



## **Under Construction Season 1 Finale with Special Guest Jean Enersen**

**Marilyn Strickland** Welcome to Under Construction. I'm your host Marilyn Strickland, CEO of the Seattle Metro Chamber. In each episode, we take you behind the scenes with the people and companies shaping our evolving region. Welcome to a special episode of our podcast, Under Construction. After 12 episodes where we met and learned from Seattle metro area leaders, we're wrapping up our very first season of Under Construction. This has been a special effort for us into new media -- and we built and strengthened incredible connections together, with strong, talented and inspiring people in our community.

**Marilyn Strickland** And today of course is no exception. On this episode, I'm pleased to be joined by legendary KING 5 television news anchor Jean Enersen, who's going to flip the mic on me and discuss with me changing Seattle and lessons learned from a first season of our podcast. Jean Enersen was an anchor and health reporter at King 5 for 46 years. She was one of the first women and television anchors in the early 70s. Now Jean works with the Seattle Children's Hospital and Research Institute helping to bring hope, care and cures to sick children through service on their board of trustees. Jean, thank you so much for joining us today.

**Jean Enersen** Thank you. I'm happy to be here. I look forward to hearing what you have as takeaways from your first year of the podcast. And I think it's a great idea that your outreach into the community is really strong. I know that Marilyn. And I just wanted to tell your audience -- you and I met when you were still the mayor of Tacoma.

**Marilyn Strickland** We did.

**Jean Enersen** And you and the super-super I call her -- the superintendent of Tacoma schools came to CDRT the Community Development Roundtable and shared with us some of the things that you had been able to accomplish in Tacoma. So when I found out you were going to be Seattle's for a while running the Chamber here, I was really, really thrilled. Because what you've done in Tacoma, what you've done in Seattle now is all positive, really great. So I would start by asking you your three takeaways from the first year of your Under Construction podcast.

**Marilyn Strickland** So, you know, doing a podcast was new. Because I'm typically used to being on the other side of the mic -- having people ask me questions so it's kind of fun to be back here.

**Jean Enersen** Oh I'll ask you a few.

**Marilyn Strickland** I know you will.

**Marilyn Strickland** And I would say my main takeaways from the first season was really just how open people were about sharing their personal stories. And when we started doing this podcast, we said we wanted to get behind the brands and get to know the people behind them. And just people having really fascinating stories about where they were born, their upbringing, some of their failures earlier on in their careers. And just so appreciated that people were willing to tell their personal stories and help us get to know them behind their daily job.

**Marilyn Strickland** I would say the other thing that I really have picked up on which is not breaking news to anyone is that Seattle is a changing and dynamic metropolitan region. And in many ways you know, we're on a global stage and I think sometimes we lose sight of that. And you know we have the ability I believe to make it better. And to not make some of the mistakes that other metropolitan regions have made in the U.S. But you know it's going to take some work. But I think we're up for it. And I'd say finally the third thing Jean is that every organization leader who I interviewed -- whether it's someone from nonprofit or a small local business or someone from a larger company, it's like everyone is so civic-minded here. People who have organizations and businesses in Seattle care deeply about this community and the people who are here. And so I'd say those are probably my big three takeaways.

**Jean Enersen** You know I'm really glad to hear you say that. Especially that third point. Because I think sometimes we feel like the newness in Seattle represent some transitory population that doesn't care as much about what happens in our community or they don't think as a concept it's our community. As I know you do and I do. So now you been in this chair in Seattle and been doing the podcast for a year. How have your perceptions of Seattle -- your thoughts about Seattle changed?

**Marilyn Strickland** Let me talk a bit about my perception of Seattle so you know from as a mayor of Tacoma who participated in a lot of regional organizations whether that was planning or in transit. You know Seattle it's the center of the economy in Washington state. And I would say a few things. You know it confirms what I always thought -- which is that Seattle leaders care deeply about the community but also to I think it's interesting. Because I think about the way Seattle has changed over time. And when you read the headlines there is a tendency to think that technology and tech just is the only thing that's part of Seattle's economy. And in reality I think we sometimes lose sight of the fact that we have a very very diversified economy.

