



Year in Review 2018: Jay Sonhraj, Zara Realty

December 18, 2018 - Spotlights

Name & Title: Jay Sonhraj

Company Name: Zara Realty

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What was the best decision that you made in 2018 and how did it impact your business?

We made a \$173 million investment in 15 buildings in Queens to modernize and improve infrastructure and amenities. This includes new boilers and HVAC systems, new elevators, new roofs and facades, new hallways and new kitchens and bathrooms. We make these investments because we believe in creating high-quality affordable housing for the long-term. We do not “flip” buildings. We refurbish and modernize them so to meet the needs of tenants. It is crucial to ensure that vital infrastructure is maintained and upgraded to meet the challenges of tomorrow, including greater energy efficiency and resilience.

What was an unexpected event that occurred in 2018, and how did it impact your career or personal life?

I was humbled and greatly honored to receive the first-ever honorary doctorate degree from the University of Guyana, where my foundation has helped to create the university’s first degree program in psychology. For too many years, mental health did not get the attention it needed in Guyana and with this new degree program, the university will be able to train and graduate psychology professionals, both from Guyana and from abroad, including from New York. My hope is that this will improve the lives of those living in the country and in diaspora communities throughout North and South America.

Do you have any New Year’s Resolution(s)?

To continue to work hard every day in the family-run company that I love, providing quality housing for New Yorkers. To expand my foundation’s charitable endeavors in New York City and in Guyana, including expanding computer training for disadvantaged young people, providing free test prep for students to attend New York’s specialized high schools, and continuing to help improve education outcomes for public school students in New York and Guyana.

