



## Transcript

### *Code 53: Episode 4* *A Conversation with DOUG BIBBY*

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

... with Gerald Ford?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, because, it happened to be the 25th anniversary of the Betty Ford Clinic, and so [glass cup being out down on table] all of his kids came out to be part of that. So, we asked him to speak and then since they were all there, we asked them to speak, and they'd never been asked to be on stage with him before. [throat clearing] And then I had Ron Nessen that was there, was his press secretary, interview them all. And then we taped it, and then donated it to the Ford Library, so it is preserved in perpetuity.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Amazing! I've never heard that story.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Isn't that cool? I know. Just stick around me. I've got a lot of stories.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

[laughs]

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, I've got a lot of stories.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Welcome back to Code 53, a podcast brought to you by the National Multifamily Housing Council. I'm Kevin Cameron, NMHC's Director of Advocacy and Strategic Engagement.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

And I am Alison Johnson, Associate Vice President of Content and Program Strategy.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

And what you all just heard was just a small portion of the conversation we had with our next guest on today's episode. Alison, what did you think of that conversation?

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

I really thought it was terrific. I mean, we had the chance to sit down with **DOUG BIBBY**, President of the National Multifamily Housing Council, and talk to him about his experiences over the last 21 years of his leadership at NMHC. And listeners, I mean, he has had so many experiences and he has so many stories to share that it's pretty incredible to think about how all that can really happen to just one person.K

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

It's really crazy. I mean, not only is Doug our boss, and a tremendous one at that, but he's also a legend in the multifamily industry, really helping shape this asset class from a time when we started, where a multifamily was seen as a terrible investment, to today, when multifamily is one of the most sought after real estate investments around the world.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

But before we cue up the interview, can we just take a moment to step back and reflect back on the fact that we are recording our final episode of season one. Can you believe we got here?

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

I mean, it's really weird Kevin. It's seems like just yesterday we were sitting down for the first project meeting to talk about — what would an NMHC podcast sound like? And here we are recording our final episode of our first official season.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Quite excited to see how far we've come. It's been such a fun process to bring this series to life with you, and we have a bunch of people to thank. It takes a village to put this all together, but we're going to save that for the end, because we have such a great interview to bring you today.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Agreed Kevin. I mean, again, we'll share more about the future of the series in a bit, but let's not wait any longer. Let's cue up the interview with Doug. Kevin and I had a chance to have a wide-ranging conversation with him about his career before NMHC, his leadership style, and his thoughts on the past, present and future of multifamily.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

And with that, here's our conversation with Doug.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

We're sitting down with **DOUG BIBBY**, President of NMHC, for our fourth episode of Code 53.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Season finale, of season one.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

That's right. Season finale of our inaugural season.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

How cool is that?

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

It feels a little cool.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Yeah, almost a year to the month when we started ... well, it's been an idea for a while, but really got pen to the paper and started putting the plans together.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Yeah, that's exactly it. So, we have two anniversaries to celebrate here. Not just the end of our inaugural season, but the end of a year-long worth of work. And an anniversary ... so three, three anniversaries to celebrate. And your seasons and tenure here at NMHC.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, so I hit 21 ... months, on June 18th.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Congratulations!

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

That's fantastic.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Thank you.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

If I can comment, that's almost unheard of these days, because you hear about, in the professional world, about the job hopping, particularly in our industry with the competition for executive talent. People move around a lot. Your tenure of 21 years says a lot.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Well, you know, I had my chances to go elsewhere, and I really ... this is no BS. I love the industry. I love the issues; I love the members; I love the staff. I love everything about it. And while people do bounce around, once they get into multifamily, they bounce around within multifamily. They don't leave it. And that says a lot too, to me, is how interesting and popular the field is, and once you get into it and start taking a bite of the apple, you can't stop. Anyway, that's why.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

That's great. If you want ...

