

Get to Know Lennox Jackson



For 25 years, Lennox Jackson has been the face of Urban Equities, Inc. Since he founded the company, it has completed numerous real estate development projects and has provided stellar project management services.

Here's a look at how it all started, how Jackson manages his time, and what lessons he has learned.

How did you get started in real estate?

I first started my career in the real estate industry for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey in One World Trade Center in 1986. There, I was introduced to airport real estate at both John F. Kennedy and Newark international airports. To strengthen my formal education in this sector, the Port Authority paid part of my tuition to attend New York University to study real estate investment and analysis, a one-year continuing education program. After resigning from the Port Authority in 1990, I returned home to Chicago, where I had grown up since I was ten, and joined City Lands Corporation, a for-profit affiliate of the now defunct Shorebank Corporation.

I stayed there three years and then opened the doors to Urban Equities, Inc. in 1993. So, cumulatively, I've been engaged in the real estate and construction industries for more than 32 years.

Why did you start Urban Equities?

Although no one in my family had ever done anything like this, I decided that I wanted to do something different. From my previous employment experiences, I felt like I had acquired enough skill sets to strike out with my entrepreneurial ambitions. I also had the desire to be creative, not confined to income earning potential, create opportunities for others, and position myself to leave a legacy for my children.

One of the other benefits I gained but didn't anticipate at the very beginning was the ability to be deeply engaged with the rearing of our children with my wife. My children accompanied me to my office and to various meetings when we encountered babysitting challenges. They grew up in the business. When I reflect on those days, I can't help but smile.

How do you feel about reaching this 25-year milestone for Urban Equities?

This is a major accomplishment. Often times, I have to pinch myself to believe that it's true. It's been an incredible journey filled with ups and downs. On balance, I'm satisfied with the narrative that has been written about my life and the many different contributions I've been blessed to make.

How was it challenging to start your own business?

At 30, starting the business was exceptionally hard since I hadn't amassed any real cash savings. I learned very quickly that when you don't have a steady cash flow stream, money runs out fast. When I look back, I was totally undercapitalized. However, fast forward 25 years now with Urban Equities, Inc., I have come to understand, much like my overall life experiences, you'll never have enough money to launch something new and different. Instead, I've learned that my faith in God combined with my partner relationship with Jesus Christ always fills the gaps. My pastor James Moody of Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church often reminds us "when the WHY is big enough, the HOW is achievable." This has substantially framed my 25-year history of operating my company during both the good and bad days.

What lessons have you learned along the way?

One's vision should control thinking and actions. The only path to success is to understand that it's not

about us. Instead, it's about identifying meaningful ways to add value to the lives of others. While doing so, we identify problems, which in turn translate into opportunities. If we pursue best-in-class execution approaches and maintain nonnegotiable standards of excellence with our business partners and collaborators, we'll earn sustainable profits that will support business growth. Keep in mind, it has taken me some years to gain this wisdom.

What do you want people to know about Urban Equities?

At Urban Equities, we don't profess to know everything. We do, however, direct all that we do know toward getting what we do right the first time, as we promise our clients. We approach every project and situation with professionalism and great expertise. We always strive for excellence, constantly seeking improvement. It's fundamental to who I am and who we are as a company.

What advice would you give to someone else thinking about starting a business?

I subscribe to Steve Harvey's quote: "It won't be easy, but it'll be worth it."

How do you balance work and family time?

During the infancy days of the company, I worked many long hours, sometimes leaving the office after midnight. There were even times I worked on my birthday or Father's Day. However, I think my wife and children will agree that I was present at the table for dinner, attended the many basketball, baseball, and volleyball games and tennis matches, along with the many other activities throughout their lives. My wife played a major role in helping me to balance work and family commitments. Often times after dinner, she'd handle the kids' baths and nighttime reading so that I could get back to work before bedtime. Without question, Urban Equities wouldn't enjoy a 25-year anniversary today without my wife having been an active part of the process.

What legacy do you want to leave your children?

It's my hope and desire that my children will continue to be inspired to do great things. I frequently remind them that God has blessed them with talents and gifts that are to be used to help others. I'm hoping that Urban Equities, Inc. will offer them a platform to empower them and upon which to stand as they do their part to change the world.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

As challenging as things tend to get, I believe in unplugging from the business whenever I can. Travel is big for me. Whether it's taking a quick drive to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, or boarding an airplane to some destination far from Chicago, I seek out rest and relaxation.

In addition, I enjoy delicious meals and quality wine, capped off with decadent desserts and a nice bourbon. I practice yoga and like attending panel discussions, watching movies, dancing, and finding the right spot for people-watching on a nice-weather day.

I love spending time with both my immediate and extended family. And I am quite involved with my church and a Young Adult Network for which I serve as the commission head.

[Visit our website](#)