**Marilyn Strickland** So there is maritime. There's manufacturing, and you know in many ways big retailers from Nordstrom to REI to Starbucks. And so I think for me it's a reminder that we have a really diversified economy and you know tech is out there. Tech is the leader. But we also have life sciences. We have manufacturing and so really just appreciating the breadth and the depth. When I think about the way Seattle's changed though I think about the fact that my first job out of college in 1985 was in downtown Seattle on Third Avenue. And as you know Jean, Seattle was not so fancy back then. And

so just to watch its evolution and kind of living up to the aspiration of always wanted to be a world class city. Well we are now on the global stage and it's here.

**Jean Enersen** We tend to think that the perception of Seattle today is the shiny penny. The tech community. But you're saying it's really so much more than that. And are you taking us back to our roots? Or are you know, are those jobs still available? Some people would say maybe not. Not so much.

**Marilyn Strickland** I mean the jobs are still available in the region. And you know one thing I come back to is that you know this construction boom means that there are a lot of jobs in the building trades. The amount of investment that we're making in mass transit means that there are lots of jobs. And so this economy again is pretty diversified. And you know, and I want to make sure I'm clear about this. You know tech in many ways is another one of those brands in sectors that continues to put us on the map and gets us global acclaim. But when we talk about having an inclusive economy, we have to remember that you know we want people with all backgrounds in different education levels and skill sets to have access to jobs that pay well. The challenge for us right now is how can people afford to live here even when they make decent salaries?

**Jean Enersen** Yeah. I guess that would be the change that I see because I've lived here all my life. The change that I see in the last couple of decades is the tremendous prosperity that's been made possible for a lot of people here. And the flipside of that is the tremendous poverty we see.

**Marilyn Strickland** Right.

**Jean Enersen** And the gap in between is what concerns me most. And you know you see that in particularly in housing or the lack of housing and the homeless population that has become the center of of our attention. Which I think is a really good thing and hopefully positive changes will come out of that attention. But it's that -- it's that gap between the have and have nots. The prosperity and the poverty that really concerns me as we go forward. That's the biggest change that I see is the expanding gap.

**Marilyn Strickland** Right. And it's shocking to us because we've always thought about our region as a place that was affordable for you regardless of your walk of life. And now that's changing and it's, and it's become very visible and very obvious.

**Jean Enersen** So a lot of the guests talked about the significant influence their family -- their parents, siblings, grandparents had in their lives and on their work. A few of the guests who talked about family influence were John Cook the founder of local tech news site GeekWire, Jasmine Donovan the president and CFO of Dick's Drive.

**Marilyn Strickland** Hooray for Dick's.

**Jean Enersen** David Bley, the director of Pacific Northwest Initiative at the Bill Melinda Gates Foundation. And of course Adriane Brown, the first guest of the podcast and a venture partner now at Flying Fish Fund. Were you surprised by the common experience of these people and others saying that they were so shaped by family?

**Marilyn Strickland** You never know what to expect when you have guests on. But every single person told some story about their childhood -- which was really cool. And you know John Cook who you know, who runs GeekWire, his mother was actually a newspaper

reporter for the Akron Beacon Journal in Ohio and she had a Wayne County beat that she developed in her own turf. John's father was an entrepreneur who ran a small business and ended up running a family business. A car and truck dealership in Wooster, Ohio. And then when you think about GeekWire today as a product, it's a tech news site with strong roots in the Seattle region and it's kind of a melding of the two. John's running a business and he's doing reporting. And he talked about his first real job which is interesting because he said he was actually working with his mother on her newspaper and doing the obituaries.

**John Cook** *My first real job in high school was, she assigned me with the task of calling the funeral homes each day to ask who died. And I would compile the list of information on who died that day and send that into the newspaper.*

**Marilyn Strickland** If you think about the story of Dick's Drive-In that's a family business through three generations. And was started by Jasmine Donovan's grandfather Dick Spady in Seattle 65 years ago. And he started a restaurant. His friend Warren who he knew from the Navy.

**Jasmine Donovan** *My grandfather -- through a series of events completely out of his control gathered a bunch of experience and connections with people that led him to starting this iconic restaurant.*

**Marilyn Strickland** And like her grandfather Jasmine she also served in the Navy. And she talked about her service and a lot of people did know this Jasmine was a Naval Nuclear Power Training Command instructor.