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Yeah, go for it.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Well, you said once you take the bite of the apple and have the fruit of the knowledge of what the multifamily industry is, I'd like to rewind a little bit to before you became the executive of this trade association. You have a long history working in the public and civic sector right, even before the 21 years with NMHC, you spent 16 years at Fannie Mae, and you served on the management committee there.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

You've not only worked in the public sector, but you've also served as a board leader for many non-profit community organizations here in DC and across the nation for the past 30 years. So, with this vast experience, this vast varied experience, love to hear your take and observations on any differences in the skillsets and the mindsets needed for leadership.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, no, that's a great question. This is a nonprofit, but we run it like a business. I look at what we do as being in the private sector. I don't look at us as being some nonprofit trying to end homelessness and so on. Although that's really important, I run this like a business and I think we all operate like a business here. I came out of two shareholder owned companies, and I had investor relations under me at Fannie Mae, so I was always dealing with publics and, you know, with our board and the board was selected carefully.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

When you go on to a nonprofit arts organization board, you don't choose the board members. A bunch of them were there already when you take over. Then other ones come on, but they're brought in by other members. It's just a very different challenge, you know, to do that, but there's a couple of the experiences I've had have been so incredibly meaningful.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

I was one of the founding members of the Survivors' Fund after 911. And we, we got somewhere between 25 and 30 million dollars coming into Washington, and we had to decide what to do with that. And it was mostly, we helped 1,100 people. Many of them were traumatized, burned, lost loved ones and so on. So, that was an eight-year experience of getting the infrastructure together, partnering with an organization that really helped them and then winding it down after eight years, and we'd done what we could do.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, that, to me, and then the other one I was involved, was the Summit Fund, which was started by two wonderful philanthropists, Roger and Vicki Sant. And what we did is we did just two causes. One is significantly lowering the teenage pregnancy rate in the District of Columbia, focusing on two or three really tough wards, where we needed to do that, and then the other was cleaning up the Anacostia River.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, we spent well over 100 million dollars on these two areas, and it was really meaningful. Great board, we were all aligned. It was a very different kind of board. We were all aligned with the mission. We agreed on the mission. We agreed to spend this amount of money on just two things, not try to spread it out over everything.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

It seems to be the through line of those three really positive experiences, NMHC included, that there is a clear mission everyone at a leadership level understands and buys into the mission, whereas other organizations you may all have the same passion towards, whether it be arts or whether it be another charity, but everyone kind of has their separate interests at play. So, do you think that having a clear mission has been part of the success of those organizations?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, as long as you don't get diffused in interpreting the mission and as long as you can bring in people who are aligned with the mission. Where you go astray is you get someone coming in rowing the boat in the opposite direction, and you've got to cut that loss [smacks hands together] as soon as you can, because we had that happen in one of these instances, so. Those people clearly don't want to be there, or they think they want to be there, but they shouldn't be there. And then you have to cut your losses and move on.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Yeah. It's funny. David Schwartz and [inaudible 00:09:03] brought up that same scenario in their leadership journeys of being able to understand when it's time to go a different direction or leave someone behind or move on from someone.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

So, aside from understanding the mission and being able to know when you have to move in a different direction, what would you say have been some of the keys to your success as a leader?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, I think, you kind of evaluate yourself, but I think I'm a pretty good communicator. I'm probably pretty high on the EQ side of the world. I'm not the brightest person in the world, but I'm pretty high on the EQ side. I care about people and I know how to walk in their shoes to a certain extent, and that people know that I care about people. So, that, to me, is pretty telling about the way I look at the world.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

The other two things I would say about me are, number one, I'm very much customer focused. I know who my customer is and I'm focused on serving that customer, and you see it throughout my work here. And the other- the last thing is, I consider myself a good strategic thinker. I hope others do, but I consider myself a pretty good strategic thinker. And not getting too caught up in tactics, but trying to look at where we're going. And I think, again, if you look at my track record here, you can see the way we've approached strategy, so.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Well, I'm really impressed by some of the skills and characteristics that you just described, because they're equal- I mean, they're both left-brain and right-brain skill sets, and how to marry those together and manage them sometimes can be a challenge. And we see that challenge, actually, play out in the work that we do at NMHC, particularly as a public advocacy organization on behalf of private sector interests, right. You know, there is a lot of cynicism out there, and we're hosting this interview after a lot of incredibly bad and disheartening news in the public in the last few weeks, not, if — let alone the last few days.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

