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In Her Own Words: Sabrina Lippman, CEO of Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County

Based in New York City

I have spent my career at the intersection of housing, public service, and nonprofit leadership, building experience that ultimately led me to become CEO of Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County. My journey has been shaped by a focus on both operational rigor and community impact, moving across sectors to gain the skills needed to lead a mission-driven organization.

I started in commercial real estate, managing and repositioning assets for firms like Westfield, Cushman & Wakefield, and SIMON Property Group. Then, I expanded into the public sector, where I oversaw a 64 million square foot real estate portfolio for the New York City Economic Development Corporation. Managing public assets required balancing competing priorities, building consensus among stakeholders, and understanding how decisions affected the lives of New Yorkers, lessons that proved invaluable when I returned to the nonprofit sector.

I first joined Habitat for Humanity as Vice President of Resource Development, helping grow fundraising capacity and building strategic partnerships. That experience deepened my understanding of mission-driven work, showing me how to translate expertise into programs that directly serve communities. When I stepped into the CEO role, I was not only passionate about housing, but also equipped with a toolkit built from years of cross-sector experience.

Today, as CEO of Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County, I lead with a focus on urgency and responsibility. As a woman leading a mission-driven organization, I've come to value alignment as much as ambition. Creating clarity empowers teams to take ownership and make decisions confidently. Listening strengthens leadership rather than weakening it, and accountability ensures that good intentions become real impact.

Housing challenges are complex and deeply human. Every decision affects people's safety, dignity, and ability to remain stable in their homes. My role is to create focus around what matters most, align teams around clear priorities, and ensure our work delivers real outcomes for the communities we serve.

Leading a mission-driven organization often means operating under constraints, aging housing stock, limited funding, evolving regulations, and competing demands. I've learned that strong leadership in these environments is not about perfection; it's about making informed decisions with incomplete information, building trust across sectors, and staying accountable to both mission and results. Women leaders are often uniquely prepared for this kind of work because we are accustomed to holding complexity, balancing empathy with rigor, and translating vision into action.

Much of our work centers on preserving existing homes, particularly through Aging in Place home repair and accessibility initiatives. These projects require navigating regulatory environments and in-place renovations while centering resident safety and dignity. They demonstrate how thoughtful program design, clear scopes, and measurable outcomes allow teams to deliver consistently, even in challenging conditions. Preserving housing is not passive work; it is strategic, people-centered, and essential to long-term stability.

Innovation also plays a critical role. Through cross-sector collaboration and policy-aware leadership, we have advanced new Accessory Dwelling Units in Westchester County, expanding affordable housing options while supporting multigenerational living and aging in place. Progress like this doesn't happen in isolation. It requires alignment among public agencies, nonprofit partners, community stakeholders, and internal teams, all working toward shared goals.

Leadership in the nonprofit housing space is not abstract. It shows up in safer homes, reduced displacement, and communities that remain intact. My goal is to continue translating mission into execution at scale, demonstrating that disciplined leadership, rooted in empathy and informed decision-making, can drive meaningful change. For women leading complex organizations across industries, those lessons are universal: clarity matters, systems matter, and impact follows when purpose and execution move together.

About Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County

Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County expands access to permanently affordable homeownership by creating, preserving, and scaling equity-building housing solutions across New York City and Westchester County. We work with working-class families to promote long-term housing stability, community resilience, and generational equity. Through public-private partnerships, innovative development and preservation strategies, policy leadership, and scalable financial models, Habitat helps unlock pathways to sustainable homeownership and a more equitable housing sector. Learn more at www.habitatnycwc.org and connect with us on social media at @HabitatNYC_WC.

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