

## TWO-MINUTE TOUR: Harlem

### The Numbers

Nestled on the northwest side of New York's Manhattan, Harlem is home to seven zip codes and roughly 125,000-plus residents. Historically a center of African American culture and commerce, it comprises West, East and Central Harlem, and is often associated with the 1920s and '30s Harlem Renaissance, a celebration of African American artists, writers, thespians, musicians and the like.

Between the aftermath of the Great Depression, rent strikes in the '50s and '60s, the crack cocaine epidemic of the '80s, and the more recent revitalization of the 125th Street shopping thoroughfare, Harlem has seen its share of change. Its demographics

are also shifting, with African Americans no longer necessarily dominating the electoral process as the area's majority, according to Jacob Morris, director of the Harlem Historical Society, noting the recent election of a Dominican American congressman.

### The Pulse

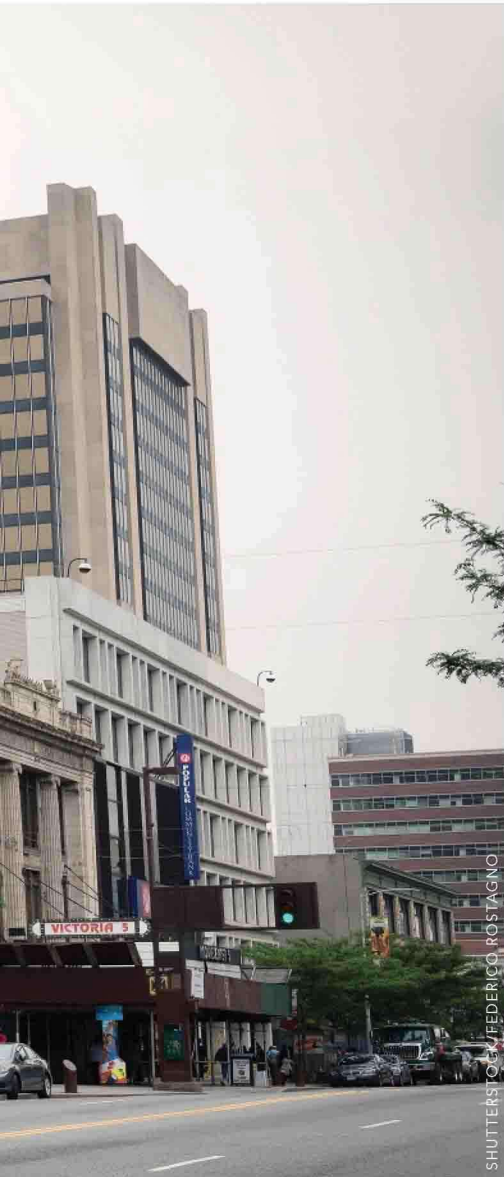
Whole Foods Market (Austin, Texas) made big news when it debuted on 125th Street this past July as part of its national efforts to eliminate food deserts. According to Morris, retailers like Pathmark of Harlem (1997 to 2015), a grocery store, and Harlem U.S.A., a lifestyle shopping center on Frederick Douglass Boulevard, brought lots

of buzz to the area upon opening, helping drive retail interest – validated by Whole Foods' recent opening.

Shops like The Children's Place (Secaucus, N.J.), H&M (Stockholm) and Payless ShoeSource (Topeka, Kan.), can be found along the 125th Street shopping corridor (the same street that houses the iconic Apollo Theater).

The culture-rich neighborhood also features a generous number of art galleries and mom-and-pop shops. Other popular local gems, like Sade Skincare on the East side and Trunk Show Designer Consignment in Central Harlem, dot the landscape. Complexes like the East River Plaza drive





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shopping closer toward the Harlem River, and 116th Street offers more eclectic options, from tattoo parlors to wine purveyors.

### The Hot Spots

The restaurant scene in Harlem is thriving, and long-time residents and visitors alike flock to the expanding range of eateries along or near Frederick Douglass Boulevard. The Red Rooster, Lido, Sylvia's Restaurant and The Cecil are just a few of the popular locally owned eateries in the area, while mainstream brands like Red Lobster (Orlando, Fla.) also exist in close proximity. Bier Intl., near 113th Street, is Harlem's first biergarten, and destinations like Shrine on

Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard pair live music and cash-only cocktails.

### Obstacles and Opportunities

According to a recent *New York Times* article, "The End of Black Harlem," many long-time residents are less than ecstatic about the neighborhood's gentrification, which causes property values and taxes to rise, often forcing out families who have lived in the area for generations. "Harlem's main shopping corridors now have substantial representation by mass-market retailers," Morris says. "Some people are upset because they believe the neighborhood has lost its flavor. I don't think it's lost its flavor, I think

its flavor is evolving, because the art gallery scene, innovative food, music, cultural ferment and associated activities are exceptionally vibrant."

Development projects like the mixed-use center planned for atop the dilapidated Victoria Theater (set to open 2019) are helping to ease additional retailers into the area. And retail rent isn't unreasonable for New York, either. According to the *New York Post*, commercial rents in Harlem at this time last year averaged between \$65 and \$279 per square foot, compared to \$3300 per square foot on Fifth Avenue in midtown Manhattan. —Carly Hagedon