So, it feels like these are almost untenable times. As someone representing a sector and working with public sector, both constituents and elected officials, where are you finding that there's an opportunity for compromise or common ground?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

You know, I'm a very optimistic person. I'm not optimistic about this. I am at a point where it's so frustrating right now, and you look at the horrific events in Texas and you say where is the compromise in trying to deal with this? And you've got one group saying, basically don't even talk about the victims. They talk about

protecting gun rights. And by the way, they co-opted this thing with gun control, where it's really talking about gun safety. But gun control sounds more onerous and they're able to really pull that off through that.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

But if you look at the major [thump] civil rights legislation that we've had and some of the major pieces of legislation over the past 50 years, they were the products of compromise. What a compromise is, is everybody is mildly dissatisfied, right? [Colin laughs] You didn't get everything you wanted, but you got a lot of what you wanted. Everybody is just mildly pissed off, but also gratified that you could get something to the table.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And today, compromise is a four-letter word on Capitol Hill. Whether you are on the left or right, whether you are a Democrat or Republican, if you are compromising with the other side, you are giving in. And, and if you can't ... it's not as much that they have to like each other, even though in the old days they did like each other. And they'd go and fight each other and then they'd go have drinks together, because that was their job. But today they don't like each other, they don't like what they stand for. I'm right, you're wrong, 100 percent of the time. You're wrong every time and I'm right every time. And why should we talk? Because you don't know what you're talking about and you're wrong.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, I'm sorry to be Debbie Downer or Dougie Downer, [all laugh] but I just ... at a point where I can't find anybody who is a shining light that will break through this. You know, when McCarthy was doing his horrible damage in the fifties, it was Edward R. Murrow who came out with a powerful, you know, on TV, a powerful denunciation of that man and what he was doing, and that started everything falling. We need something to take place that, you know, that people say, it's enough. It's time to compromise.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

But I'm sorry, I don't have any ...

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Well it's not even on issues as divisive as necessarily gun control or gun safety.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Right

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

If you look at the last few years looking at our industry and housing, we are members, the private sector owners, operators and developers have really been villainized as the bad actors in a system, whereas from our point of view, we are providing a vital service to millions of Americans. Do you see some light or chance for compromise on our issues, whereas some issues it may be a long time until we can come to an agreement on some things?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, I mean, I've already seen it. I think with the CARES Act and then the ERAC funding, the better balance in the media, just in terms of covering issues. They used to be saying, oh well, by and large, they're terrible. Now, they say, with the owners, because they understand better now, that there are millions of owners of

real estate out there and most of them are quite small. And maybe that's their retirement income, maybe that's their current income, maybe it's both. And all of a sudden ... so we've seen better balance there.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

The issues that crop up now are localized, and they're localized because people are frustrated that rent increases are going up. And why are rent increases going up? And the challenge that we face is people not understanding why rents are going up so dramatically. And it's been a failure of 40 years of policy makers neglecting housing, and then all of a sudden there's not enough supply and they go, oh, well it's the landlord's fault. You're pushing your rents too fat.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Well, guess what? There's not enough housing out there, and anybody who has taken Economics 101, knows supply and demand, if you have too little supply and too much demand, your prices are going to go up. I don't care what industry you are talking about. I don't care what it is. If there were fewer cars out there right now, prices would be going up, because people would be bidding for them.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

But I think we're getting a better balance of coverage. We're getting certain majors and certain city councils to start at least listening, and that's a step forward.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Absolutely.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

I had a great conversation with the mayor of San Diego, and we were talking about their homeless situation, and I had mentioned Shelters to Shutters as a private sector response to homelessness. And he was intrigued and we also, also, he's been out pushing for the repurposing of assets into housing, for funding, denser housing and so on. So, you come from that kind of experience and you say, "yes!" You know, "somebody gets it." But then you have a mayor of Boston saying, "I want rent control."

