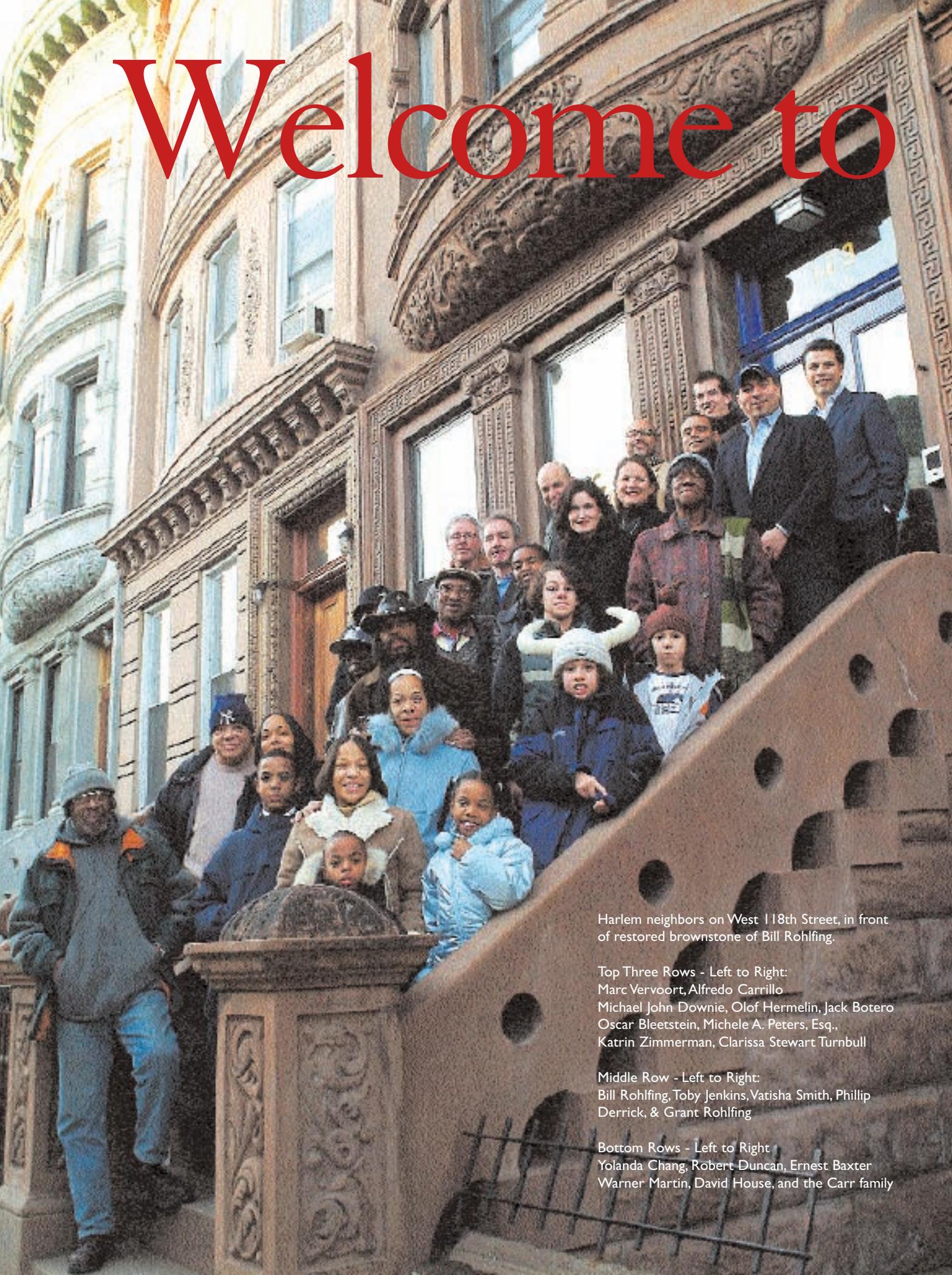


Welcome to



Harlem neighbors on West 118th Street, in front of restored brownstone of Bill Rohlfling.

Top Three Rows - Left to Right:
Marc Vervoort, Alfredo Carrillo
Michael John Downie, Olof Hermelin, Jack Botero
Oscar Bleetstein, Michele A. Peters, Esq.,
Katrin Zimmerman, Clarissa Stewart Turnbull

Middle Row - Left to Right:
Bill Rohlfling, Toby Jenkins, Vatisa Smith, Phillip
Derrick, & Grant Rohlfling

Bottom Rows - Left to Right
Yolanda Chang, Robert Duncan, Ernest Baxter
Warner Martin, David House, and the Carr family

HARLEM

by Steve Cutler
Photography by Atsushi Tomioka

The home-buying frenzy that has driven the average apartment in Manhattan over the \$1 million mark and made every neighborhood viable for luxury development has new buyers and builders looking north, making Harlem the most enticing and promising piece of real estate on the island.

And as the glorious brownstones of Harlem are being brought back to their former splendor, and new developments are rising, a cultural revitalization recalling the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s is well under way. This past fall, for example, the Dance Theater of Harlem was reopened thanks to donations of \$1.6 million raised by supporters, nearly a third of that said to be contributed by Mayor Bloomberg.

Trading Uptown

Harlem is saving many young families who love Manhattan yet dream of owning a house from moving to the suburbs. Broker Chris Halliburton, head of Warburg Realty's new Harlem office, says, "We get people who have lived in a 1,200 square-foot, two-bedroom doorman co-op Downtown and have two children and a third on the way, and they can get \$1.4 to \$1.6 million for their apartment and then roll that over into a 3,300 square-foot townhouse with a backyard."

Lonni Efron, a photographic postproduction consultant, and her husband, Russell, lived in Battery Park City for three and a half years, then felt the need for more space when they had a baby. "We wanted the baby to be able to play outside. My husband said in Harlem we could live in the city and have a house. Ultimately what got us was the size of the space we could have — and having so much outdoor space."

