looks more like a climbing wall," says Toft. "There's crevasses and ledges, and that's really good for invertebrate and algae attachment. You want to give those smaller invertebrates a place to live and grow." The wall's concrete texture was designed by artists Laura Haddad and Tom Drugan to mimic the forms of the creatures and plants that Toft describes. Haddad and Drugan describe the seawall as "the dynamic seam between land and sea," but it can also be described as a meeting point between art and science.

Another waterfront design feature that's a result of the UW team's involvement is glass bricks in the sidewalk that allow natural light to get under the piers. Pedestrians strolling along the waterfront may be unaware that tiny salmon could be swimming in the water just a few yards below them.

Toft says there are plenty of other surprises under the water, too. Most Seattleites don't realize that shoals of herring swim close to the waterfront. But then, not many of those people snorkel in the cold waters of Elliott Bay, as Toft and his team do. The researchers don drysuits for an annual "snorkel survey" of fish and invertebrates near the seawall. "If you see someone on the waterfront this spring walking around in a drysuit, it could be one of our team members," Toft says.

The scientists are glad to see their research and ongoing data collection contribute to environmental improvements. "Even though Seattle is a huge city, and there's big problems with trying to improve habitat for salmon, it is possible," says Toft. "Salmon still migrate back and forth along our shorelines. This connection, where freshwater meets saltwater, is just hugely important."



The new Tideline Promenade and seawall were carefully designed to create shallow-water habitat for native marine life. IMAGE BY JAMES CORNER FIELD OPERATIONS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE

## Thank you

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# Young women take the stage

Interview with  
Haley Graves and THEM



Last October, hundreds of people gathered to enjoy the return of large-scale live concerts at Pier 62, the first since the beloved concert series Summer Nights on the Pier ended in 2004. The first show in the new Pier Sounds series was headlined by local favorites The Black Tones, with opening acts Haley Graves, a recent arrival to Seattle's pop punk scene, and THEM, a four-piece band making waves with their candy pop rock flair. We talked to Haley and THEM about their music, their inspirations, and their experience playing at Pier Sounds.

## Names, ages, and years as professional musicians?

HG: 21, less than a year.

THEM: Thompson Whitehead, 17; Hudson Steere, 16; Ellie Vann, 20; Maia Schinkel, 20. We have all been professional musicians and a band for the past four years.

## Haley, what is it about pop punk that captures your imagination and sparks creativity for you?

HG: I love the energy! Lets out all my anger and aggression, but in a playful way!

## THEM, how would you describe your music?

THEM: An insightful look at the teenage experience, with the catchiness of your favorite ear candy pop rock. With inspiration from Neko Case, Olivia Rodrigo, Bikini Kill,

and other female rock stars. We like to switch genres and mess around with new sounds with each song we write.

## What was it like performing at Pier Sounds? How was it performing on stage with all of the other bands, including The Black Tones?

HG: It was an amazing experience! I've played with The Black Tones before, and the girls in THEM are so amazing! I can't wait to watch them (no pun intended) evolve!

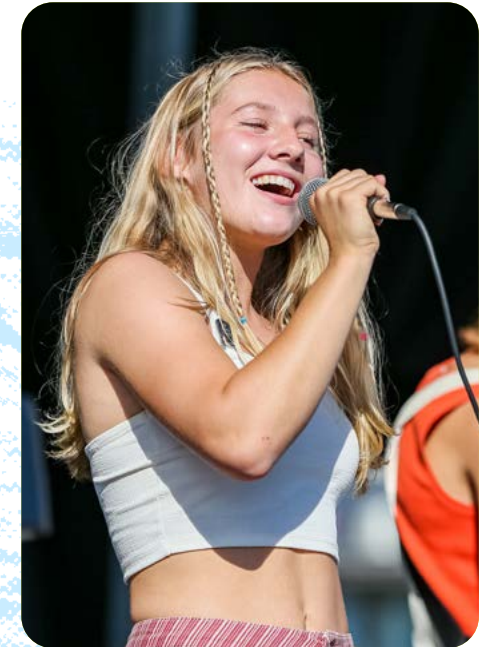
THEM: It was truly an unreal experience. The Black Tones will always be one of our top Seattle bands. THEM actually formed as a band at a small music school in West Seattle where [Black Tones front woman] Eva Walker was the instructor. She taught us cover songs

as a group every Sunday evening when we were 12, 13, and 14 years old. We've learned so much from everyone in The Black Tones over the years, and to share the stage with them was so surreal.

## THEM, you mentioned Eva Walker's support earlier on. Who else do you find inspiration from as young women in music?

THEM: Seattle's music community is so supportive, and we are lucky our experience in the music scene has been nothing but positive. Our local faves—including Naked Giants, Shaina Shepherd, Archie the Shycon, The Black Tones (of course), and Thunderpussy, to name a few—have all been great mentors to us and continue to be there for us as we grow.

## Haley, your website mentions your hope to



PHOTOS BY ADAM LU

## add diversity to the pop punk genre as a Black woman. Where do you find your inspiration in this mission?

HG: I feel like I'm in a unique position with pop punk making a comeback and seeing more Black people come to the front, especially Black women like Willow Smith and Meet Me @ The Altar.

## Pier Sounds was the first series of large-scale concerts held at Pier 62 since 2004, when Summer Nights at the Pier ended. There was a big demand in Seattle for these concerts to come back. How did it feel to be a big part of the return of live concerts on Pier 62?

HG: It was truly an honor! Thank you for having me!

THEM: Pier Sounds was one of the first big outdoor events we attended post-COVID lockdown, and it was so refreshing to be gathered by our friends and neighbors after such a long couple years locked down. We feel so lucky that we were able to be a part of such a historic concert series joined by our favorite artists; the show was truly unforgettable.

## What are your thoughts on free concerts for the public in parks and public spaces?

HG: I feel like it's very important. I would assume that the girls in THEM can relate to this, but I have a lot of friends under 21 or about to turn 21, and many of them wish they could come see a show of mine, and having more all-ages spaces could help with that.

THEM: So many of our friends and fans were able to attend this concert that could not attend previous shows due to cost and location, and it felt so awesome that there was no factor that couldn't bring people out to the show. There were dogs, babies, families—you name it! It was quite a diverse audience of people, and I'd say a good amount of the people there hadn't even planned to see a show that day but were in the area by coincidence and got to attend.

## Thank you

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Friends of Waterfront Seattle is the nonprofit partner to the City of Seattle responsible for helping to fund, build, steward, and program the park—today and into the future.

## The Frolicsome Crests and Glistening

By Rena Priest

*“What is it then between us?” —Walt Whitman*

There are 20 million pounds of gold  
suspended in normal seawater,  
spread out in parts-per-trillion.  
Gold is a good conductor  
of electricity, but seeing how it's sought,  
I'll bet it's the best conductor of a heart's deepest want.  
I once had a conversation with my daughter  
in which she asked,  
“Do you believe everything is connected?”  
“That depends,” I said.  
“On what?” she asked.  
“On whether you're being spiritual or conspiratorial.”  
“Spiritual,” she said.  
“Then, yes,” I said, “everything is connected.”  
“How can everything be connected spiritually,  
but not conspiratorially?” she asked.  
Considering it, I believe the spirit conspires  
against our errant belief that we are separate.  
I might be you. You might be me. We might be  
the living sea with 20 million pounds of gold  
shimmering, suspended between us,  
conducting our hearts' deepest wants across  
frolicsome crests and glistening, and what else  
could it be, if not a spiritual conspiracy?

Rena Priest is an enrolled member of the Lhaq'temish (Lummi) Nation. She currently serves as the Washington State Poet Laureate.