**Jean Enersen** I can't even say that all.

**Marilyn Strickland** Exactly right. And if you look at David Bley he had family members who were politically active and they did inadvertently influence him to drop out of high school after introducing him to injustice in the world and civil rights. Because in his mind he said, why was school relevant when I had to go change the world.

**David Bley** *I wanted to be a part of changing the world and I didn't see why high school had anything to do with the path I wanted to take.*

**Marilyn Strickland** And so it's interesting to think about his journey. And his parents and his brothers also helped him return to school and graduate. And now he's out there changing the world himself at the Gates Foundation. And I want to go back to our first episode which I thought was one of our most compelling stories. Adriane Brown is a venture partner at Flying Fish Fund and in her own right one of the first women to go into tech and to be a true leader. And she shared these profound memories about being one of the first five children to integrate an elementary school in segregated Virginia in 1966.

**Adriane Brown** *After bawling my eyes out my parents sat me down and sat my brother down the night before the first day of school. And talked about this journey that in order to effect change you have to take action. We weren't there just as students. We were there as role models because people had perceptions about what black people were and what we were about. And I was there to help change that.*

**Marilyn Strickland** And you know, she was one of the first children because her dad was a teacher and he wanted integration to happen as quickly as possible for her and her siblings. And so these personal stories that were very moving very profound and really helped shape the attitudes and the perspectives of the guests that we've had here on the podcast.

**Jean Enersen** Is it true for you also that your family in some way shaped your future as a political leader, community leader?

**Marilyn Strickland** Yeah. I mean I wouldn't say that my family sat around the table discussing politics. But my dad joined the military when he was a young man. He met my mother in Korea. And you know from the time I was a little girl it was always about education. Education was at the core of everything that they said would happen for me. And they said you have to do well in school. It's not you know if you go to college -- it was when you go to college, and so in many ways my parents focusing on education has helped me be successful and in some cases inform me when I was mayor. Because my focus when I was mayor was education.

**Jean Enersen** And I think we're all pretty aware. And for us who weren't aware what you were able to accomplish through Tacoma schools in terms of keeping kids in school which is so important for their future has really really been important and significant for the region. And I think a lesson for districts around the state.

**Marilyn Strickland** Well and I say to folks that even though the mayors typically do not have direct control over schools -- making a civic priority working closely with the school district and you and I talked about this earlier -- consistent leadership. You have to have consistent leadership to move an agenda forward and I think that because we had a great school board, a great city council and Dr. Santorno and I worked really closely together. We were able to do some really great things in Tacoma with education.

**Jean Enersen** Yeah. Well done. Really important. Well so life moves quickly for everybody especially for the people that were guests on the podcast. When the episode with Jasmine Donovan was recorded, she was vice president and has since taking the reigns to become the president of Dick's Drive-In. And Solynn McCurdy was the CEO at social venture partners SVP. He's now senior vice president of the co-operative affairs part of BECU the Boeing credit union. So does the advice given throughout the first season of Under Construction stay true as these jobs change?

**Marilyn Strickland** Oh absolutely. You know one of the things that most of the guests talked about was the importance of having positive work behaviors. And you know strong leadership skills and those things are transcendent.

**Marilyn Strickland** I think about the CEO of Swedish Hospital Dr. Guy Hudson and how he advised young people looking at their futures to find joy in the service of their work. And how it benefits people to connect with one another and see how their work helps others. And that sentiment transcends medicine and really can be applicable to any industry.

*Dr. Guy Hudson As a physician and taking care of patients for the 15 years that I had the privilege of doing so, the most important thing I can say is that trust that you form and the bond that you form with your patients is the most important aspect of patient care. The human touch. The compassion. The connectedness you get when you're helping people. Health care cannot lose that.*

**Marilyn Strickland** And then there was Solynn's great advice about checking your ego. Which I really appreciated. You know he said, don't be afraid to ask people for help and think of yourself as a lifelong learner. Learn forever and always grow and stretch yourself.

***Solyann McCurdy** Number one includes this this idea of leading with kind of humility and grace. Like not taking yourself so seriously. Because you're going to make mistakes.*

**Marilyn Strickland** And you know these things are important too because in some of these conversations we had with people, their path to leadership was not linear.

**Marilyn Strickland** Sometimes it works out. Sometimes it doesn't. And I think about the president of Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo Alejandro Grajal and he told people to follow their passion and not give up or get distraught when talent in the field they've chosen is not immediate.