Efron took to the brownstone lifestyle right away. "You come home, go up the stairs, and you're in your house," she says. "You look out the window and you can see your car. Open the back door and you can sit outside — have a barbecue. We have two floors, a finished basement, two decks, and a backyard with a garden." Plus two rental apartments. All this and, adds Efron, "we end up paying about \$100 less per month than we paid for our apartment in Battery Park City."

Take the D Train

In addition to space, the family has gained a bit of time. "My husband works in the 50s on Madison Avenue," says Efron. "It used to take 25 minutes from

Battery Park. The D train runs express from 125th Street to 59th Street and can take as little as 10 minutes."

For convenience, Harlem has just about every neighborhood in Manhattan beat. The 1, 2, A, B, C, and D subways get you anywhere in the city in no time, and the Metro-North train station at 125th Street goes express to Grand Central Station in seven minutes. Connections by car to the airports are direct and speedy, as are those to Long Island, Westchester, and New Jersey.

Of course, families are not the only ones flocking to Upper Manhattan. "Harlem is fabulous for single people," says decorator Elaine Griffin, resident of Mt. Morris Park since 2000. While she came to Harlem seeking a larger living space — "my first apartment was featured in Elle Décor *"Small Spaces,"* she quips — Griffin loves it for the neighborhood hospitality. "I grew up in a small town in the South where you know everyone," she says, "and my block here is a microcosm of my little hometown. Anytime I do a decorating special on TV, I have my block cheering squad. They go, 'You go, girl—I saw you on *"Maury Povich"* today.'"

Griffin finds herself living something of a European lifestyle in Harlem. "You have tons of creative friends — great people you want to see more of. You're in and out of each others' houses for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It's the best of both worlds: very Southern and very European."

Other world-class decorators residing in Harlem include Roderick Shade, author of *Harlem Style*, Sheila Bridges, and Michael Henry Adams, renowned architectural historian and author of *Harlem Lost and Found*. Notable newcomers to the area include Marcia Gay Harden, Maya Angelou, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Georgia Boothe, owner of the gift shop Xukuma on Lenox Avenue, loves the gritty, creative lifestyle in Mt. Morris Park. "It's funky and groovy, and a lot of fun people live here. People have made a commitment to come. It's a real neighborhood. If you're struggling with your grocery bags, somebody is going to ask you if you need help. You're not going to see that in other places."

Brownstone Pioneers

One of Upper Manhattan's biggest draws is the abundance of historic brownstones, potentially the city's finest housing stock, scattered about neighborhoods unobstructed by high-rise apartment buildings. Some 3,000 of the borough's townhouses are here. "The brownstones for single-family townhouses in Manhattan are here," according



to Bill Rohlfig, who has made a business out of transforming dilapidated brownstones into eminently livable townhomes. His company is called, aptly, Uptown Townhouse. A former sculptor and set designer, Rohlfig bought a devastated brownstone on 118th Street, off Lenox Avenue, for \$425,000 in January 2001 and converted it into an expansive, loft-style, four-story townhome within six months, working off his own design.

While Rohlfig lives there with his wife and three sons, the house serves as a prototype for prospective buyers. Once would-be buyers tour the brilliantly designed townhouse, they can buy a brownstone closely resembling the model, at a fraction of the price of such a richly appointed home just a mile or so downtown.

“The concept,” says Rohlfig, “is to buy a shell that’s been the blight of the neighborhood and turn it into the diamond on the block, not only for someone who wants to have some space in Manhattan, but to have a life here, instead of moving to the suburbs. I buy a shell you can’t walk into and turn it into a single- or two-family building with somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 square feet of space. The taxes are about \$4,000 a year, and there’s no maintenance because everything, including central air-conditioning, is brand new.”

Rohlfig sold a brownstone on West 130th Street to actor Cameron Matheson, best known for the role of Ryan in *All My Children*, which has earned Rohlfig high esteem among longtime residents of the block who are soap-opera fans. He is in the process of

converting three additional brownstones.

Works in Progress

Emmy Award-winning video editor Keith DeBetham is an early settler, having bought his five-story brownstone on 119th Street — a shell, really — in 1990, for \$55,000. “It was a wreck,” he recalls. “I did the demolition myself, with my cousin — we filled 10 dumpsters.” He’s still working on the place, using top-of-the-line materials, and meanwhile is living the life: “I cut my commute down from an hour and 10 minutes” — from his home in Queens to CBS studios in Manhattan — “to 20 minutes. I have a backyard and I park my car right in front of my place.

“I have five floors,” continues DeBetham. “A triplex for myself, and my brother and his wife have the street level and basement recreation room.” The first floor of his living space includes a kitchen, half bath, and living room; the second has the master bedroom, office, and 17-foot-by-20-foot master bathroom with fireplace and whirlpool; and the third floor contains two additional bedrooms, a full bathroom, and washer/dryer.

Currently, brownstones below 125th Street start at about \$1.4 million and escalate according to the width of the building, number of floors, and the finishes to about \$2.5 million. Generally speaking, \$1.4 million buys a 16-foot brownstone with four stories, and \$2.5 million gets you a 25-foot house with five stories. Above 125th, renovated townhouses go for between \$1.25 and \$1.7 million.

Harlem: An Epic History

Founded by Peter Stuyvesant in 1658, Upper Manhattan was farmland until the 1800s, when the coming of the commuter railroad promoted development, turning the area into a wealthy suburb of New York City. Real estate values collapsed due to excessive speculation in the early 1900s, and around the same time the construction of the IRT subway connected Harlem with Downtown Manhattan, spurring an influx of African-Americans, whose population reached 180,000 by 1930.

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s produced a rich legacy of great American artistic and intellectual achievement. Jazz, that uniquely American music, was refined here by such masters as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Bessie Smith, and Eubie Blake and performed at such venues as the Cotton Club, the Lincoln Theatre, the Apollo Theater, and the Savoy Ballroom. Tap dancer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson was called “The King of Harlem.” Paul Robeson, the actor and singer, was known worldwide, as were writers Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois, and Alain Locke, painters Jacob Lawrence and Aaron Douglas, and sculptor Augusta Savage.

