



Brisa Builders developed & National Standard Abstract provided title insurance for \$310m affordable housing projects

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Shown (from left) are: Osei Rubie of National Standard Abstract, Ericka Keller of Brisa Builders, and Bishop Nelson of Church of God of East Flatbush

Two Black-Owned Firms Building Relationships, Communities, & Wealth One Project at a Time

New York, NY National Standard Abstract and Brisa Builders are breaking ground in more ways than one, exemplifying the importance of Black entrepreneurship and generational wealth in creating

stability within underserved communities through housing opportunities and philanthropy. Ericka Keller of Brisa Builders has committed her organization to circulate dollars within the ecosystem of Black entrepreneurs. An example is engaging one of the largest 100% Black-owned companies in the industry, National Standard Abstract, to provide title insurance for all of her real estate transactions.

Since 2018, Brisa Builders has developed several faith-based real estate projects totaling over \$310 million, including the \$154 million Ebenezer Plaza Phase 1A and \$75 million Ebenezer Plaza Phase 1B with the Church of God of East Flatbush, \$45 million Bishop Philius and Helene Nicolas (BPHN) Senior Residences, and the \$36 million Harry T. Nance Apts.

Brisa Builders Corp. is a family-owned construction management, development, and general contracting firm based in Brooklyn. Founded by the late Lilly and Thomas Keller in 1997, the company has a long history of working with faith-based organizations to construct affordable senior housing. Ericka Keller was a principal for the New York City Department of Education before taking the helm of the family business in 2012. Four years later, she opened her company called Brisa Builders Development LLC to continue educating and forming partnerships with faith-based institutions throughout New York City to build quality and affordable housing accessible to all residents.

Although there are very few Black real estate developers, studies show that they have the highest percentage of hiring other Black-owned firms throughout the development process. In 2014, The Church of God of East Flatbush engaged Brisa Builders to develop two parcels of land in Brooklyn, known as Ebenezer Plaza. Three years later, Brisa Builders enlisted National Standard Abstract to provide title insurance for the transaction. Ericka Keller introduced Bishop Dr. R.C. Hugh Nelson from the Church of God of East Flatbush to Osei Rubie of National Standard Abstract in 2017 to cultivate partnerships with faith leaders through educational forums. Ironically, in 2020, Osei Rubie discovered Bishop Dr. R.C. Hugh Nelson was his cousin.

Osei Rubie's mother, Jamaican-born Yvonne Rubie, identified the new family connection during a Zoom meeting led by Bishop Dr. Nelson's sister, Joy Nelson. She immediately made the revelation of a development project in Brooklyn that would now reunite long-lost cousins working side-by-side for years and unaware of their shared roots. After a quick confirmation call between mother and son, it became clear why the friendship with Bishop Dr. Nelson and Osei Rubie came with such ease.

Strengthening communities is a family affair for these intergenerational organizations. After realizing the complexities of faith-based development, National Standard Abstract began to supplement the industry insight offered by Brisa Builders. Osei Rubie facilitated public forums on title insurance where he shared crucial knowledge about the history of properties that could benefit faith leaders considering development. National Standard Abstract is a full-service title insurance agency with expertise in faith-based developments, residential and commercial real estate transactions. Since launching in 2015, the family- and Black-owned firm has closed over \$1 billion in transactions within New York and New Jersey. As the bridge to building one community at a time, National Standard Abstract expanded its footprint into philanthropy through the Osei Rubie Charitable Fund to help end

racial inequity and support the organizations working on the ground to create real change.

“Cooperative economics is critical in Black communities, where small businesses competing for government contracts are already at a disadvantage because of our race, level of experience, budget, and capacity. Relationships with Black real estate professionals and developers, including Brisa Builders, who hired our agency to provide title insurance, were essential to expanding our business portfolio. Today, we have set the industry standard with quality services while deepening our commitment to investing in the communities where we do business. As a proponent of Black entrepreneurship and generational wealth, I am excited to carry on this vital work amongst newfound family like Bishop Dr. Nelson,” said Osei Rubie, founder and president of National Standard Abstract.

“In less than a decade, National Standard Abstract has grown exponentially because we believe that relationships matter – at home and in the workplace. Before one can lead, you must first learn the fundamental principles of life and business. I am collaborating with my business partner, mentor, and father on development projects that will uplift historically marginalized communities. Together, we have achieved what others thought was impossible because we are family and of African descent,” said Nadir Rubie, a partner at National Standard Abstract.

“Every opportunity to partner with industry leaders and faith-based institutions that reflect our community deepens our long-standing commitment to providing stability to Black and Brown families who are vulnerable to economic insecurity and homelessness. I am proud to uphold the legacy of my father Thomas Keller, who believed that it is our collective responsibility to build affordable homes that combat efforts to uproot local residents,” said Ericka Keller, CEO of Brisa Builders Corp./ managing member of Brisa Builders Development LLC

“In recent years, houses of worship in New York City have begun to expand their ministry’s focus beyond the borders of the sanctuary to improve the quality of life in the community. Foundational to the existential needs facing the urban landscape is affordable housing. A little over a decade ago, our congregation decided to take a leap of faith and incorporate affordable housing in our future expansion. A few years after purchasing two city blocks to relocate the church facility, we were introduced to Brisa Builders and later National Standard Abstract to bring the vision into reality. After doing due diligence and checking several references, I am convinced this was the most important step in bringing the vision into reality,” said Bishop Dr. R.C. Hugh Nelson, senior pastor of the Church of God of East Flatbush. Currently, he oversees two phases of a three-phase development project called Ebenezer Plaza, totaling \$364 million to build nearly 530 affordable housing units, commercial spaces, a sanctuary, and a community facility to provide social services.

Brisa Builders and National Standard Abstract have created a blueprint that has every potential to spur economic growth, stability, and opportunities in underserved communities. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, where Black-owned businesses were largely excluded from the federal government’s emergency relief programs, we must begin to rely upon ourselves to rebuild Black wealth and communities. Black dollars can only circulate when we hire within to secure the future for the next generation.