***Alejandro Grajal** You really have to work hard at it. Nobody's born with it.*

**Marilyn Strickland** And I think that's important to hear. Another great interview I had was with Amelia Ransom, who's the senior director of engagement and diversity at Avalara. And that's a company that does transactional tax compliance. And she gave some really interesting advice to companies. And she highlighted that it's an organization's responsibility to make sure that they are creating spaces that are inclusive for all of their employees. I highlight this because I think sometimes when you are a member of a marginalized community you think it's just your responsibility to try to fit in. At the same time, it's the company's organization to make sure that you are included. And she also points out that having conversations about diversity inclusion are important and you have to think about where you are on that continuum because different companies are in different places. And so I really appreciate the fact that she said check yourself and find out where you are in the continuum and then think about how you move forward with that conversation.

***Amelia Ransom** And what the organization can do is create this space that those conversations are safe and good to have. And that the organization has your back in trying to push it forward.*

**Jean Enersen** So when you talk about education -- which, which you were just doing I think it's really important for people to be broadly educated. Because when you think back on the kind of improvisational parts of people's careers that they talked about, I think that there are people who are listening today who will fall into a job or take a job that maybe doesn't even exist today somewhere down the line.

**Jean Enersen** And you know I think about my job as an anchor person. There were no women anchors so I couldn't. People say, did you always want to do this. Well no I never could dream of having that job because there are only men in that job.

**Marilyn Strickland** So did you major in that when you were in college?

**Jean Enersen** I majored in filmmaking and political science.

**Marilyn Strickland** Interesting.

**Jean Enersen** So I've always been in the nexus of writing and politics not unlike you know your job in politics and communication.

**Marilyn Strickland** That's right.

**Jean Enersen** I just think that underscoring the importance of education at all levels earliest like great start for kids and continuing on to high school and college or community college, it's just crucial for the future.

**Marilyn Strickland** So I want to go off script here for a minute Jean. So you are a master communicator. And when we talk about education especially we talk about you know post-secondary credentials there's such an emphasis on STEM STEM STEM. And we know that those jobs are important in that jobs are changing over time. But I would like you to spend some time on the significance and importance of being a good communicator both in writing and verbally.

**Jean Enersen** One of the things that I was always told was think about who you're talking to and then the fact that there's a microphone in front of you or a television camera in front of you becomes irrelevant. Because you're focusing on a person you want to reach and an idea that you want to impart. And I think a certain amount of confidence helps. That you really believe in what you're saying you really want to impart this idea to people. And then the technology around you kind of fades away.

**Jean Enersen** I work at Children's Hospital now and I have a passion for kids always have. And being able to talk to people about the importance of supporting kids at the earliest age is my passion. And so I don't find it difficult to talk about it. I mean try and turn me off about it. You can't. Because I think it's just so important that kids get a really early start in education and in health. And it just takes care of a lot of the problems we see in our community later on if we help kids at the earliest part of their lives.

**Marilyn Strickland** Well you know even watching on TV and seeing around the community one of the gifts you have is that you're just able to connect with people. Is that a skill that you honed over time or is it intuitive for you?

**Jean Enersen** I don't know that I could answer that except that I'm intensely curious. It's not that I want to interview people. It's that I'm really interested in what their story is. Like what drove you to the career that you have. And I think I walk around Green Lake sometimes and I think that person I'm passing on the path at Green Lake, they have a story. I'd love to stop and say what's your story. But I know that would be so odd and so weird. But if you pass me on Green Lake, know that's what I'm thinking about you.

**Marilyn Strickland** She may stop you and interview you impromptu.

**Marilyn Strickland** So you know it's interesting because I talked earlier about these careers having non-linear paths and I really was just so pleased with how candid people were. And so, so many folks acknowledge the fact that you know being agile and able to adapt was part of how they were successful. And for example we know Graciela Gomez Cowger, who's the CEO of Schwabe Law Firm, talked about the fact that she started out as an engineer, realized after five years it was not the profession that she thought it was and then switched to law.