The Great Depression of 1929 hit Harlem particularly hard, causing widespread unemployment, economic collapse, and a sharp, long-term decline in real-estate values. Ultimately many residential buildings were transferred through foreclosures to city ownership and remained unoccupied through the 1960s and 1970s.

“Harlem remained dormant,” according to developer M. Steven Williams. “Landlords abandoned buildings, which laid on the city’s books unproductive and vacant. The city was not a great manager and had limited resources.”

LIVE AT THE APOLLO - TICKETS ON SALE NOW

THE ORIGINAL APOLLO QUARTET NIGHT
Every Wednesday, 7:30pm
One Mic, One Stage, One Chance

SHOW TIME AT THE APOLLO TV TAPINGS
September 24 - Tickets \$12

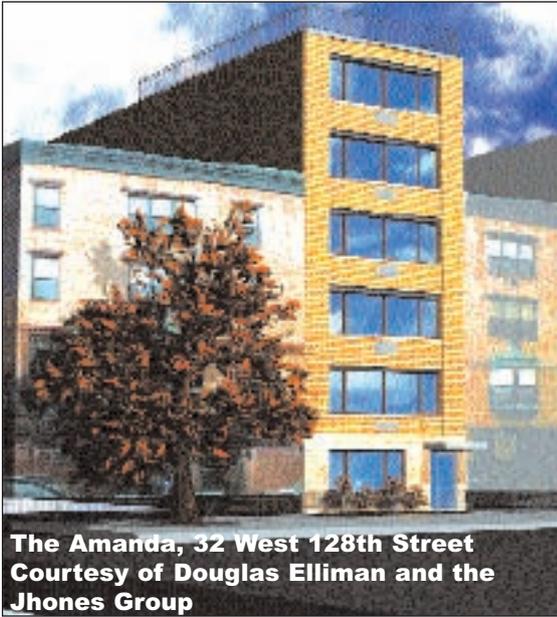
SAVIN GLOVER - LIVE AT THE APOLLO
October 8 - October 10

GOSPEL AT COLONUS
Featuring CHARLES RUTTON & THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA

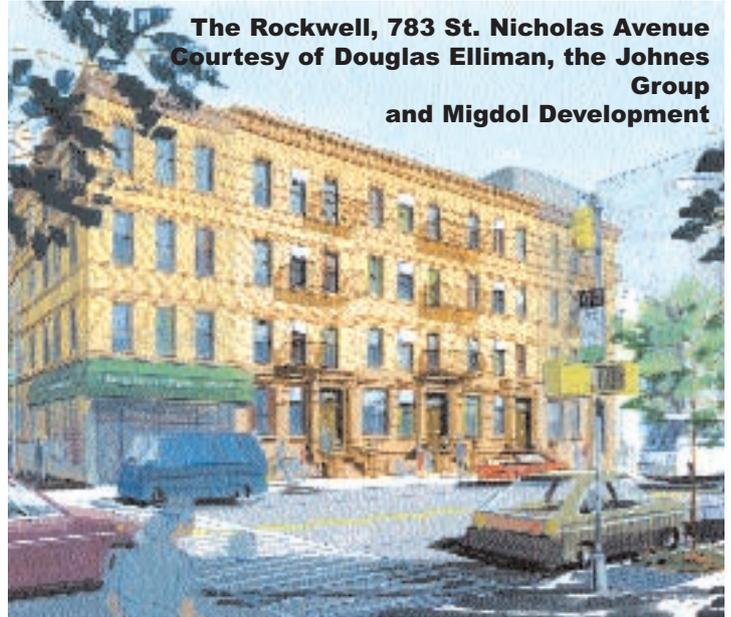
NAT KING COLE
WALK

WORLD
WIDE

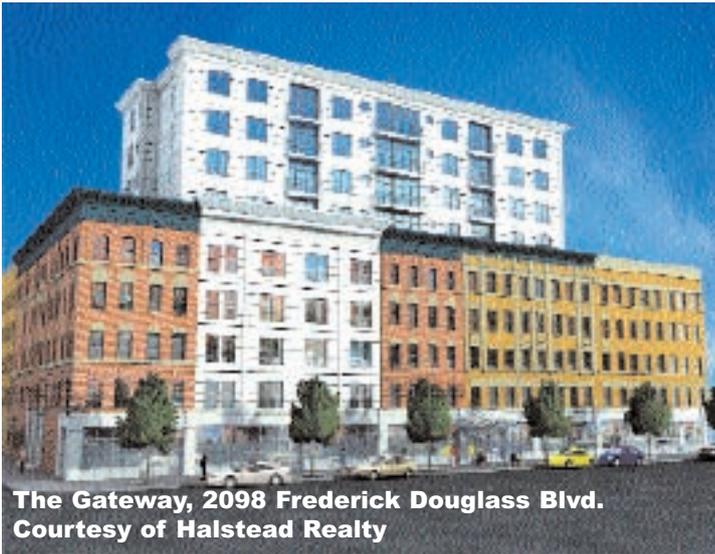




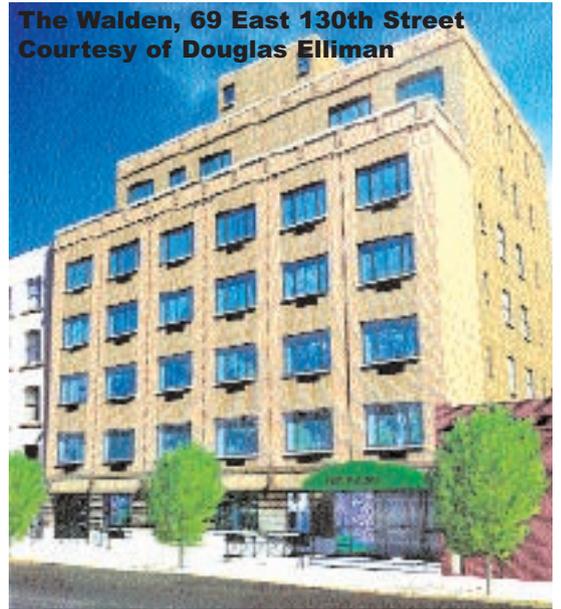
**The Amanda, 32 West 128th Street
Courtesy of Douglas Elliman and the
Jhones Group**