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, it's an ongoing battle.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Continuing down this conversation about our advocacy efforts at NMHC, we are a trade association made up of corporate firms. Our membership is made up of corporate firms, and we largely represent the leadership of those firms and those who are active members, including our officers. What has been your experience of bringing together, you know, executives who have their own companies to answer for to work with you and NMHC to advocate on behalf to the industry at large?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

That's been, you know, one of the most gratifying parts of my life here and my experience here, and that's why, [thump] to answer your earlier question, I didn't choose to move away from this responsibility, is our members have so wonderfully volunteered. And it's not just the officers who always are great, and they'll come and they'll testify on the hill or they'll meet at the White House or they'll meet with certain senators and congressmen. It's others, who will fly in and help us; they'll also put on fundraisers, as you well know, at

the local level, either in their own state or another state. It has nothing to do with [thump] where that person is from.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Yeah.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, that's been really, really gratifying, because for us, as representatives and we have a large number of lobbyists here, for us to have people on the ground running, they're representing us side by side with us as they're representatives, works really, really well.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

It's definitely helpful to have the practitioner, the executive who has been dealing with the consequences of legislation, legislative action or regulation, right. But I'd love to talk a little bit more about how it is important to have a strong private sector in general, right. Because, earlier you were talking about the challenges in supply of housing in America, a lot of that instituted by policy actions that had unintended consequences. Or, for as long as many of these policies have been on-book, for intended consequences.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Or inaction, altogether.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Altogether.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, the policies were put on the books decades ago sit there.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

A lot of solutions that we hear now for compromise or lack of compromise are stronger public sector actions and less participation by private sector interests, whether they be monied interests or development interests, particularly around housing. How do you see a trade association like NMHC navigating those political waters going forward?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Well, if you look at my record going back here from almost the get-go, I said the only way we are going to solve problems here is if the private sector and the public sector work together. And I consider the public sector to be comprised of the states and localities and the local governments, and the federal government we deal with, the regulatory bodies that we deal with. All of them together are the public sector, and that we are the private sector.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

What the private sector brings is the ability to access capital in large amounts, and to innovate. The government and the public sector is not known for innovation, and that's why we have the term bureaucracy applied to the public sector, typically, because people get entrenched in jobs and they just do their job and check the box. So, you need a vibrant private sector to do that, to bring capital in, to innovate, and to take risks. And yet, the private sector won't always be there.



**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Right.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

We go back 2008, 2009, and the private sector said, see you later, because we're going to have [inaudible 00:21:10] the risks in this situation right now, and at that time Fannie and Freddie were under enormous stress. The whole system was stressed out at that point.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Right.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

But the public sector can both do programs that maybe the private sector won't do, and they can also fund programs from year-to-year that are important to keep going, whether it's a Hope Six program, it's HOME, it's CDBG, it's a Section Eight voucher program, it's, you know. All of these things are really important, and it's important for the public sector to continue to fund them, and it's important for legislators to approve that funding.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And so, that's a bedrock that you have, and then the private sector comes in and can add enormous value, but you can't keep them there if they don't want to be there.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Because what I'm hearing from what you're describing here, is that the public sector really is an entity that supports and enables the vision in the community, the values in a community, and helps establish the framework from which the private sector can come in and partner and help scale those ideas, right?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, I think that's very well-said. I think saying it — reflecting the values of the community I think is exactly right. The big criticism of the companies is they just care about their shareholders and to benefit their shareholders. That's not necessarily true, but that's the criticism that you here. And you never hear that HUD doesn't care, or even the DPA doesn't care. I mean, they get some things wrong, but they care about their mission and about the public.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, that's really well-put. I agree.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

And I think that segues really well into something that I really wanted to dig into with you, and it's something you talk about so well, is the impact of the work that not only NMHC does, but that the multifamily industry does at large for this country. I think it's something that you've spoke about many a time. So I'd love for you to just to dive in a little bit on your view on the impact that the multifamily industry and NMHC have had over your tenure here.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, I mean, I think first of all, when an apartment firm has a community that it's running, whether it's two or three hundred or four hundred units, they're employing people from that community. They're also pouring dollars into that local economy, buying services and so on. So, you know, there's a reach, a multiplier effect that goes out. But I think where you're headed with this thing is also they invest in their communities, and there's some great examples out there.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

