

A Time for Leadership

An Interview with R. Donahue Peebles, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, The Peebles Corporation

EDITORS' NOTE Don Peebles was awarded the Corporate Citizen Award from One Hundred Black Men of New York and the Community Leader Award by Russell and Danny Simmons' Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation at their inaugural Art for Life event in Miami Beach. He has also been inducted into the Martin Luther King International Board of Renaissance Leaders Hall of Fame at Morehouse College in Atlanta. Peebles was honored as one of Black Entertainment Television's Top 50. He is a frequent guest on FOX News Channel, FOX Business News Channel, CNBC and CNN. Peebles is a former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Board and is currently raising a PE fund to invest with minority and women developers. He is also a potential candidate for mayor of New York City. His company's current development pipeline is in excess of \$4 billion. He is also the author of top-selling books *The Peebles Principles* and *The Peebles Path to Real Estate Wealth*. He is currently working on his third book.



R. Donahue Peebles

COMPANY BRIEF The Peebles Corporation (peeblescorp.com) is one of the country's largest African American-owned real estate development companies and oversees a national real estate development and investment portfolio with a current development pipeline in excess of \$4 billion. The firm's development projects have included Class-A office buildings, four-star hotels and resorts, boutique hotels, and luxury residences in major cities including Boston; New York City; Philadelphia; Washington, D.C.; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Los Angeles.

The world is fighting a public health crisis that is impacting all countries and their citizens. The pandemic is being fought on the front lines by healthcare workers, first responders, those providing supplies and meals, transportation workers and all other essential workers. What do you say to these true leaders and heroes that are risking their lives to protect others?

Thank you to the first responders and those who are on the front lines every day. To the political leaders in Washington, D.C., Albany and New York City, it's time to step

up. We need to put partisan politics aside as well as fear creation, need-less posturing and messaging. We need real leadership that will put our citizens first; both their physical and economic health. Business leaders, we can no longer sit on the sidelines and defer to the politicians and bureaucrats. It's time for us to lead and to get engaged. We all know that if we destroy our economy there will be catastrophic impacts on our city and its citizens. Fellow citizens, it's time to get engaged and be a force in directing your future and the future of your family.

How critical is it for there to be a strong public/private partnership to ensure a safe and effective reopening of New York?

It's essential as government has proven it alone cannot solve this crisis. We need the private sector's innovation and vision to rebuild our economy and the city's infrastructure.

How concerned are you about New York's future and its ability to remain the leading global city?

New York City must accept that it will need to compete with other cities around the country and globe for business and residents. There is currently an exodus of people and small businesses leaving the city and more will follow. The city must address the causes of the departures – rapidly declining quality of life, rapidly increasing violent crime, extremely high cost of

living and a receding economy. The first step is to reevaluate the role of the city government and what it can and can't afford to do. Once these issues are addressed, New York City will again be able to compete with the top-tier cities.

What do you see as a company's responsibility to the communities it serves?

Companies must provide an environment with true equal economic opportunities for all citizens and take affirmative steps to extend this equality of opportunity to minority and women citizens as well as to businesses. They must also lead on key issues of the moment and be a part of the discussion about what created them and what their solutions will be.

What are the keys to effective leadership during challenging and uncertain times?

Not panicking, engaging in finding solutions, staying focused on the big picture and looking forward are all key. You have to see the opportunities the current setbacks provide and use the time to reset priorities and restructure to be more efficient and innovative.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers during this difficult and unprecedented time?

This will pass – there will be a vaccine and the world will go on, so focus. Recognize the future will be different. Visualize new trends and build upon them. See the great opportunity that lies ahead. Learn how to contribute and thrive under the current circumstances. Don't expect it to be easy. ●

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