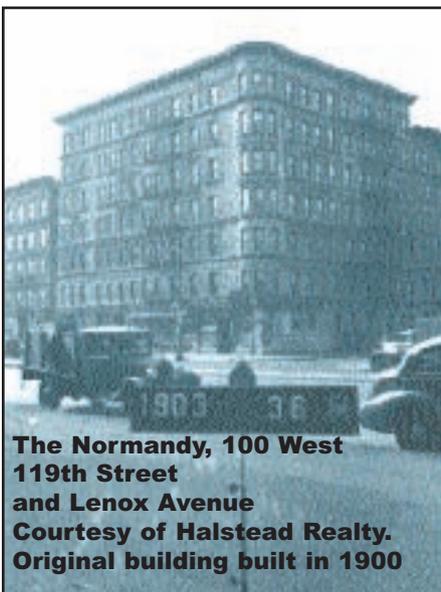
**The Rockwell, 783 St. Nicholas Avenue
Courtesy of Douglas Elliman, the Jhones
Group
and Migdol Development**



**The Gateway, 2098 Frederick Douglass Blvd.
Courtesy of Halstead Realty**



**The Walden, 69 East 130th Street
Courtesy of Douglas Elliman**



**The Normandy, 100 West
119th Street
and Lenox Avenue
Courtesy of Halstead Realty.
Original building built in 1900**



**North General Hospital at 121st Street and Park Avenue
Courtesy of Costas Kondylis and Partners LLP (Architect)
and Danforth Development Partners**



Finally, in the 1980s the Giuliani administration launched a program, called Homeworks, that turned brownstones over to private developers, who would renovate them and sell to members of the community. “They started turning the vacant brownstones into occupied brownstones,” recalls Williams, who worked as a deputy in the administration. “Harlem became more palatable to people. People started to invest in Harlem; it finally became established as a viable market and a market-rate market. Those with some vision could see it would soon generate income and sales that were worthy of investment.”

Clinton’s Harlem

M. Steven Williams, of Danforth Development Partners, is one of those visionary investors. His company bought and renovated 55 West 125th Street, the building in which Bill Clinton makes his headquarters. “People thought we were crazy to spend \$6 or \$7 million on the building. When Clinton moved it was an indication that we had met or exceeded our goals.”

“When we first bought the building, we tried to market it as back-office space to some U.S. corporation, but we never got any interest from the private sector. After Clinton moved in, we got a lot of inquiries from law firms

and private-sector parties suddenly interested in being in Harlem. It changed people’s perception of Harlem.”

Adds Williams, “Clinton is highly regarded and loved in the community, and his moving in was a validation that what everyone felt was going on was real. There was a great deal of pride and enthusiasm about his moving in.”

Condominiums

“There are not enough condominiums in Harlem,” says Klara Madlin, cofounder of Harlem Homes, one of the first brokerage houses to specialize in Harlem exclusively. But developers are stepping in en masse to fill the void.

Most of the new development is happening in the areas surrounding and in between the landmark centers of West Harlem’s historic districts, which include: Mt. Morris Park, from 116th Street to 124th Street, from Seventh Avenue to Madison Avenue; Strivers Row, including 137th, 138th, and 139th Streets, between Seventh Avenue and Eighth Avenue; and Sugar Hill, extending from Edgecomb Avenue to Amsterdam Avenue, from 145 Street to 155 Street.

One new condominium, the Gateway, at Frederick Douglass Boulevard and 113th Street, consists of two phases: the first a renovation of a prewar building in a contemporary style, and the second a new construction to

be completed the end of 2005. One- to three-bedroom units are listed at \$334,000 to \$849,000.

“We had 500 people on opening day,” exclaimed Norman Horowitz, senior vice president at Halstead Realty. “I was taking groups of 10 to 15 up at a time. It was like the Museum of Natural History on opening day.” The project was more than two-thirds sold within two weeks. “Harlem is gentrifying even quicker than I expected,” says Horowitz. Buyers in the buildings will benefit by the revitalization of the area due to the recent purchase by Columbia University of all the brownstones on 114th Street, adjoining Frederick Douglass Boulevard, for its professors and graduate students.

The Normandy

Halstead will also market the Normandy, a conversion of a prewar building by developer Joe Tahl at 119th Street and Lenox Avenue. The project will offer 25 family-size condominium apartments, from 1,450 to 1,700 square feet, ranging in price from \$800,000 to \$1.2 million. Finishings are deluxe, including detailed crown moldings, granite kitchens, wood-burning fireplaces, and washer/dryers. Due to open in February, the Normandy will have a full staff, 24-hour doorman, and roof deck with spectacular city views.