There's the, there's the broad-based consortium known as the Atlanta Food Bank, which started 20 some odd years ago, I think, and the leaders of Atlanta got together in our business and said we need to do something about the situation for homeless and for people who can't make their next meal. The Atlanta Food Bank is a really great example.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Shelters to Shutters, I mentioned earlier, that grew organically from one person's vision, one of our members, board member. So, you know, Chris Finley of Middleburg Capital, it's his vision, and they're moving 10 people a month out of homelessness, a month, in Atlanta. That's one city. So, I told the mayor of San Diego this and said, you know, you can start whittling away at the population you can deal with. You can't get all the people out, because there's some mental issues, and there's health issues, and there's drug issues and so on. But there are a lot of people who can work.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Anyway, so Shelters to Shutters is another example. The [inaudible 00:24:47] started a foundation, he has now a workforce housing unit in ULI. They do important work. MAA has a program called Open Arms where they fund families who are coming to see their [inaudible 00:25:02] serious, serious illnesses and they get them free lodging, which is a wonderful program.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And then Ken Valach, our current chair, his New Hope Housing in Houston, is really doing very valuable work down there. So, it's an untold story, but our members are out there doing really good work. And why is that important? Because we [throat clearing] get cast as, we mentioned earlier, the villains. We get cast as these renters, they come in and they cause traffic and crime, and all this stuff that ... you're investing in that community, you show your really good side to that community and I think it really is helpful.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Well, we — I'd like to offer that we also saw the integrity of the industry play out in the last two years with the COVID and the stay-at-home orders.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Absolutely.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

While there was a deep concern and an outcry that there would be a looming eviction crisis which has yet to come to fruition, the industry and the property managers on-site did everything in their power to make sure that people felt safe and healthy in their homes, but also felt secure in the knowledge that they weren't going to be kicked out unceremoniously.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Right

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

While they figured out what to do.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

No, for sure, I mean ... like Camden, I think they put up 10 million dollars and it was subscribed in 15 minutes. But our people reached out, and I even talked to some people outside of our membership, one of whom manages 10 units, or owns and manages 10 units. They were reaching out individually to every single one of their residents. What can I do? How can I help?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

The vast majority of owners in this country were really responsible for the welfare of their residents. There were a few ... pick any industry in the United States. There are jerks in every single industry, sector. There are. People will take advantage of the system, but our membership, and then the greater community in multifamily were super focused on helping people out. So, you're right. I'm very proud of that.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Yeah, I think one of the thruways of all the interviews we've hosted this season, especially with multifamily executives, is that the unique part about our industry is we're not simply creating a product, we're not just building buildings. We're building homes; we're building communities. I think your few examples is that our members go above and beyond to create those communities and make sure our residents have a safe and stable place to live and call home.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Well, I'd like to transition the conversation a little bit from looking at your tenure with NMHC and the industry and looking forward, and maybe kind of picking your brain on what you think might be next for the sector. You've had this wonderful and rich history, not only at Fannie Mae, but here at NMHC, and in that time span, multifamily industry has institutionalized, right? I know housing production, when you were at Fannie Mae, was really single-family home, it was a single-family home mortgage underwriter, and now at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, both GSE's, I think it's about 40 percent of the multifamily housing mortgage market?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Well, it bounces around a little bit.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

It bounces around.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, but at least 30 percent. Yeah, and it's gotten as high as 50, based on, again, private sector lease, you're going to have to fill the void. Yeah, this industry, if you think about it, Fannie Mae created its delegated underwriting service system, and then Freddie Mac, after some really horrible starts and missteps