**Graciela Gomez Cowger** *I was just searching. And I think that I see a younger generation also searching for passion and mission. And I think you have to try different things until you find the one that clicks.*

**Marilyn Strickland** And then I would say one of the most fascinating interviews we've had here and they've all been really good. But you know we had former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice on the season. And he is legendary and a great leader and to this day you know you hear people say wow Norm Rice is probably one the best mayors Seattle's had. And he spoke about himself with such humility. It was refreshing to hear him talk about how he had setbacks and how he used those setbacks to launch forward instead of being disappointed. And you know I heard the story of how he flunked out of college when he first started and he lost elections but then he's gone on to become with the most successful mayors in Seattle's history.

**Norm Rice** *I tried to run for mayor and lost. I ran for Congress and lost. And so I was pretty much sure that I wasn't going to be elected to anything.*

**Jean Enersen** So Marilyn some of the hobbies I learned about were fairly surprising.

**Marilyn Strickland** Yeah. You know I think that's always interesting about people. Because you just never know you know how they spend their spare time. And what was interesting for me was Graciela Gomez Cowger talked about learning beekeeping and so she bought a couple of books and one of them includes Beekeeping for Dummies and she literally wants to become a beekeeper.

**Marilyn Strickland** You know Dr. Guy Hudson was actually a swimmer in college. And he participates in the Tough Mudder obstacle course races. Mari Horita goes to Burning Man and she likes to hitchhike and then you know Alejandro, he's a painter and he actually sells art on Grajal.art and his paintings are hanging up on the walls of his home.

**Marilyn Strickland** And then you know Norm Rice shared with us that he actually has an underwater voice to make his grandson laugh.

**Norm Rice** *I do have a sense of humor and I like to talk in voices. I can talk underwater.*

**Jean Enersen** Do you have a hobby that would surprise some of your listeners?

**Marilyn Strickland** You know my hobby is I just really love film and I love watching movies. I still remember back in the day when I lived on Capitol Hill in Seattle. I we had season tickets to SIFF the Seattle International Film Festival and so I don't get to do that as often as I'd like. And because of technology now Jean, like it's easy just to sit home and watch something on Netflix or sitting in the couch. But on the rare occasions I get into a theater I always say to myself my husband's like we need we need to do this more often. There's no substitute for sitting in a dark theater with a group of people enjoying film and popcorn.

**Jean Enersen** Yes I'm about the popcorn.

**Marilyn Strickland** Oh my God. The Grand Cinema in Tacoma. Best popcorn ever.

**Jean Enersen** Hot tip. So some of the moments on the podcast were pretty raw personal stories about war, about political conflict. Do some of those stand out in your mind even after the year is up?

**Marilyn Strickland** Oh yeah. There was one for sure that really stood out. So the executive director of the Housing Connector. And this is a new organization that is being incubated by the Seattle Metro Chamber and the Housing Connector connects private property owners and managers in King County to those who are most in need of housing and Shkelqim Kelmendi who runs it tells his origin story. And he was eight years old when he and his family fled Kosovo during the Kosovo War. And he shared with us the beauty in his childhood despite that. Weekends at his grandmother's village and then the violence that turned his life in 1998 and 1999. And he remembered fleeing the capital Pristina and his father literally throwing him into the train through a window because it was the best chance of surviving.

***Shkelqim Kelmendi** We slept for six nights on the border of Macedonia in Kosovo. And what I remember about that time is that it rained every single day. And we, we slept on the ground with trash bags just holding it over our heads.*

**Jean Enersen** Wow.

**Marilyn Strickland** You know another story too is you know Mari Horita, who is Japanese American and she's a vice president of community engagement in philanthropy of NHL. And she talked about the inspiration to attend law school after learning about her mother's experience being interned during World War Two. And Mari's family were among those who were forcibly relocated and interned. And afterwards her parents did not speak Japanese around the house.

***Mari Horita** When you hear what happened, it just doesn't even sound real. And to my mom you know and and such a gross violation of civil liberties. And it happened and yet we seem to somehow gloss over the loss of property. The loss of jobs. And it's not like.*

***Marilyn Strickland:** Putting people in encampments.*

***Mari Horita:** Yeah. Yeah. That, yeah. So it inspired me. I think it would inspire anyone to just try to better understand it. Like how could this happen. Why did it happen. How can we make sure it doesn't happen again. Get a sense of what the laws are so that you have the ability to navigate within them. Both for yourself and for others who, who don't have that opportunity.*

**Jean Enersen** We're a storytelling people. And I think some of these stories really resonate because whether you were part of the Japanese American community or not. You can certainly feel compassion for the people whose families were so disrupted by this. And I just think stories about individuals to me you know, you ask about communication. People's stories are absolutely fascinating to all of us.