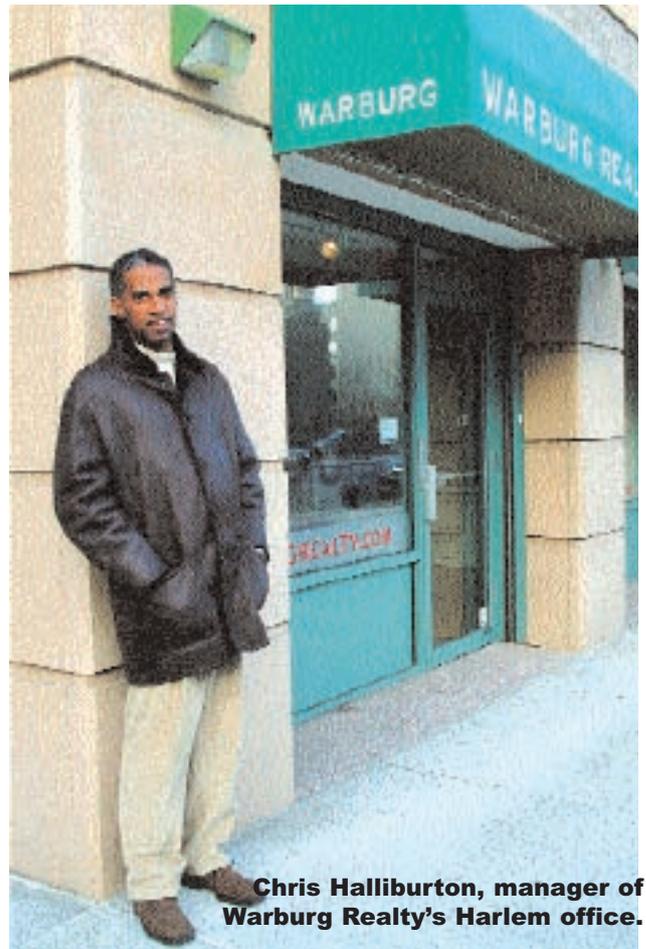
The Amanda

The Amanda, a newly constructed low-rise condominium at 32 West 128th Street is named for Amanda Jhones, a vice president at Douglas Elliman who is also a renowned jazz singer and enthusiastic promoter of Harlem, where Jhones has seen values skyrocket. “Two years ago they paid \$200,000 for the piece of property The Amanda was built on,” she says. “Now that same land would cost about \$1.5 million.”

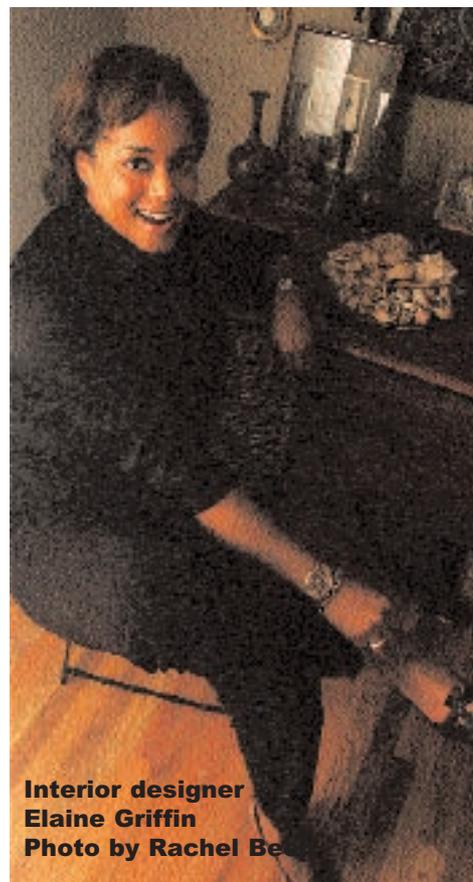
The Amanda features six loft-style, 1,200-square-foot units with a keyed elevator entrance, two bedrooms, two full baths, high ceilings, washer/dryer, and roof deck. “The chef’s kitchen is bigger than a gallery kitchen,” says Jhones, “so when you’re entertaining, people can hang out with you.” Units are offered at approximately \$650,000.

Jhones will also help market The Rockwell, named after Harlem resident Norman Rockwell, for Migdol Development, at 783 St. Nicholas Avenue. The condominium apartments, contained in a row of brownstones, have the Jhones touch: “I made them sexy,” she says, “with elegant lighting, exposed brick, wood-burning fireplaces, open kitchens, and park exposures.”

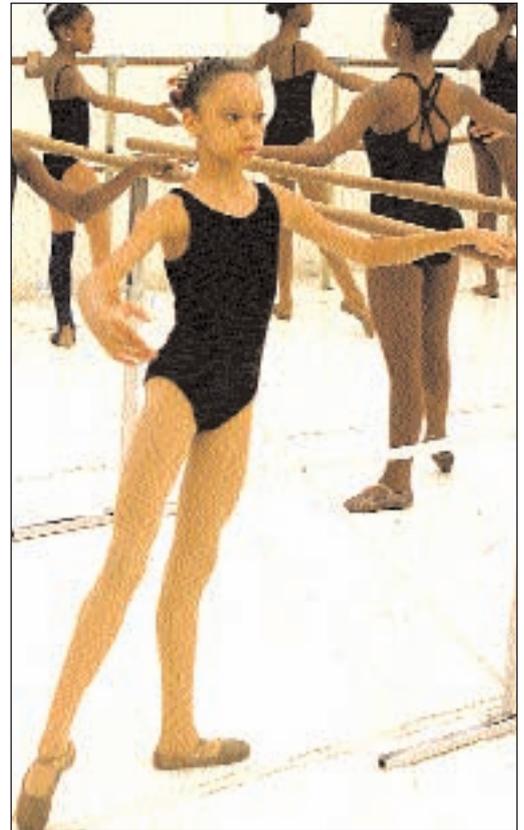
Rosetree Development is renovating six brownstones, the first of which is at 2119 Fifth Avenue and 130th Street, to create at least 24 condominium apartments. Marketed by Klara Madlin, the loft-style units boast marble-and-stone tile bathrooms, open Silestone



Chris Halliburton, manager of Warburg Realty's Harlem office.



**Interior designer Elaine Griffin
Photo by Rachel Be...**



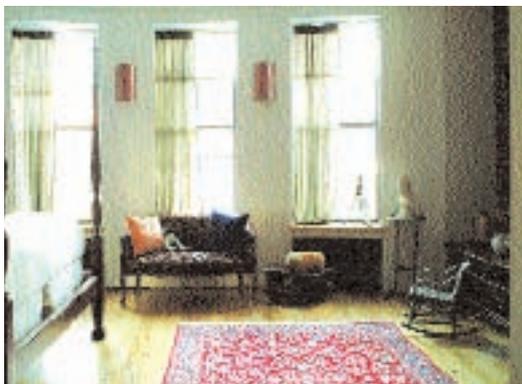
Dance Theater of Harlem
Images by Joseph Rodman

Uptown Townhouse

Before



Bill Rohlfling's vision: before and after of his magnificent Uptown townhouse on 118th Street, "The concept is to buy a shell that's been the blight of the neighborhood and turn it into the diamond on the block."