and so on, both came out of the gate in the early nineties with good programs. And what that did is, they were already well-known in bringing capital into the single-family sector.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, them going into multifamily, then that not only opened up domestic sources of capital, it opened up international sources of capital, and you couple that with the REITs going public. In the early nineties, there was about a three-year window when the REITs went public, and you had then transparency. You had another expanded investor base looking at it, risk-taking that not every firm would take, particularly the technology area. The Camdens of the world and the UDRs and other firms led the way, and pushed the supplier industry to really innovate and be better.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And so yeah, this industry, I look at it as being just a little over 30 years old. It's always existed, but the modern multifamily industry is a little over 38 years old, and it's thriving in ways that even surprised me a little bit, just greatly gratifyingly so. But when I took this job, multifamily was looked down on as the dregs of the real estate sector basically. If you were going to invest in multifamily and you had a choice to go into office or retail or multifamily, you'd say well I'll invest in multifamily for 250 to 300 basis point premium on the rate that I get, because that was the perceived risk.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And then I'd talk to ... I know you're laughing, because it's completely flipped. So, I'd talk to international investors, I don't like your sector. Well why don't you like our sector? Well, because ... 80 percent every year. Well, you have turn over, but you're always able to find a renter. If you have an office and you lose your anchor tenant, it isn't easy to find, and all of a sudden you're sitting there in the hole.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, we began to build that understanding that multifamily is a solid asset class with predictable returns and then as we got more and more professional, just better transparency, better standards, and now, for the past, really it's almost 10 years, the darling of real estate. And so, that's also gratifying, because we have been preaching we have renters by choice, we have capital that really wants to come in. They believe in us. And so, the rest is history there. We're not going back to those days of ignorance just about the sector. People understand the returns in this business.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

And continuing down this forward-looking view of the industry and how far it's come, arguably in my opinion and I'm sure Alison agrees, I'm sure a lot of people agree, one of the hallmarks of your time at NMHC has been the emphasis that you put on diversity, equity, inclusion, and I think it's come to the forefront of the national and international conversation over the last few years, but it's something you've been talking about for a very long time. So, talk to us a little bit about that work and how it's impacted your time at NMHC.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, and I had two very enlightened CEOs at Fannie Mae. It started with my career, where I, inspired by my mother, who believed in two things that she inculcated in all three kids, was you give back to your community, and you treat everyone, no matter what their station, is the same. Everyone is the same. And so, I came out with that mindset of volunteerism and trying to treat everybody the same, and when I got to Fannie, I had this CEO who really believed in diversity.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And I believe that the fueling of our turnaround was because we had a diverse team working on our issues and on our needs. Then, translating it to this, I had some really inspirational leaders in our industry work with me, like David Neithercut, and Peter Donovan, Mary Ann King, Daryl Carter, for sure, and others who just said, this is ... we need to be doing this.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And it is, at the end of the day, and I know you can't talk about this all the time, but it is the right thing to do. That's number one. Number two it is the smart thing to do. And remember I said earlier on that I'm customer-focused? You've got to watch where your customer is going? Where is the customer going? Take a look at who is coming out of the schools today. Take a look at states like Texas and California and others that will soon be minority majority, and you say, okay, well if your customer is going to be looking a lot different than your customer looked 25 years ago, maybe you ought to be focused on the best way to serve that customer.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And the best way to serve that customer is to understand the customer but also to look like the customer. And I can tell you when we have that rainbow coalition around the board table at Fannie Mae, it made it a heck of a lot easier to recruit. Because you had people who could, hey, you can't believe this place. And we've all been places where the culture has been totally different, where people of color come in and felt totally uncomfortable, and have left. And so, we didn't have that issue.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

When I took over as basically running all of the administrative side of Fannie Mae, we were having 25 percent turnover. Yeah. Awful. We put in place a lot of programs, and yes, some of them were stock option programs and they could buy stock, but also we had an employer assisted housing program, where we gave them down payment money. They could pay it back on a declining basis, but thousands of people, thousands of people through that program. It got to the point where our turnaround was under five percent. You had to blow people up to get them out of there.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, it completely flipped, because you treat people well, you embrace diversity and you share gains with them, and they, gee whiz, what a miraculous thing, they appreciate that, and they want to stay. And I hope that this place is somewhat like that where we treat you well and you feel valued. That, to me, is the determining factor.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Well, Doug, from envisioning a future marketplace and asset class of multifamily to envisioning one of diversity and inclusion and prosperity for all that's involved, you've accomplished a lot. Now, as we speak, our board is searching for your replacement, and there's a very big seat to fill.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Thank you.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

