



Directors of the Year

## Maggie Walker anticipates the construction of Seattle's Waterfront Park

Sep 10, 2021, 9:54pm PDT

Maggie Walker is looking forward to seeing the Waterfront Park get built. It's a project years in the making, and she has served nine years as chair of the Friends of Waterfront Seattle board. Other topics that are close to her heart are the arts and the environment.

Both issues are clearly reflected in the list of boards she serves on, which includes the National Audubon Society and the UW College of Arts and Sciences.

**What encouraged you to join your first board, and what board was it?** My first board was for the Henry Art Gallery. I had an interest in visual art and collecting, had worked on the original Artfair Seattle in the '90s and met many lovely people who asked me to join that



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Maggie Walker stands on Pier 62 on the Elliott Bay waterfront.

board. It was a wonderful experience and the tie to the University of Washington made it all the more enticing.

**Do you have a specific memory that illustrates your experience on that board?** Just that I made so many friends and felt connected to the Seattle community – Sam Stroum was a mentor and gave me much sage advice for future use.

**What did you learn on that first board that you still use today?** I learned many of the basic skills for board management and structure – and that ultimately it is always about relationships and trust.

**What is something you wish you knew before joining your first board?** It would have been useful to have had some training in nonprofit governance and finances.

**What would you say to someone considering serving on a board?** It is a wonderful experience as long as you remain flexible and see yourself in service to the organization and its mission. Patience is an important quality to have as well as the ability to listen and learn.

**What's the best advice you've ever received?** My best advice and learning: Life is mostly about trust. I try to build it wherever I am.

**What is one way the business community can support the arts?** The arts are one of Seattle's under-valued assets; our robust landscape contributes enormously to the quality of our lives and our attractiveness as a place to live. The creative aspect of our culture is taken for granted. The corporate sector does not seem to recognize the need to support the arts sector broadly as an investment in the future of their own workforce and product development. Creating more funding streams that are catalytic would be a boost.

**What is one thing you wish the business community considered regarding sustainability?** In our time, it is necessary to have a bottom line beyond profit that measures the movement towards making our businesses less damaging to the climate.

**What is one thing a board member can do to maximize their impact?** Listen and learn, lean into engagement and remember

that board work is not about individual achievement but the effectiveness of the organization. Board members are bridges into the community with traffic flowing both directions. They represent the work of the organization but also bring information back from the community.

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*This interview was edited for length and clarity.*

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## **About Maggie Walker**

**Company:** Walker Family Foundation

**Position:** President

**Years in position:** 15

**Hometown:** Summit, New Jersey and Greenville, South Carolina

**Residence:** Seattle

**Family:** Husband, Doug Walker, died in an avalanche in 2015. He was a founder of WRQ Software. Daughter, Kina Walker-Nisbet, son-in-law, Alex Nisbet, and grandson, Wilson Walker Nisbet, are surviving family.

**Education:** Two B.A. degrees from UW

## **Current boards**

Global Partnerships: 10 years

Seattle Art Museum: 12 years

National Audubon Society: 9 years

Friends of Waterfront Seattle: 9 years

Forterra Strong Communities Fund: 5 years

UW Foundation: over 20 years

UW College of the Environment: 10 years

UW College of Arts and Sciences: over 20 years

## **Previous boards**

Woodland Park Zoo Society: 10 years

Henry Art Gallery Association at UW: 10 years

Bullitt Foundation: 12 years

Seattle Foundation: 9 years

Washington Women's Foundation: 9 years

MOHAI: 10 years

**What to read:** "Biography of Ulysses S. Grant" by Ron Chernow

**Takeout go-to:** Nell's at Green Lake

**Favorite beverage:** Tea with lemon

**New hobbies:** Pilates and Zoom

**Natalie Guevara**

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