Where To Shop

Boutiques and More



Georgia Boothe, owner of Xukuma



B. Oyama, owner of B. Oyama Homme



Montgomery



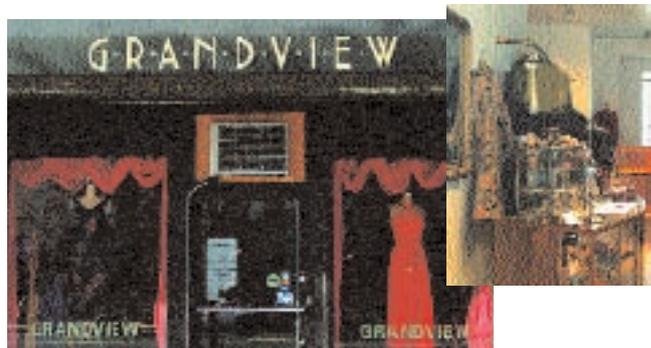
the HUE-MAN bookstore



Murphy Aeyliger, a partner at Harlemade Style Shop



Harlem Vintage, above right, manager Lee Campbell



Grandview

125th Street



Xukuma, 183 Lenox Avenue, 212.222.0490
"The store changes from season to season," says proprietor Georgia Boothe. "Sometimes we're heavy with home décor, sometimes it looks more like a fashion store." The shop, which opened in 2002, offers select scarves, leather bags, silk ties, picture frames, cushions, clocks, glassware, and candleware.

B. Oyama Homme, 2330 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, 212.234.5128
Harlem's fine haberdashery, offering British and Italian suits, bold striped shirts, cashmere sweaters, and woven silk ties. Photographs of Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, and Nat King Cole adorn the store, conjuring an era of reverence for fine fashion in Harlem.

Grandview, 2531 Frederick Douglass Blvd., 212.694.7324
Fine women's evening wear;

sportswear, knits, vintage hats, scarves, and jewelry. Several top designers are represented.

Harlemade Style Shop,
174 Lenox Avenue, 212.987.2500

Opened in 2000, the store celebrates Harlem and African-American culture, featuring specially designed T-shirts, hats, postcards, coffee mugs, picture frames, and dolls as well as original artwork. The shop sells books and hosts author reading and signings.

Harlem Vintage, 2235 Frederick Douglass Boulevard, 212.866.WINE

Opened just last October, this haven for wine connoisseurs displays 300 different vintages of wine, organized by grape, plus fine brandies and other spirits in elaborate Lucite cases under muted lighting. The store aims to demystify wine, offering tastings in the back room.

The Hue-Man Bookstore,
2319 Frederick Douglass Blvd. 212.665.7400

The largest and best known African-American bookstore in the country hosts a steady stream of events and appearances by well-known authors and guests. The knowledgeable staff and café make it a cultural hub for the community. HUE-MAN is independently owned by three women of African descent who live in New York.

Montgomery,
2312 7th Avenue @136th Street,
212.690.2166

Unique clothing by Montgomery Harris, whose designs pair the classic with the unexpected. Harris's signature style mixes couture with Americana, and the boutique reflects the lively mix of many cultures.



Restaurants



Home Sweet Harlem Cafe

Amy Ruth's, 113 West 116th Street, 212.280.8779
Owned by former civil-rights leader Carl Redding, who is also the chef, and named for his grandmother, Amy Ruth's serves sophisticated, serious soul food. The menu offers a "salad and vegan corner."

Bayou, 308 Lenox Avenue, 212.426.3800
New Orleans/Creole-style cuisine in an attractive and comfortable setting.

Charles' Southern-Style Kitchen, 2839 Eighth Avenue, 212.926.4313
Down-home soul-food restaurant that some say has the best fried chicken in Harlem.

Sylvia's, 328 Lenox Avenue, 212.966.0660
The legendary soul-food restaurant, number one choice in Harlem for tourists from around the world, famous for its Sunday gospel brunch.

Native, 161 Lenox Avenue, 212.665.2525
A stylish, intimate brick-walled restaurant serving progressive French Moroccan/Caribbean cuisine. Signature dishes include Red Curry Coconut Shrimp with Balsamic Grilled Portobellos, Island Style Yuka Cakes, and Pan Seared Catfish with Cheddar Cheese Grits and Pecan Morita Chile Sauce.

Settepani Bakery & Cafe, 196 Lenox Avenue, 917.492.4806
A comfortably elegant place for panini, Tuscan soups, and salads, as well as luscious desserts, such as chocolate-hazelnut mousse with brownie bottom. Sidewalk seating for 50 in warm weather.

Home Sweet Harlem Cafe, 270 West 135th Street, 212.926.9616
Offers soups, sandwiches and salads made with natural and organic ingredients in a homey setting. Famous for their Chicken Peanut soup. Catering is also available. The café also displays artists' work.

Les Ambassades, 2200 Frederick Douglass Blvd., 212.666.0078
This boulangerie-patisserie-café is known for their baguette and French-inspired confections, but also serves a delicious mix of international dishes, including Moroccan couscous, Fettuccini Alfredo, Vietnamese spring rolls, and steak au poivre. The owner is from Senegal and lives in the neighborhood.



Settepani Bakery & Cafe



Bayou



Les



Lenox Lounge,

288 Lenox Avenue, 212.427.0253
 The historic club, open since 1939, showcased the likes of Miles Davis, Billie Holiday, and John Coltrane in its heyday and still serves fine jazz and soul food. Saxophonist Patience Higgins heads an all-night, all-star jam session every Monday.

Cherry Lounge,

454 West 128th Street, 212.662.0900
 Timbaland and DJ Clue bring Downtown-clubbing style to Harlem. Located in a renovated warehouse, the brand new upscale hip-hop room is finished in cherry wood, leather banquettes, and red hues, and features a stage and top-notch sound system.