**Marilyn Strickland** And everyone has an origin story. And those are I mean I was recently on a panel about arts and culture. And we talked about what does it mean to have arts and culture in a community and what's the significance? And I talked about the fact that arts and culture are really -- its storytelling. And you know to your point storytelling it's what joins us. It's what binds us. And it's often how we build social capital because that's a way

to share an experience. And people listen to those stories and sometimes they just have a different impression of you or they say to themselves I didn't know that. And I think about you know Alejandro Grajal of Woodland Park Zoo, who talked about growing up in Venezuela and the fact that he has two sisters living there. And he talked about the current humanitarian crisis and described it as heartbreaking.

**Alejandro Grajal** *Over 3.5 million displaced people. Just of last week the country run out of electricity for four days. Reported alone there were almost 500 people that died in hospitals because they couldn't get dialysis or medical procedures.*

**Jean Enersen** We hear these stories and they were gripping and powerful. We got to know some of these leaders individually through their stories. But we also learned a lot about their businesses. Some businesses we might not have known as much about the businesses that are essential to our city's economy and to our state. So in this year of Under Construction, what surprised you while you were learning about these businesses?

**Marilyn Strickland** Well you know I would say a few things. I mean you know, I did not know that Dick's Drive-In for example was a you know third generation business. And even you know something like GeekWire, the story of how John Cook basically joked around saying that every time he was at a publication it either went out of business or folded and now there's GeekWire. And so I would say that you know just again coming back to the fact that this economy is diverse. It has a lot of different sectors but also too, just the fact that so many businesses here really do have a social conscience. And they understand that they have a duty to give back to the communities.

**Marilyn Strickland** And every single leader I spoke with talked about something they're doing to give back. Whether it's through volunteerism, board service, philanthropy, initiatives fundraising and more than that they expressed how personally important it is to them.

**Marilyn Strickland** And so having a regional business leaders who care about the health and well-being of our community is incredible. And I think that adds the beauty of Seattle and the beauty of our unique business community. But I also say too that you know that is a very Pacific Northwest ethos. And you know people often move to regions to follow jobs but also people are now starting to make decisions about where they want to live based on quality of life and values. And so when I hear these business leaders and leaders of organizations talking about what's important to them, it's something that makes you really proud.

**Jean Enersen** So one of the things because I have not been part of the Chamber of Commerce or Community Development Roundtable as a reporter. You know we weren't even invited in because I think that our reporting sometimes is viewed as critical. But one of the things I hear from the community is a voice of criticism of the Chamber like it. Isn't that a conservative body? Isn't that just businesses are conservative and now that you're the head of the Chamber would you say that's a fair kind of observation? Or is there some counterpoint you'd like to make to that.

**Marilyn Strickland** Well I mean I think that when people tend to think of the term Chamber of Commerce there is a certain connotation that comes with it. Let's be honest with that. And you know I think one thing that some people may not know is that the Seattle Metro Chamber actually disassociated itself with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce a few years ago over climate change.

**Marilyn Strickland** Now with that said, this is no disrespect to anyone and you know we tell folks look we're a nonpartisan organization. But I think some people think that we are these ultra-ultra conservative right-wing organization who doesn't care about people of color or people struggling in poverty -- and nothing could be further from the truth. We consider ourselves a regional leadership organization. We want to have thoughtful, smart debate about our most pressing issues. But we understand that as a business community, especially in the 21st century we have a responsibility to the communities in which we operate.

**Marilyn Strickland** And I don't think there's a single company that is a member of the Chamber that says that's not something that we want to do. I will say this though you know it's so funny. Because I think about the conversation about brands and communication. And one of the reasons that you know we decided to do this podcast Under Construction is to actually give our listeners a chance to tell their stories because sometimes you have an impression of a brand and you don't control how the media report the story. And sometimes in stories it's always a hero and a villain.

**Marilyn Strickland** So this gives us an inside look at some of the people behind the organizations. And the one thing about the Seattle business community it is diverse. People have various backgrounds. And I believe it's a business community that we should be proud of because we share the values that make the Pacific Northwest great.