So, if you can think about what you might say, well no, actually, don't think about it. Please tell us what you might say to your successor as they enter into this space and think about the next vision for multifamily.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

I've thought a lot about this as you might imagine. The first thing I will tell you is I'm going to tell this person to respect the culture. And I've seen people come in and say, well I know what to do. And then blow the place up, and more often than not, they fail and they're gone, thank god. But if you come in and you respect the culture ... and then the second thing is to understand the issues, listen to the people who are there, listen to what they're going through before you set your vision.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Again, they're connected, because I don't want to come in and say I know the way to fix everything, and you all just follow in line like little ducklings.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Quack, quack.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, quack, quack. So, those two are good. Third is, and particularly in this industry, stay the course even when the course ahead of you looks tough or daunting, because that's what we've done. We have stuck to our guns on things that we've needed to communicate, the things that we've needed to produce to change the narrative, because we knew where we wanted to go, and we weren't going to get distracted. So, I would say that would be my third.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And, last is back to my usual customer focus. Keep a focus on what the members need and value the most, and deliver to them, because that's the most important thing you can do. You represent them, and their interests. This is not an entity that exists on its own for its own benefit. We exist to serve the multifamily industry and specifically, our members.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

If I can throw one more curve ball at you?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Sure, throw away.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

It may not be that big of a curve ball because I'm sure you've answered this question many a time. But you know, we created this podcast in conjunction with our Emerging Leaders program that started under your tenure. And seeing as you've seen such a change in multifamily over your career in this sector, envision someone who's thinking about starting a career in real estate and they're teetering on whether or not to join multifamily, what would you tell that person about-

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, it's interesting, because today, in addition to this podcast, I just did an update of the leadership of the Careers Building Communities website. We're trying to deal with a pipeline challenge across all sectors of real estate. And then after this, I'm doing an Emerging Leaders Zoom call to talk about that program. I would say that of all the sectors of real estate, this one is most interesting because of what you said earlier

Kevin. You're putting people in homes and there is such value in doing that, and then beyond that there are so many cool jobs in multifamily.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

And you know, you could come out of college and you could spend three or four or five years maybe on the leasing side or maybe on the property outside, and you can then rise to a level of being, say, an onsite community manager or even a VP over communities, and you've got assets that are worth \$500 million dollars and you're not even 30 yet.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

You can have that, but development now, where we see more and more women coming in and more minorities coming into the field, investment, brokerage, all areas of finance, debt and equity, property operations, asset management, all of these things are very interesting areas. And so that makes it so interesting to be involved in it, because there are some trade associations that are just focused on one element, and we are involved in the breadth of multifamily, and that, to me, is the real determining factor.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Twenty-one years ago people looked at what we do as putting people in apartments just so they can have somewhere to live before they own a house, or those who are stuck there because they are never going to have enough income to be able to do that. So, there are two different types but they both didn't want to be there, and I think today it's just totally different. And because of the public companies that are out there now, largely because of them, the transparency issues are so important, and people can see what is going on and that's helpful too.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Is there one piece of advice that you've stuck to or were given that was helpful to you in your journey?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

I saw that question and I thought, you know, I was thrown into the deep end and told to swim, and so I did. I never had a mentor. I never had any training program to be a leader. I ended up running the Washington office of J. Walter Thompson, but I largely learned by learning. I largely learned on the job, but I had watched. I'm an observer, so I had watched good bosses and bad bosses, more bad than good, and said, I'm not going to ever do that and I'm not going to ever do that.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

But when I do that, when I face that challenge I'm going to approach it very differently, and that from my very first job I had done, on my own, an analysis of a competitor of a brand I was doing. And then I sent it to my boss and my boss sent it over to his client and didn't attribute me, I said, that's wrong. That's wrong. It's deflating and it's wrong. And so I would never do that to somebody; I would always give them credit. But that's what I learned from a lousy boss, and I've learned a lot of things from lousy bosses, and I hope people haven't learned from me as a lousy boss.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

But I was in the deep end swimming.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Well, it's kind of like, lessons are learned from failures, not from successes, right?