The Apollo Theater

253 West 125th Street, 212.531.5300
 The legendary Apollo has recently installed state-of-the-art digital lighting and sound systems, and is now restoring its brilliant façade. Its popular Amateur Night, started in 1934, launched the careers of countless artists, including Ella Fitzgerald, James Brown, Michael Jackson, D'Angelo and Lauryn Hill.

Dance Theater of Harlem

466 West 152nd Street, 212.690.2800
 Reinvigorated by a recent outpouring of private donations, the Dance Theatre of Harlem offers training to more than 1,000 young people annually and community programs open to any child who wants to study dance. Its world-class classical dance ensemble, currently on hiatus, tours internationally more than just about any other ballet company.

Cotton Club

656 West 125th Street, 212.663.7980
 In its heyday an ultra-glamorous showcase for such talents as Duke Ellington, Ethel Waters, Cab Calloway, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Lena Horne, the Cotton is swinging again, offering swing dance nights, buffet & jazz shows and gospel brunches.

The Brownstone, 2032 Fifth Avenue, 212.996.7980

Princess Jenkin's triplex brownstone emporium has a hair salon, manicure service, café, and boutique resplendent with "contemporary Afro-ethnic" women's and men's clothing, custom-made dresses and wedding gowns, and a selection of jewelry, accessories, and cosmetics.

Cynergy Day Spa, 207 West 135th Street, 212.491.7880

Nestled in two floors of a brownstone, Cynergy attracts clients from all over the tristate area for such luxury treatments as the Rain Forest Facial, Jungle Mist Herbal Wrap, Ancestral Aromatherapy Massage, or any of a range of spa services.

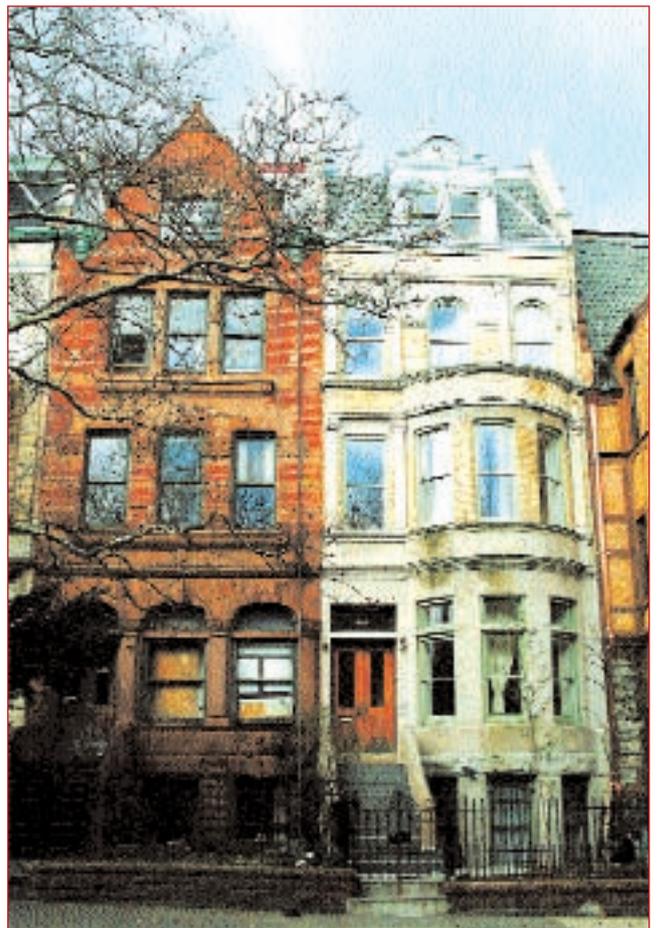
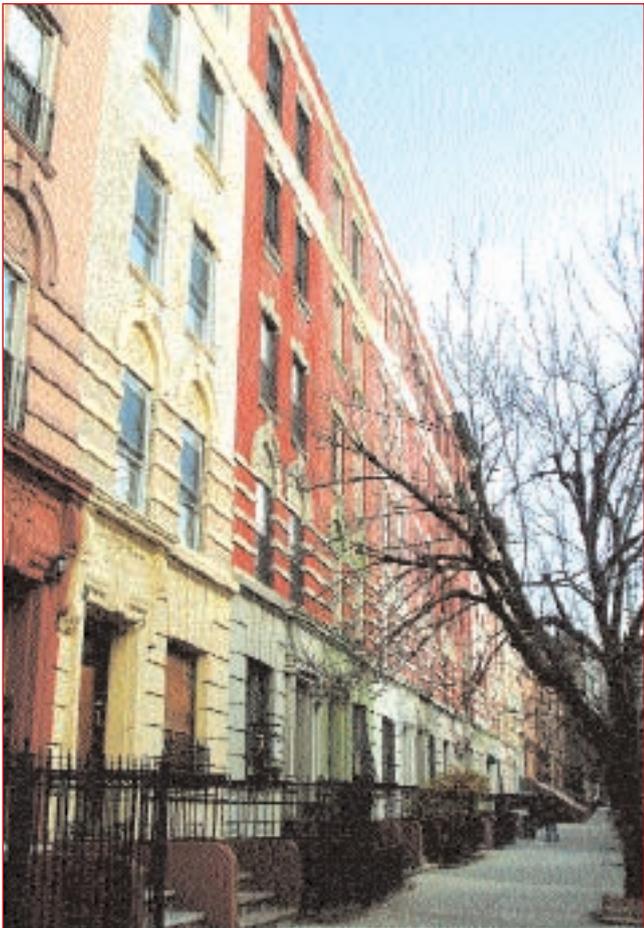
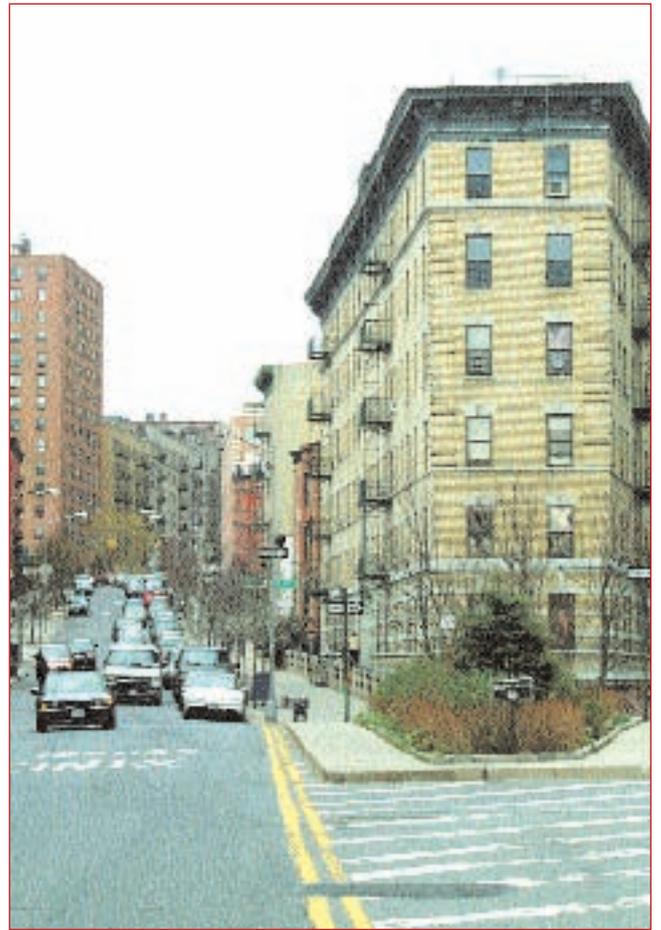
Turning Heads Beauty Salon & Day Spa,

