



WIL Highlights November 15, 2019

"Transformational Leadership: A Purposeful Mission, A Compelling Vision, and the Pursuit of Excellence" featuring Lisa Y. Gordon, President & CEO of Atlanta Habitat for Humanity

Summary: By her own description, Lisa Gordon is "direct, energetic, and analytical" and she clearly knows her strengths and how to leverage them. In her current role, she's using her strength as a purpose-driven change agent to address the critical issue of affordable housing, a problem in Atlanta and across the country. Not content with the status quo, Lisa knows the real numbers, the scale of the problem with over 80,000 people who need help in Atlanta. And even though significant progress has been made during her tenure - especially with a high of almost 200 families served this year, her five-year goal is to serve 1,100 families.

To accomplish that requires new investments (over \$14M has been raised in the latest \$15.5M capital campaign); an aggressive strategic plan; and new approaches like the recently announced Browns Mill Village development, a 31-acre community that is/ will be truly groundbreaking (no pun intended.) In addition, Lisa also helped get support for the Brush with Kindness and Repair with Kindness programs to provide minor facelifts and repairs to existing houses. These initiatives not only improve the appearance of the neighborhood but help people stay in their own communities.

As we listened and learned and were inspired by Lisa, it was clear that she's the real deal - a transformational leader, a devoted wife and mother, and a caring and committed citizen. Her authenticity, self-awareness, ability to communicate with clarity and passion, and her "be who you are" mantra make her a true role model. Add to that her ability to get things done and anyone can understand why she's admired and why the Business Chronicle honored her as a 2018 Woman Who Means Business. She closed her remarks with a moving excerpt from Shonda Rhimes book Year of YES; How to Dance It Out, Stand in the Sun, and Be Your Own

Background - Personal & Professional:

- Lisa grew up in a big family and learned early on not to get too ruffled under pressure and not to take things too personally. She also played business with her cousin who pointed out that she always wanted to be "the boss."
- She received her undergraduate degree from Georgetown University; a Master of Public Administration degree from the Maxwell School of Syracuse University; and a Master of Accounting from Nova Southeast University.

- Early career roles included work in city and county governments where she learned a lot about business, politics and relationship building.
- Meeting her husband in her 20's was not a part of Lisa's plans, but it was meant to be and today they are a family of four who spend time together and are fans of humor, candid dialogue and share a deep bond. Lisa credits her family for keeping her grounded and not taking herself too seriously.
- Prior to Habitat, Lisa was VP/COO for the ATL Beltline and also worked in former Mayor Shirley Franklin's administration.
- Lisa chairs the Urban Land Institute and Habitat International's U.S. Advocacy Committee, is a member of the International Women's Forum and was inducted as a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration as well as the ATL YWCA's Academy of Women Achievers. She is involved in several organizations and during her career she's received many more honors and awards.

Take-aways / Comments from Attendees:

- "As a leader you set the temperament & tempo"
- "Set your boundaries up front when negotiating a position and hold others accountable for maintaining them."
- "Be yourself; Be who you are; Don't let anyone else define you."
- "Leverage your strengths, own who you are."
- "Don't try to make your personality fit into someone else's mold."
- "Be user friendly in your relationships."
- "If you ignore your health, it'll go away."
- "Taking care of yourself- do something quiet and be intentional - every step of your career."
- "No such thing as work-life balance, strive for equilibrium."
- "Understand the importance of work-life-self balance because it'll affect you throughout your life."
- "Dinner dates with your spouse or significant other / people you love is difficult but try breakfast dates. Less expensive and no lines!"
- Happy to see a strong woman succeed being authentic