**Jean Enersen** I think about our location in the upper left hand corner of the map. And I think that we are a region of independent thinkers.

**Marilyn Strickland** Independent thinkers and innovators.

**Jean Enersen** So having said how you think people should perceive the Chamber, what could the business community be doing better as we move forward in a changing region?

**Marilyn Strickland** I would say that as we think about what we can do better, one of the things that actually makes me proud or gives me hope is that the conversation about equity and inclusion is now something that I hear just about every business organization discuss. And Jean you know this I'd say 5, 10 years ago it was hard for people to even wrap their minds around diversity.

**Jean Enersen** Discuss and act on.

**Marilyn Strickland** Exactly. Yeah talk about it and then actually acting and that's you know that's an important point Jean because you know diversity is the idea. Equity and inclusion means taking the action to bring people in and to really live those values. And when I think about the different companies I interact with, you know just about everyone has diversity equity and inclusion as part of something.

**Marilyn Strickland** And I was really proud you know during the last legislative session in Olympia that the Seattle Metro Chamber endorsed I 1000 the Washington State diversity equity and inclusion act. And yes this is an economic justice issue but it also was a business opportunity issue.

**Marilyn Strickland** If we have government which spends billions of dollars on procurement and contracting we have to make sure that our women and veteran and

minority owned businesses have access to those types of contracts. And this was never about trying to do something for people who were not qualified. This was about making sure that those things could be taken into consideration when awarding contracts. And so I'm really pleased that we supported that particular initiative. I'm so proud of our state legislature for having the courage to pass it but also too, you know I look forward to it withstanding any sort of a challenge because it's the right thing to do. And it's just frankly good for business.

**Jean Enersen** All the way up the line. That diversity makes a stronger organization.

**Marilyn Strickland** Absolutely.

**Jean Enersen** So challenges. What do you see as the biggest challenges our city our region faces?

**Marilyn Strickland** Yeah, you know I would say a few things. You know when you travel around the country, you know you hear about the tri-state area. You hear about metropolitan Atlanta, you hear about Dallas Fort Worth, the Bay Area and I think it's still a little hard for us up here I know in the Pacific Northwest to think of in the Puget Sound to think of ourselves as one region. And I tell folks that you know people going to work you know businesses like they're not caught up in municipal boundaries. That sometimes we tend to be very guarded in our little cities, our little fiefdoms and we just need to start thinking more like a region.

**Marilyn Strickland** And for cities that are outside of Seattle, I think sometimes there's a bit of heartburn when it leads with Metropolitan Seattle or Greater Seattle because people feel as though it's to the exclusion of your city. And I remind folks that when I would travel to Asia to promote Tacoma when I was mayor, I was there with a picture of the Space Needle, Mount Rainier and talking about all the great Seattle-based companies. Because to the rest of the world -- they're not parsing our boundaries. They're looking at this shining metro region and all these cities in this three-county area are part of that region. And so it's really, the challenge for us is to think regionally in terms of economic development. It's to think about you know how we're going to address the housing affordability issue -- because we desperately need more housing at all income levels. And I would say finally Jean, something that really hasn't gone a lot of attention is equity in inclusion but geographic equity. So as we think about where we're locating high-wage jobs, are we being geographically equitable as we think about where we locate them? Because at some point we just can't keep trying to shove everyone into downtown Seattle.

**Jean Enersen** Very good point. Particularly because so much of the housing that's expanding is not just King County. It's Snohomish County, it's Pierce County.

**Marilyn Strickland** That's right.

**Marilyn Strickland** And it's east all the way up to the Cascades. I mean the regional growth is tremendous.

**Marilyn Strickland** Right. And if you look at the Puget Sound Regional Council, which is a planning body for the different cities in the region. You know, they talk about equity and you know we're we're making massive investments in mass transit and that's great. But you know it'd be great if someone could spend 20 minutes using public transit as opposed to having to spend 60 to 70 minutes on it. And so as this region continues to grow I think

that you will start to see a desire to have more geographic equity. And you know, and you're seeing companies on the Eastside now. You know the Eastside is starting to have a lot of growth. And so will that growth start to spread northbound and southbound as well so that there's more equity and more opportunity for more people?

**Jean Enersen** So when you talk about the region, how do you think the region is doing in addressing some of the really obvious pressing problems that we face --homelessness and housing affordability, public safety.

