

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

U District Advocates (Nonprofit 501c3 corporation) v. Domain Administrator / Synergy Technologies, LLC
Case No. D2026-0410

1. The Parties

The Complainant is U District Advocates (Nonprofit 501c3 corporation), United States of America (“United States”), internally represented.

The Respondent is Domain Administrator / Synergy Technologies, LLC, Cook Islands, represented by ESQwire.com PC, United States.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <udistrict.com> is registered with Epik LLC (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on February 2, 2026. On February 2, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On February 2, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Epik LLC) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on February 4, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and asking the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on February 6, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on February 6, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was February 26, 2026. On February 13, 2026, the Respondent requested an automatic four-day extension in accordance with Paragraph 5(b) of the Rules. The Response was then due for March 2, 2026. The Response was filed with the Center on February 26, 2026.

The Center appointed Scott W. Blackmer, Douglas M. Isenberg, and Lynda M. Braun as panelists in this matter on March 18, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. Each member of the Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.¹

4. Factual Background

The Complainant, headquartered in Seattle, Washington, United States, is a nonprofit corporation formed on January 27, 2014, according to the Washington State online Corporations and Charities Filing System.² The Complainant serves as a volunteer advocacy organization for the residents, students, merchants, property owners, workers, commuters, and visitors of the “U District” (short for “University District”), a geographical section of the City of Seattle, as described on the Complainant’s website at “www.udistrict.org”.

The Complainant holds United States Trademark Registration Number 7911200 (registered on August 26, 2025) for the word mark U DISTRICT in international class 35, claiming first use in commerce and first use anywhere “at least as early as April 17, 2013”.

The disputed domain name was created on June 1, 1996, and is registered to the Respondent Domain Administrator / Synergy Technologies, LLC (“Synergy Technologies”) of the Cook Islands. The Response attaches the Declaration of Hugh Hedley, the owner of Synergy Technologies, who affirms that the Respondent is a domain investor that has been in the business of buying, selling, leasing, and developing “generic and descriptive domain names” since April 26, 2007, with over 15,000 domain names in its portfolio. The Response attaches a record of purchases showing that the Respondent purchased the disputed domain name on July 9, 2008, from NameJet.com, a domain auction platform handling expiring and deleting domain names, consistent with the Respondent’s strategy of acquiring geographic domain names.

The Response attaches historical screenshots of websites associated with the disputed domain name over the years since 2008 related, for example, to the Seattle University or “U” District, The University of Washington, the City of Seattle, and Epik.com’s geographic domain names platform. At the time of this Decision, the disputed domain name resolves to an atom.com landing page advertising the disputed domain name for sale.

The Complainant contacted the Respondent in January 2026 and offered to purchase the disputed domain name for USD 1,000. The Respondent countered with an asking price of USD 23,000. This proceeding followed.

¹The Panel notes that the Complainant objected to the inclusion of Mr. Isenberg as a panelist in this proceeding, given that he had served as presiding panelist in an earlier UDRP proceeding involving the Respondent, when it was represented by the same counsel as in the current proceeding. The Complainant suggests that this may affect the panelist’s obligations under the Rules and refers to the General Standards Regarding Impartiality, Independence and Disclosure of the International Bar Association, which requires disclosure of relationships and circumstances that might cast doubt on an arbitrator’s independence or impartiality. The Panel notes that these facts have been taken into consideration, and the panelist (one of three, in this instance) has completed and signed the required WIPO Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as recited above. Further, the Panel notes that, despite the Complainant’s later objection, the Complainant named Mr. Isenberg as one of three panelists it asked the Center to appoint in this proceeding, as provided by paragraph 5(b)(v) of the Rules. Finally, the Panel notes that the present decision result is unanimous.

²Noting the general powers of a panel articulated in paragraphs 10 and 12 of the Rules, it is commonly accepted that a panel may undertake limited factual research into matters of public record, as the Panel has done in these proceedings. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions (“[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)”), section 4.8.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain name is identical to its registered U DISTRICT trademark, which the Respondent has no permission to use and in which it has no other rights or legitimate interests, as the Respondent is not commonly known by this name and is merely passively holding the disputed domain name for resale.

The Complainant says that the "Respondent's knowledge of Complainant's rights may be inferred" because of the "Complainant's public use of the U DISTRICT" mark and the fact that the disputed domain name is identical. The Complainant concludes that the Respondent has acted in bad faith, as the Respondent suggested a resale price to the trademark holder in excess of out-of-pocket costs. The Complainant argues that there is a "high risk" of misdirecting Internet users seeking the Complainant and further that the "passive holding may constitute bad faith where, as here, the domain is identical to a complainant's mark, the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, and the Respondent's conduct indicates an abusive registration".

