

The new, old Harlem

Vibrant black middle class survives gentrification

By **Lana Bortolot**
Special to amNewYork

New Yorkers have taken note of Harlem's rebirth, and its newfound allure has given long-time, returning and new residents a whole new pride of place — but not necessarily a whole new feel.

As gentrification threatens to sweep aside Harlem's traditional culture, a resilient black middle class is proving that rising rents don't necessarily spell the end of old Harlem's tradition.

"Even when middle-income blacks moved to the suburbs, a significant middle class remained in Harlem. A lot of people coming back are one generation removed," says Mark A. Willis, executive vice president and head of the Community Development Group at JPMorgan Chase. "It's a coming back of the African-American community."

Willis, the former deputy commissioner for development for the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, added "I don't know a communi-

ty that doesn't understand the benefits of having a thriving middle class."

Andy Gerring, managing director in the development marketing group at Douglas Elliman, which has several projects in Harlem,

'IT'S A COMING BACK OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY'

Mark A. Willis,
JP Morgan Chase Community Development Group

agrees. "It's a market that draws a lot of people — from single women to families to people who have lived in the area for years waiting for something nice to happen."

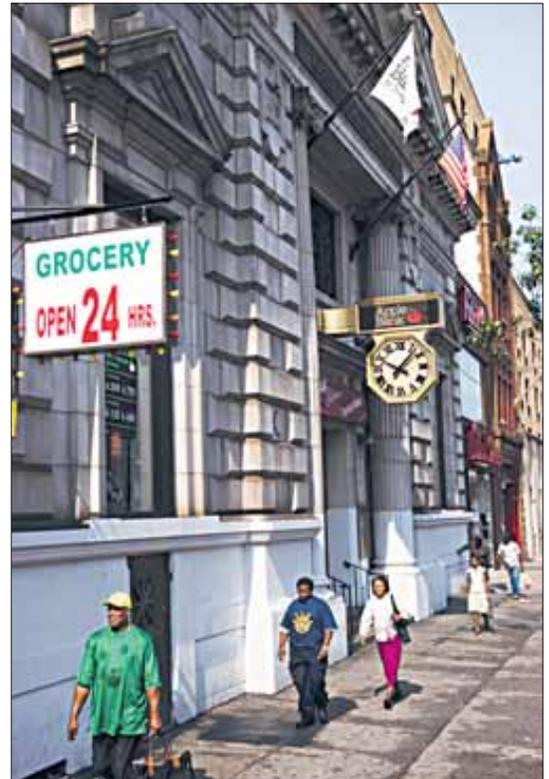
While many people are watching Harlem closely for telltale signs of over-gentrification, a number of developers are mindful of the scale of the neighborhood and the need of its residents. One reason buyers come to Harlem, says Stephen G. Kliegerman, executive director of Development

Marketing at Halstead, is to get luxury at good value.

Kliegerman said 90 percent of the 24 units at 50 W. 127th St. sold within six months. At SoHo North, an 11-unit boutique loft building at 267 W. 124 St., only the penthouse remains. They flew off the market six months at prices ranging from \$1.15 million to \$2.3 million.

At The Langston, Halstead's mammoth signature Harlem project, on Broadhurst Avenue, 85 percent of the units sold though in a year. Though it's the most upscale project of its kind, Kliegerman said it speaks to the needs of the neighborhood: 70 percent of its 180 units are designated for affordable housing, proving that large-scale or innovative projects don't always mean the little guy is squeezed out.

"I think the future of Harlem is very bright for people who live there now and the community," says JPMorgan Chase's Willis.



Harlem is retaining its flavor despite an influx of commercialized, franchised businesses on 125th Street. (RJ Mickelson/Veras)

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BUSINESS BRIEFS

New iPod, cheaper iPhone

Apple Inc. slashed the price of the iPhone by \$200 yesterday and updated its iPod media players, introducing a model that incorporates a touch-screen and other iPhone features.

The 8-gigabyte iPhone will be \$399 — \$200 cheaper than when it went on sale.

The iPod Touch is less than a third of an inch thick and can store photos, music and videos. It features the same 3.5-inch, touch-screen display as the iPhone, on which light finger touches allow the user to scroll through menus. (AP)



The new iPod, right, has the same touch screen as the iPhone, which has been reduced in price by \$200. (AP)

CORPORATE

Microsoft cuts Zune price by \$50 to \$199

Microsoft Corp. slashed \$50 from the price of its Zune digital media player yesterday, just before Apple Inc. announced an iPhone price cut and additions to its market-leading iPod line. The 30-gigabyte Zune now costs \$199, the software maker said on its Zune Insider blog.

ENVIRONMENT

Coke sets recycling goal of 100 percent

Coca-Cola Co. announced yesterday that it will help build a \$45 million recycling plant as it set a new goal to recycle or reuse every plastic bottle it sells in the U.S. The company acknowledged it has a long way to go. About 10 percent of its plastic bottles are recycled now.

RECALLS

Latest toy recall puts Mattel on the defensive

The third major recall by Mattel of lead-tainted Chinese toys has left the toy-maker fighting to maintain its reputation as shares fell sharply yesterday. Mattel announced it was recalling 800,000 toys, including one of the company's biggest sellers, the Barbie doll. (AP)