**Marilyn Strickland** Yeah I mean it's hard. Because if you look at every metropolitan region in the country, you could write the same script. So look at what's happening metropolitan Atlanta. Look at what's happening in Los Angeles and San Francisco. So these regions, what I call these mega-regions that have a lot of growth and prosperity are also experiencing the same issues. And so as far as how we're doing, I think we're doing the best we can with what we have. But I think we can do better and we can be more unified. We can let go of some of our practices and think about how we do things in a more unified region. And you know and also too, I think you know just be very realistic and honest about what we can and can't do. The challenges that these metro regions are facing including Seattle it didn't happen in a year or two. This has been 20 years in the making and it is a combination of divestment and mental health at the federal level. The vestment in community development block grants to build more housing. So there's a whole series of things, and the fact that we didn't invest in mass transit for a long time. You know 20 years behind really. And so it's going to take a while to get there -- but I think one thing I see right now happening is that you see leaders coming to the table, wanting to do something and think OK, how do we solve this problem together. So you know it's going to be a heavy lift. But you know we do great things in this region -- and so I'm confident that at some point down the road, we will be able to make some progress on these things. But it's not going to be easy, Jean.

**Jean Enersen** So it wasn't easy getting a mass transit plan. We rejected the one decades ago that went to Atlanta.

**Marilyn Strickland** Yes, we did.

**Jean Enersen** And now we have ST3, and we're going to have a regional transportation system. But give us some reason, and not to say that we want the Chamber to be able to sugarcoat a big problem, that's obvious to people, but give us some reason to be hopeful.

**Marilyn Strickland** I think about the Sound Transit band. I call it the band. So it was, it was government. It was business. It was labor. It was environmental. Everyone got together and said OK we know we've got a transportation problem here. And we came together. We got behind ST3 and we passed it. So what will be that thing that we do for housing affordability?

**Jean Enersen** Another marching band.

**Marilyn Strickland** Another marching band. Or you know get the band back together and say OK we have this coalition. Are we open to the idea of creating a regional housing authority where we think about where we're going to build housing? Exactly how much it will cost. Exactly what we need to make it happen and how do we get there? I mean -- I would like to see us do something on that scale. It's going to be a heavy lift but it is absolutely possible.

**Jean Enersen** All right. So that's a challenge for season two on the podcast.

**Marilyn Strickland** Exactly. A Regional Housing Authority. I've been talking about it for a long time but is it going to get any traction?

**Jean Enersen** Last, last take on season 1. Before we wrap this one up?

**Marilyn Strickland** You know -- last take on season one, doing a podcast was something new for the Chamber and again new for me as a host. And you don't know what to expect as far as who you're going to have as guests, how the audience will respond, and you know, how do we build an audience for this? There are people who you know are loyal podcast listeners. And we do have a set of subscribers, but we also want to have a larger reach. And so the question for me for next season becomes who do we have as guests? What type of topics do we cover? I hope that Jean, you decide to come on as a guest because I would love to talk politics with you.

**Jean Enersen** I ask the questions.

**Marilyn Strickland** Whatever works. But thinking about season two. OK. Where do we go from here?

**Marilyn Strickland** And I would also say too, you know if you're one of our listeners, if you could please shoot us an email and let us know what's working and what isn't. I think that would be helpful. But you know, it takes a while to get some traction to build an audience for a podcast because it feels like everyone's got a podcast now. And so you know again -- who do you have on here, what topics do you cover and how do you make sure it's something that's interesting for people?

**Jean Enersen** Marilyn Strickland, leader of the band.

**Marilyn Strickland** Jean Enersen, the legend.

**Jean Enersen** Thank you.

**Marilyn Strickland** Thank you.

**Marilyn Strickland** You've been listening to Under Construction with Marilyn Strickland. Thanks for listening in, and we hope you return. Special thank you to our producers Alicia Teel and Maggie Wilson of the Seattle Metro Chamber, and our engineers at Cloud Studios here in Seattle. To learn more about the podcast, visit [SeattleChamber.com/UnderConstruction](http://SeattleChamber.com/UnderConstruction). You can find us on iTunes, on SoundCloud, and if you like what you hear, please rate us and subscribe. And stay in touch! Follow the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @SeattleChamber.