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Yeah, yeah, exactly, so you have to be willing to fail. And so people who just won't take a risk because they're so fearful of failing, they're never going to get anywhere. If you don't take a risk, you just never push the envelope and you are always in your own comfort zone, you don't find innovation, Daryl Carter says it wasn't Ford and General Motors that came up with the breakthrough, it was Elon Musk, who is totally outside the industry.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

So, yeah, that's it. It's taking risks and failing, and learning from failure. You have to learn from failure.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

I really appreciate, though, your attention to just observation, that you don't have to be in the mix to learn from what's happening. Right? Just by observation, I've read books of creative leadership, those are all the advice that they give is, pay attention to what's happening around you and learn from that. I really appreciate you calling that out, that you don't have to have that direct engagement in order to learn.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

Not at all, and I think we all learn just watching people operate, and you learn a lot from that. You know, frankly, that's how I built my, as I said I didn't have a mentor, I didn't have any courses to be a leader, but ... my dad was, but I didn't really follow his career. He was my dad. But he was a leader.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

You watched. You learned.

**DOUG BIBBY:**

I watched, yep. I did.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Man, what a great conversation. I mean, I know we get to talk to Doug all the time, but it was really interesting to sit down with him and pick his brain about his journey throughout this industry. As you know, I'm still on my journey of learning about multifamily, and it is so great to hear about his storied career and his perspective on what has happened and what's to come.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Right? I enjoyed having that conversation with him very much. You got a little bit of an insight about why he is such a sought out counsel amongst the membership and beyond with all things related to multifamily. And as I said during our conversation, his successor is going to have a big seat to fill, for sure. But let's step back and let's talk about our success.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

More importantly.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

More importantly, let's talk about our success in wrapping up the official first season of Code 53. How are you feeling about this Kevin?



**KEVIN CAMERON:**

It's a little bittersweet. It's been such a fun and exciting time. I'm going to miss recording these with you, but there's more to come. And speaking of season two, Alison and I are going to take a little break to plan out what may come next and what we may do, but of course we want to hear from you, our listeners, about what you want to see next. If you have any ideas for future episodes of Code 53, please email us at <mailto:podcast@nmhc.org>. We cannot wait to bring you more content and would love your input on what that should be.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Before we sign off, Kevin and I have a few people that we would like to thank. Starting off with our most loyal listener, Conor Ellis, senior marketing associate. He is our fantastic editor, producer and partner in making this podcast a reality. Honestly, without him, Kevin and I would just be talking to one another in a conference room with no one listening.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Those are some riveting conversations, but maybe not for a broadcast audience. We'd also like to thank our program committee from the NMHC Emerging Leaders committee, who helped shape this podcast and helped us bring it to life and will continue to be our guides as we prepare for season two. That consists of Andrew Bonin of Equity Residential, Peter Herbst of Berkshire, and Rick Pollack of RCLCO.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

Thank you to our animation colleagues that helped Kevin, Conor and me bring this project to life, from providing insight on episodes and topics to helping us get this podcast onto your phones and into your ears. We really couldn't have done this alone. To name just a few names, we could not have done this without Rick Haughey, Jim Lapidis, Racquel Madlala, Jessica Cheng, Caitlin Walter, Megan Blauvelt, Kim Duty. And of course, last but not least, thanks to NMHC's President **DOUG BIBBY** for his endless support and for sitting down with us.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

And finally, thank you to you, our listeners. Thank you for tuning in to each episode and making all this work worthwhile. Without your support, Alison and I would not be able to have this much fun with a professional microphone. It has been truly amazing to hear from all of you, be it email or in person at NMHC meetings about your thoughts and ideas for the future of Code 53 and we can't wait to bring you more. In the meantime, don't forget to subscribe to the podcast so you are the first to know when season two drops, and make sure to tell your colleagues, your friends, your family, your neighbors about this podcast. Tell everyone you know.

**ALISON JOHNSON:**

This is Code 53 signing off.

**KEVIN CAMERON:**

Thanks everyone.