B. Respondent

The Respondent contends that the Complainant has not satisfied all three of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name. The Respondent argues that it has a legitimate interest in acquiring geographical domain names for resale or development and cites over 4,500 such domain names that it currently owns, furnishing examples. In any event, the Respondent denies any intent to target the Complainant's mark, which was not in existence in July 2008 when the Respondent acquired the disputed domain name – the Complainant claims first use of the mark almost five years later.

The Respondent requests a finding of Reverse Domain Name Hijacking, given the impossibility of the Complainant's claim of bad faith in the registration of the disputed domain name years before the Complainant's first use of the mark in question. The Respondent notes that the Complainant's representative was sufficiently knowledgeable to handle trademark registration and multiple Office Actions before the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("USPTO") and should have been able to investigate the merits of a UDRP claim against a domain name originally registered in 1996.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#) section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark (the registered U DISTRICT word mark) for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1.

The entirety of the mark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is identical to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

The Respondent has attached evidence, such as a Wikipedia article and Internet search results, supporting its claim that “U District” is a geographic term referring to a section of Seattle, Washington, and the Complainant acknowledges as much. The Respondent has also established that it has been in the business of investing in domain names for nearly twenty years, including thousands of geographic names, and that it associated the disputed domain name with relevant geographic websites for years, as well as offering it for resale. The Panel finds on this factual record that both activities represent a use in connection with a bona fide commercial activity consistent with the Policy, paragraph 4(c)(i). [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.10.

The record does not indicate that the registration of the disputed domain name composed of a geographic term was a pretext for attacking the Complainant's trademark, as discussed further in the following section on bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.10.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has not been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith. The Complainant alludes to some of these, such as creating a confusingly similar domain name to misdirect Internet users and offering to sell the disputed domain name for an amount in excess of registration costs. However, none of these arguments support an inference of bad faith in both the registration and use of the disputed domain name without the necessary foundation of establishing the likelihood that the Respondent selected the disputed domain name in contemplation of the Complainant's trademark. That is virtually impossible given the facts in this case.

The Respondent furnishes documentary evidence of its purchase of the disputed domain name on July 9, 2008. This is almost five years before the Complainant claims first use of its U DISTRICT mark (and five and a half years before the Complainant was formed as a legal entity). The Complainant offers no evidence of “anticipatory registration” or “nascent trademark rights” due to some advance knowledge on the part of the Respondent. The Respondent could hardly have acquired the disputed domain name to attack a mark not in existence, to be used by an organization that would not be formed until several years later. As set forth in section 3.8.1 of [WIPO Overview 3.1](#): “[W]here a respondent registers a domain name before the complainant's trademark rights accrue, panels will not normally find bad faith on the part of the respondent.”

The Panel finds that the Respondent did not register the disputed domain name in bad faith targeting of the Complainant or its trademark rights because the Complainant had no trademark rights at the time that the Respondent registered the disputed domain name. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.8.1.

The Panel finds the third element of the Policy has not been established.

D. Reverse Domain Name Hijacking

Paragraph 15(e) of the Rules provides that, if after considering the submissions, the Panel finds that the Complaint was brought in bad faith, for example in an attempt at Reverse Domain Name Hijacking or to harass the domain-name holder, the Panel shall declare in its decision that the Complaint was brought in bad faith and constitutes an abuse of the administrative proceeding. The mere lack of success of the complaint is not, on its own, sufficient to constitute reverse domain name hijacking. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 4.16.

Here, the fact that the disputed domain name was created nearly thirty years ago and is composed of a common geographic term should have given the Complainant pause in assessing the likelihood of prevailing

on the second and third elements of the Complaint. The Complainant was in contact with the Respondent and could have ascertained the nature of the Respondent's business and when the Respondent acquired the disputed domain name, before undertaking and imposing the costs and burdens of a UDRP proceeding.

The Panel finds on this record that the Complaint has been brought in bad faith and constitutes an attempt at Reverse Domain Name Hijacking.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, the Complaint is denied.

/W. Scott Blackmer /

W. Scott Blackmer

Presiding Panelist

/Douglas M. Isenberg/

Douglas M. Isenberg

Panelist

/Lynda M. Braun /

Lynda M. Braun

Panelist

Date: March 20, 2026