

## HCCI HOSTED A BRADHURST MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION (BMA) NETWORKING MIXER

By: Peter Cooper/photojournalist



L/R - Freddy Del Pilar, HCCI Senior Asset Manager; Malcolm Punter, HCCI Director of Real Estate Development; Patreinnah Acosta-Pelle, Business Development Advisor BMA; Clive Clarke, HCCI Financial Controller



L/R - Malcolm Punter, HCCI Director of Real Estate Development; Arlyane McGlashan, Prestige Management General manager; Jeanette Washington, Esplanade Gardens Manager; Horace Henry, Prestige management Executive Vice President



Kenneth Morrison, President of Bradhurst Merchants Association, Inc.

Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc. (HCCI) hosted the third monthly Bradhurst Merchants Association, Inc. (BMA) Networking Mixer on Tuesday, March 13th. The mixer was held at the David and Joyce Dinkins Building, located at 263 West 153rd Street between Macombs & Frederick Douglass Boulevard.

HCCI's history spans back to 1986, when over 90 diverse inter-faith congregations came together to formulate the organization. HCCI is "committed to the holistic revitalization of Harlem" expressed Mr. Derek E. Broomes, HCCI President and CEO, and continued to explain that HCCI carries out this mission with a social service component, housing component, and commercial component that "all craft into a holistic approach to creating a sustainable and vibrant community". "The bottom line," Broomes stated, "HCCI acts as a safety net for the community".

"Real Estate is the main branch and social services branched out through its evolution," explained Malcolm Punter, Director of Real Estate Development/Asset Management. Punter revealed that HCCI has helped to develop

over 2500 low-income housing units and over 42 commercial spaces to date.

However, HCCI is a unique organization because it dives much deeper than just a real estate portfolio. "When we talk about housing, housing is just an edifice, bricks and walls and light fixtures. The most important component of that housing is supportive services. This creates the success of housing, this is the safety net, the social services that are accessible via HCCI can assist in solving many of the day to day problems in living, whether you have legal issues, health issues, Con Edison issues, etc. This makes you intuitively a better tenant, you are able to take care of your apartment and don't need to take out your frustration on the walls," expressed Broomes. These social services fall under a Health and Wellness sector and a Human Capital Sector. Health and Wellness include lectures, workshops, outreach programs, and assistance geared toward congregations that have diseases that disproportionately affect African-American and Latino communities. Human Capital Development includes services geared toward the professional development of one's self, such as job training, educational opportunities, youth ser-

vices, and more.

HCCI has been working diligently in the community and recently obtained a 30 year extension of tax credit for 448 units in central Harlem. These families will benefit from an extended period where rent will be kept affordable and reserved only for low-income families. Broomes expressed a renewed focus on economic development and economic sustainability, and reiterated the importance of partnership in community development.

"With his [Broomes] leadership and the leadership of the board of directors we are on the course for new heights and new accomplishments for HCCI." -Malcolm Punter.

HCCI was instrumental in the formulation of the Bradhurst Merchants Association, Inc., which is a member association of business owners in the Bradhurst Community who are concerned with the sanitation, safety, and quality of life of the community. The area of focus is Frederick Douglass Boulevard (8th Avenue) between 144th and 163rd Street, 145th Street between Malcolm X Boulevard (Lenox Avenue) and St. Nicholas Avenue and 155th Street from Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard (7th

Avenue) to Bradhurst Avenue. "It is something that is greatly needed and I applaud them and the merchants that take their time at 8 in the morning to be there and they are really serious and demonstrating themselves as excellent business people with an interest of the community," affirmed Broomes.

Local Bradhurst District businesses sponsored the food and beverages for the evening. Including Charles Country Pan Fried Chicken, Hot Pot under the Tree, Jacob Restaurant, Tastings NYC, and Unity Fine Wine & Liquors.

*All are invited to attend the monthly Bradhurst Merchants Association meetings which are held every last Wednesday of the month from 8:00am - 9:30am at HCCI's Family Life Center, 266-268 West 153rd Street between Macombs Place & Frederick Douglas Blvd. For more information you can reach Kenneth Morrison at (212) 281 - 2714.*

*For more information on HCCI visit online at [www.hcci.org](http://www.hcci.org) or stop by the main office at 2854 Frederick Douglass Blvd, phone number (212) 281-4887.*