

Rhonda A. Lewis



Affordable housing and quality of life have long been a passion for Rhonda A. Lewis, previous Executive Director of Greater Newark LISC. Throughout her 25-year career in real estate and economic development, Ms. Lewis has been at the forefront of headline-making projects, and was an innovative force within countless communities throughout NYC, where she spent much of her career in the nonprofit sector.

Originally, from Brooklyn with a BA degree in Environmental Design and Urban Planning. Rhonda also held an advanced certificate from Harvard in leadership and urban planning. Ms. Lewis always knew that affordable housing and community development was her true calling. Whether serving at the New York Department of General Services, HPD, or LISC,

Ms. Lewis enthusiastically embraced the challenges of turning around distressed projects in downtrodden NYC neighborhoods in the 80's & 90's. She explains, "At that time there was enormous opportunity to create quality affordable housing, and sustainable communities. I was able to use both my planning and development skills to make a change"

Ms. Lewis' extensive background in both residential and commercial development projects, along with an understanding of affordable housing issues in NYC, laid the groundwork for her role as President and CEO of Bridge Street Development Corporation (BSDC). The Brooklyn-based organization was founded in 1995 as the development arm of Bridge Street African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church - the oldest African American church in Brooklyn. This faith-based, not-for-profit CDC, known for its passionate community advocacy, senior services, and quality affordable housing. While at BSDC she spearheaded the building of the first Pathmark in Harlem

During her tenure, the organization was involved in many "firsts" for Bedford Stuyvesant Community. It was during her term that the first condominium development was built in Bedford Stuyvesant. Thanks to her recognition of a market for this type of home ownership this pioneering project jumpstarted Bedford Stuyvesant's condo market, and subsequently won her an award from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce in 2005.

Ms. Lewis was proud of BSDC's groundbreaking work on a quasi-assisted living facility which boasts 94 affordable senior rental units, enabling residents to live independently. This is another first for Bedford Stuyvesant. She made sure that the financing addressed the health and recreational issues of the residents as well because Ms. Lewis always makes the case for a comprehensive, rather than a piecemeal, approach to community revitalization.

Over the span of her career, Ms. Lewis has underwritten \$100M in loans and grants to community organizations and developed 2,000 units of housing. At BSDC, she has created 500 units of mixed-income housing, as well as programs ranging from commercial revitalization, to financial literacy to civic engagement and education. Under her leadership, BSDC implemented the "Anti-Predatory Lending Initiative." BSDC also works with homeowners threatened with tax

lien sales, to restore their tax status and avoid foreclosure; connecting homeowners to reputable banks to provide resources for refinancing and reverse mortgages.

Ms. Lewis joined Greater Newark LISC as its Executive Director. She was confident she can build on the organization's 26-year record of accomplishment of success and at the same time usher in new opportunities for growth that would benefit the local community and make it a good place to work, do business and raise a family.

Rhonda's work for underserved communities was her passion, but the driving force became her son Chase. Rhonda's desire was to set an example for Chase of lifting up, and giving back.