

WHEDco's Nancy Biberman Steps Aside as President



(WHEDco)

After twenty-five years of service, one of the borough's most influential and effective social service leaders is leaving her post. The Board of the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) announced in a press release that **Nancy Biberman** is stepping aside as the organization's president, a position she has held since its founding in 1992.

The Board also announced that based on his talent, demonstrated leadership and devotion to WHEDco's mission, **Davon Russell**, WHEDco's decade-long Executive Vice President, will succeed Biberman. The transition comes as WHEDco celebrates 25 years of transformative work in the South Bronx, most recently breaking ground on Bronx Commons and the innovative Bronx Music Hall after seven years of planning.

But Biberman will not abandon this important Bronx project. In addition to being named President Emerita, Nancy will serve as Senior Advisor for Housing Development to WHEDco's [Bronx Commons](#) development through its scheduled completion in 2019.

A true innovator, Biberman pioneered a process of community and research-driven historic and contextual development, utilizing buildings and land for a mix of purposes in addition to housing: business incubators, retail, childcare, health care, education and performance venues.

These were all inclusive projects, developed with community input. Their foundation programs were designed after early findings that many women were supporting themselves by preparing and selling food, and caring for children. So WHEDco's first initiative in its Urban Horizons building on East 168th Street was the commercial kitchen business incubator, now known as [Bronx CookSpace](#). Under her guidance WHEDco also developed a training program for family day care providers, now called the [Home-Based Childcare Training Institute](#).

Because of the Bronx's uniquely high asthma rates, Nancy determined that WHEDco's next development, [Intervale Green](#) (completed in 2007) would be built to Energy Star standards and with non-toxic building materials. She also completed a cellar-to-roof energy retrofit of [Urban Horizons](#). With Bronx

Commons and the Bronx Music Hall, Nancy has led WHEDco's decade-long neighborhood collaboration to revive the borough's history as a hub for music innovation.

"I believe in the Bronx, in the women who have been tireless advocates for themselves and their families, in the music that has enlivened street corners and moved people to dance for decades, and in the memories and energy of the 'Boogie Down' that have endured despite the city's constant cycle of change," she said.

Then speaking of her successor, Biberman said, "Nothing I have done at WHEDco gives me greater pride than passing the leadership baton to my long-time colleague and friend, Davon Russell, with the utmost confidence in his wisdom and inspirational leadership. Davon is a lifelong educator who has overseen, grown and deepened significant aspects of WHEDco's work, while mentoring countless young people and serving as a role model for the entire WHEDco staff. Davon is a star."

In turn, Russel complimented his mentor. "I have had the enormous pleasure of working with and learning from Nancy for nearly twenty years," Russell said. "Under Nancy's leadership, we grew WHEDco into a force that not only houses hundreds of Bronx residents, but educates and enriches thousands more."

A year ago Biberman became [the first New Yorker to be awarded](#) the Peter B. Goldberg Aramark Building Community Executive Leadership Award.

ABOUT WHEDco

The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. (WHEDco) is a community development organization founded on the radically simple idea that all people deserve healthy, vibrant communities. Working in the South Bronx, WHEDco builds award-winning, sustainable, affordable homes that serve as anchors for strong communities that residents can be proud of. WHEDco's mission is to provide the Bronx with access to all the resources that create thriving neighborhoods – from high-quality early education and after-school programs, to healthy food, cultural programming, and economic opportunity. For more information: www.whedco.org

ABOUT THE BRONX MUSIC HERITAGE CENTER & BRONX MUSIC HALL

WHEDco's Bronx Music Heritage Center (BMHC) is a performance and community space designed to showcase and amplify the Bronx's rich musical legacy. Envisioned as a "lab" space, the BMHC encourages artists and community members to gather, participate in performances, and express their vision for this cultural facility. In less than five years, the BMHC has hosted more than 400 events for nearly 14,000 attendees.

Building off the success of the BMHC lab, WHEDco will open the Bronx Music Hall, a permanent music venue and cultural center, in the Melrose section of the Bronx. The Hall will be housed in Bronx Commons, a 426,000 square foot, mixed-used development that will include 305 all-affordable apartments and 25,000 sq ft of retail. WHEDco is co-developing Bronx Commons with builders BFC Partners.

When complete in 2019, the 14,000 square foot Bronx Music Hall will feature a flexible, 300-seat performance space and dance hall; a permanent, interactive exhibit that connects visitors to the history and influence of Bronx music; rehearsal and classroom spaces; gallery space for temporary or traveling exhibitions; and an outdoor plaza for recreation and open-air performances. The Hall will be a state-of-the-art venue where Bronx residents and visitors from around the city and the world can explore Bronx music history and understand its lasting legacy and contributions to today's popular music, and actively participate in music and art making. In May of 2017, the development was awarded the "Creating a Dynamic City Award" by The Richman Group. Danois Architects is the design architect for Bronx Commons. WXY Architecture + Urban Design is the architect for the Bronx Music Hall. Local Projects, an interactive-media design firm, is designing the exhibits and music experience for the Bronx Music Hall. For more information, visit www.thisisbronxmusic.org

Link: <http://www.thisisthebronx.info/whedcos-nancy-biberman-steps-aside-president/>