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Climbing gym to open in Shoreline

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A new training-focused climbing gym called Uplift Climbing is slated to open at 17229 15th Ave N.E. in Shoreline later this year.

Owner Andrew Hou acknowledges a pandemic is not the best time to open a gym but it has been in planning since late 2018 “and it didn't really seem like quitting was the right move to make given that we had put all this work into it.”

Hou is a software engineer and avid climber. He moved to Olympia at age 14 and has lived in Seattle since he came here to attend the University of Washington. He started climbing in high school and has been deep in Seattle-area sport climbing in the last 12 years. He has also done alpine climbing and traditional climbing on the West Coast.

“Climbing is my biggest passion, and I want to build a facility that I want to climb in, I want to train in,” he said.

Hou said newcomers to climbing have found easy introductions at many of the Seattle-area climbing gyms designed to appeal to a broad demographic -- gyms that have done a fantastic job at introducing new people to the sport.

While Uplift Climbing will welcome people of all ability levels, it will focus on serving people for whom climbing has become more than just recreation — dedicated outdoor athletes who are looking to push themselves to higher levels of performance, he said. They climb in competitions, have set long-term climbing goals outside and train four to five times a week to achieve them.

The 7,300-square-foot bouldering-only facility will have 14-foot-tall walls that vary in angle from 5 degrees to 60 degrees overhanging. Other amenities will include hang boards, a campus board, Moon and Tension boards, cardio equipment, weights and other training-focused equipment. The diamond-patterned climbing walls are built by Vertical Solutions, a Salt Lake City-based climbing gym company.

While it will be a designed for training, the gym will also offer programming that will revolve around community events, training-specific classes and outdoor stewardship.

According to Hou, rock climbing has exploded in popularity, with thousands of people holding memberships at Seattle-area climbing gyms. Recent films such as “Free Solo” and “The Dawn Wall” have exposed climbing to more people than ever before. And with the inclusion of climbing to the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, this interest is not expected to wane anytime soon, he said.

In 2019, over 5.1 million people stepped into a climbing gym nationwide, Hou noted, quoting a 2019 report from the Climbing Wall Association, an industry organization for climbing gyms in the country.



Rendering provided by SKL Architects and Vertical Solutions [\[enlarge\]](#)

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Construction on Uplift Climbing started in August. It is a remodel of a longstanding building that most recently was a Maid Brigade location, according to Hou. Architecture is by SKL Architects. Metis Construction is the general contractor. Outside investors in the gym are friends and family.

Uplift Climbing will be a mile off Interstate 5 and about a mile from the Shoreline North/185th Station light rail station slated to open in 2024.

Hou said it will be the first climbing gym to serve the North Seattle area, including the neighboring cities of Lake Forest Park, Mountlake Terrace, and Kenmore.

He said he was able to delay the commencement of the lease for the gym space from March, when the pandemic hit, until August, giving him time to figure out what the new COVID-19 operating environment would mean for the business.

Uplift Climbing expects to be at 25 percent capacity when it opens due to COVID-19 requirements. It will do cleaning nightly and some cleaning during the day, Hou said. People can make reservations at upliftclimbing.com once it opens.

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