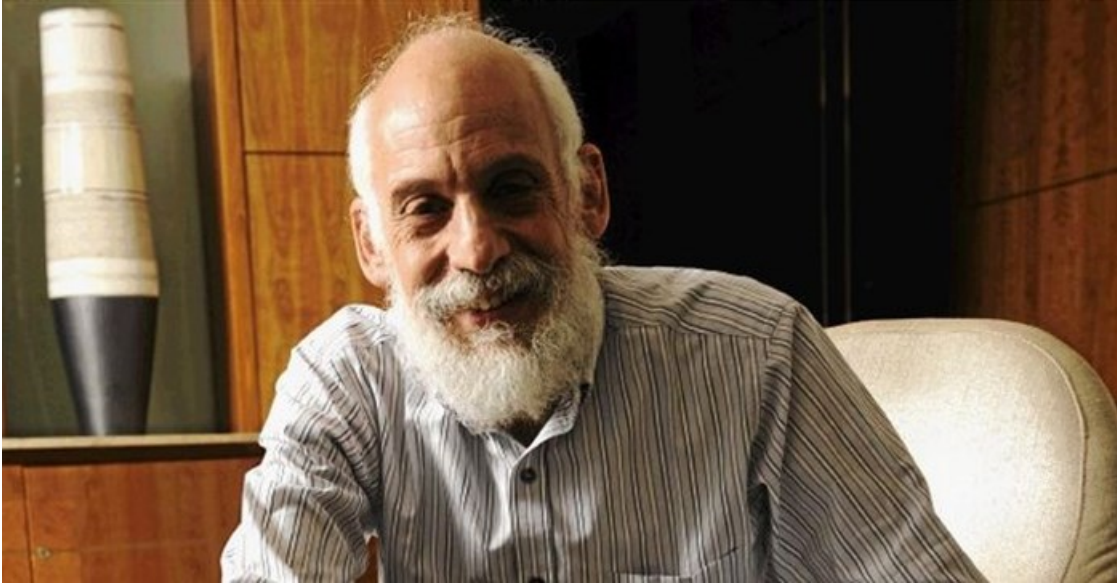


# Gerald Leissner's contributions to civil society praised

By [Alistair Anderson](#)

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Gerald Leissner, a property industry titan with more than 50 years' experience who died on Friday, 16 December, aged 74, has been lauded for his civil contributions.



Gerald Leissner died aged 74.

Leissner was heavily involved in civil society, having held prominent positions in various organisations and activities which were aimed at overcoming poverty and inequality, said independent non-executive chairman of Arrowhead Properties, Taffy Adler.

These included the Urban Foundation, the Central Johannesburg Partnership, the Inner City Housing Upgrading Trust, the Johannesburg Housing Company, the Trust for Urban Housing Finance, the Housing Development Agency, the ApexHi Empowerment Trust and the ApexHi and Arrowhead Charitable Trusts, Foundation 2000 and Yeshiva College.

The two trusts have distributed about R100m to various charities.

His contribution to the country as a whole was recognised by former President Nelson Mandela in his address to the 37th Annual Congress of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in August 1993 where he said: "I want to take this opportunity also to make special mention of some of the other outstanding leaders and figures from the Jewish community who have been in the forefront of the struggle for human rights. All South Africans owe much to the example set by Mr

Gerald Leissner, the President of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Mr Mervyn Smith, its current chairman, and Professor Michael Katz, its past president."

Adler said Leissner had also shaped one of the earliest black economic empowerment (BEE) policies in the listed property sector. He applied a BEE policy to ApexHi, a property company which he founded before Arrowhead.

"ApexHi was formed in 2001 as a listed property loan stock company with 15 properties, mainly in Johannesburg, worth about R15m. Gerald was the founding CEO of the company and, under his guidance, ApexHi grew to be the second largest listed South African property company on the JSE, owning 235 commercial, retail and industrial properties, with a market capitalisation in excess of R6bn by 2007," said Adler.

Investors who acquired ApexHi units when the company first listed its A and B unit structure in March 2001 realised a total return of 386% for the 70 months of trading to the end of December 2006, according to Adler.

"As part of the requirements of the government's BEE Charter, companies such as ApexHi were encouraged to make a minimum of 10% of capital available to black shareholders. True to form, and again under Gerald's guidance, the company came up with an innovative way of ensuring not only that black shareholders could participate in the spectacular growth of the company but also that both capital and income could be transferred to groups who were involved in poverty alleviation activities in SA," he said.

Expanding the A and B unit structure of its listed shareholding, ApexHi created a C unit which was offered to existing A and B unit shareholders on condition they sold 30% of their C units to the BEE partners at a unit price of R2 per unit.

"The company was then in a position to offer 74,980,920 C units to black empowerment groupings. While 50% of the BEE allocation went to a black commercial partner, the balance, worth R75m, was offered to a broad-based empowerment trust. The beneficiaries of this scheme are the Cida Empowerment Fund, the DEC Investment Holding company, MaAfrika Tikkun, Makhulong A Matala and the Soul City Broad-Based Empowerment Company," said Adler.

"One of ApexHi's key objectives in selecting the BEE shareholders was to ensure a significant proportion of the economic benefits that flow from the transaction would contribute to those communities and persons who have historically been, and continue to be, the most disadvantaged members of the South African economy," said Leissner at the time of the share issue.

*Source: BDpro*

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