

Diversity

For more information on Lowndes' diversity initiatives:

Rachel D. Gebaide

Co-Chair, DEI Committee

John D. Ruffier

Co-Chair, DEI Committee

As Central Florida has changed in the five decades since the founding of Lowndes, so too has the firm.

At Lowndes, we believe that cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment not only enriches our workplace and community, but it also enables us to better serve our clients and our community. While we are consistently working to achieve these goals, we also acknowledge there is no end point, and that in seeking to do better, we still won't always get it right. We are committed to continual, steady improvement and ongoing conversation and education. To help us in our journey, we continue to seek a more diverse firm of talented attorneys and staff to reflect today's Central Florida community.

We value the wide range of experiences, traditions, cultures, and backgrounds of our attorneys and professional staff. Our diverse teams bring different perspectives and new ideas that help us find innovative solutions to our clients' challenges and achieve a higher standard of service.

We also know the importance of cultivating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community for all. Whether through financial support, volunteer time, or leadership roles, we are proud to contribute to civic and charitable organizations and projects that are working to broaden and improve our communities.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

Our Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee works in collaboration with firm leadership to help develop and promote programs, policies, and procedures that support our DEI initiatives and encourage an inclusive and equitable work environment. The committee is comprised of firm leadership, practice group chairs, shareholders, of counsel, associates, and staff professionals.

Recruitment

Recognizing that diversity is integral to our success as a law firm, we are committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse group of attorneys.

- We take intentional steps to recruit candidates and law students from a wide range of backgrounds by actively participating in minority job fairs, such as the Southeast Minority Job Fair (SEMJF), and purposefully including the Florida A&M University College of Law, a historically Black college/university (HBCU), in our outreach.

- Our 1L Opportunity Scholar program offers the opportunity for a first-year law student from a historically underrepresented community in the legal profession to join our summer associate class, with a pipeline to a second summer opportunity and potentially permanent employment.

Women's Initiative

- The Lowndes Women's Initiative provides women attorneys with quarterly professional and personal development programming, as well as relationship-building and mentorship opportunities, to support them in their careers and help them elevate as legal and community leaders. We believe that women must play an active role in leadership and policy development in order to create an inclusive, relevant and thriving law firm and community.
- Women shareholders serve on the firm's executive and compensation committees and chair a number of firm committees and practice groups. At Lowndes, women attorneys are at the table and in the boardroom making decisions and setting firm policies.

Education & Training

- We celebrate cultural heritage months and other inclusive-related events through educational programming and social celebrations for all staff and attorneys.
- We also invite Central Florida business and community leaders and firm clients to share their experiences and stories with us during cultural heritage months, including but not limited to Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and LGBTQ+ History Month. We want to learn from them and each other and engage in important and change-making dialogue.

In the Community

- Our pro bono work focuses on advocating for those who are most vulnerable. Our attorneys serve as guardians ad litem for vulnerable minors, with two shareholders honored multiple times for their dedication and work. We also participate in a pretrial diversion program for youths arrested for non-violent misdemeanors, represent indigent individuals who need to obtain a divorce, and assist Habitat for Humanity of Greater Orlando, Inc. with clearing land titles for homes.
- We are active supporters of Lift Orlando, a nonprofit organization cofounded by our President & CEO William T. Dymond, Jr., that works with residents, business leaders, and community partners toward the revitalization of the historic communities of West Lakes in Orlando.
- John Ruffier, a Lowndes shareholder, has volunteered with and served on the national boards of directors for both the Human Rights Campaign and Human Rights Campaign Foundation, the nation's largest advocacy organizations dedicated to improving the lives of the LGBTQ+ community, rising to the role of chair of the Human Rights Campaign Board of Directors.
- Our "Celebrating Diversity Through Art" program showcases the works of diverse artists, both locally and from around the world, at our Orlando office. The collection is curated in cooperation with the Downtown Arts District, and several pieces have been purchased by firm personnel, clients, and other visitors.
- The firm sponsored "Rising Up Parramore," a mural project of CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women) Orlando celebrating the history of the Parramore community and honoring those who provided services to this otherwise underserved community during segregation.
- We are proud to be part of "Take the Pledge," a regional initiative sponsored by the Orlando Economic Partnership to encourage businesses to commit to creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive business

community.