218 Lenox Avenue, 212.828.4600
 The spacious, newly renovated duplex spa offers a full menu of treatments including hot-stone massage, body polish with Vichy Shower, and Rosemary Mint Body Wrap, as well as facials, manicures, and hair care on a separate floor.

Le Pavillon Garris,

2544 Frederick Douglass Boulevard, 212.234.3859
 Luxury, professionalism and unmatched quality meet at this day spa run by a master physician and surgeon. The finest in skincare products, regimens and procedures.





“It’s funky and groovy, and a lot of fun people live here. People have made a commitment to come. It’s a real neighborhood,” Georgia Boothe, owner of the gift shop Xukuma on Lenox Avenue

kitchens, Jacuzzis, washer/dryers, and central air-conditioning. Priced from \$525,500 to \$660,000 for a 1,400-square foot garden apartment with backyard, the floor-through units offer original exposed brick walls, oversize windows, Brazilian cherry satin hardwood floors, and wood-burning fireplaces.

Katherine Gautier of Douglas Elliman represents The Walden, a 25-unit luxury full-service condominium at 69 East 130th Street. Opened for sales in January, the building features a penthouse with 1,200 square feet of rooftop deck with unobstructed skyline views. At nearby 2002 Fifth Avenue, at 124th Street, a 28-unit condominium project is just breaking ground. “This is a sexier project,” says Gautier, “a Downtown building Uptown, loft-style with nine-and-a-half-foot ceilings and open kitchens. They’re on the corner, with two exposures overlooking lush, green Marcus Garvey Park.”

East Harlem

The most heated activity has been in West Harlem thus far, but according to Gautier, “development is naturally going east.” “Lots of money is being dumped into Madison and Fifth Avenues, from 130th Street down to 120th, because of the Metro-North connection. And you have Pathmark at Madison and 125th.”

The project that will polish East Harlem’s image once and for all is Harlem Park, a 29-story glass tower at the corner of 125th Street and Park Avenue, adjoining the Metro-North train station. Harlem Park will house the first major hotel built in Harlem in 40 years, the 222-room Marriott Courtyard, as well as 100 luxury condominium apartments, 160,000 square feet of office space, restaurants, shops, and a jazz venues.

“East Harlem will get very hot,” says M. Steven Williams, whose development company, Danforth Partners, is planning its first residential tower, a full-block, 20-story multiple-use building at Madison Avenue and 121st Street. The condominium section starts on the seventh floor, atop a 300-car garage and a nursing college.

Designed by Costas Kondylis, the building will begin construction by the end of the year. Most of the luxury apartments will have unobstructed views of

Central Park, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and the East River. Some have set-back terraces.

Stores & Services

Magic Johnson focused widespread attention on Harlem in 2000 when he opened a state-of-the-art, nine-screen movie theater on 125th Street in the multimillion dollar Harlem USA complex, which also housed an HMV, Disney Store, and New York Sports Club. Stores and services in the area have been steadily on the increase ever since.

According to Elizabeth Martin, president of E.L. Martin & Co., “Ten years ago it was very difficult to convince a bank to come in, which is amazing considering there are over 600,000 people in the neighborhood. Now you see a plethora of banks, from Commerce to Norfolk, Citibank, Chase, Banco Popular, Washington Mutual, and Bank of New York.”

She adds, “Every big retailer that has come in has been number one, two, or three in the nation.” The big names include Starbucks, Marshall’s, H&M, Old Navy, and most recently Aerosoles and M.A.C, the high-end cosmetics chain. Most of the big-box stores have settled on 125th Street, but the six-acre East River Plaza complex at 116th Street and Pleasant Avenue, which will contain a Costco and Home Depot, should open surrounding thoroughfares to large-scale retail.

The area is ripe for boutiques and restaurants, but so far they’ve been a bit slow in coming. “I would like to see more retail stores on Lenox Avenue,” says Boothe. She envisions the thoroughfare taking on “a Smith Street feel, with more restaurants and gift shops — it’s just a good avenue for it. That’s what I see for this street.”

Meanwhile, several interesting shops and restaurants *have* opened around the hood to keep discerning Harlemites well dressed, fed, and entertained.

The New Harlem Renaissance

So far Harlem seems to be expanding with minimal growing pains. Longtime residents are cautiously optimistic — happy to see services improve, streets spruce up, and businesses prosper, if just a bit wary of gentrification.

Harlem is going to become even more spectacular! **n**