

125th Street: Maintaining Its Hold on the Consumer Amid a Changing Harlem



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Executive Summary

Over the last few decades, 125th Street has undergone considerable transformation and it is becoming increasingly recognized as a successful retailer corridor. This stems from a variety of factors, including an active BID, that all come together to make the street a special place. However, the unique advantage that 125th Street has over similar retail strips is its deep connection to African-American and diaspora cultures.

As 125th Street evolves, culture could be a common denominator between businesses that call the street home. Should culture serve as a unifying narrative, it could be possible to avoid becoming a generic retail corridor.

Through exploring case studies and conducting interviews with local stakeholders, it has been determined that the continued success for 125th Street, and the BID, requires finding the right balance between accepting, and even encouraging change, while also leaning into its status as a cultural corridor.

Executive Summary (Continued)

Therefore, as market forces continue to play out on the corridor, the three elements that are critical for 125th are:

- 1) 125th Street's history needs to be clear, accessible and of critical mass;
- 2) 125th Street has to be a dynamic area and reflective of the culture—it has to be current;
- 3) 125th needs to be marketed so people are universally aware of its status as a cultural corridor.

125th Street is a Successful Retail Corridor Destination



Press coverage tracks **positive developments**

New York holidays

Harlem's renaissance: how art, food and history are shaping its latest evolution

Diana Hubbell

Wed 9 May 2018 01:30 EDT



REAL ESTATE

Harlem's 125th Street Picks Up Momentum

Surge Includes Projects for Retail, Residential and Office Space

By *Keiko Morris*

Dec. 14, 2014 10:18 p.m. ET

News

New York Neighborhood

As Harlem Booms, Its Growth Is Spreading Outward

July 25, 2018 12:00 AM

On the rise in central Harlem

TOM ACITELLI



The number of stores in the 125th Street BID continues to rise

2017-2018:
237 Stores

2016-2017:
217 Stores

2015-2016:
210 Stores

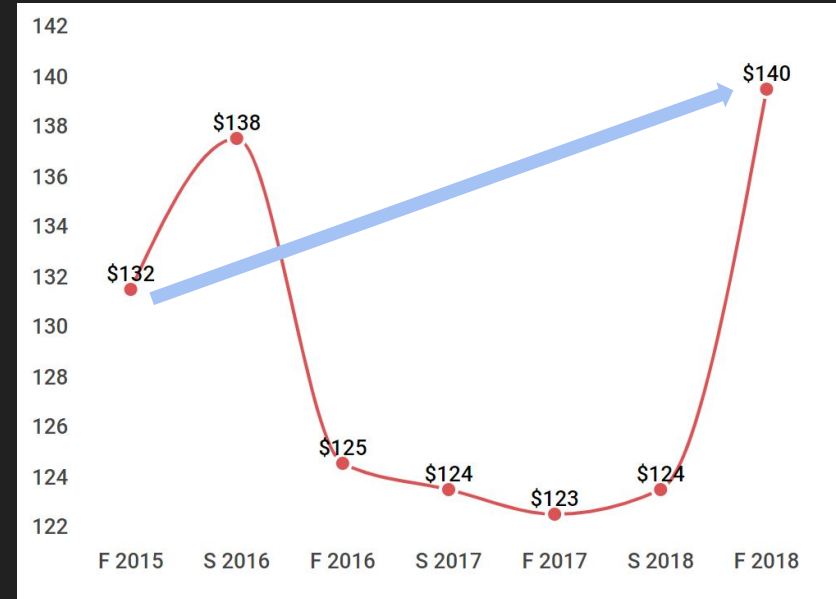


125th Street bucks larger retail rent trends

Change in Fall 2017 through Fall 2018
Average Asking Rent (PSF):

- Bleecker Street down 17%
- Flatiron/Chelsea down 13%
- East 86th Street down 19%
- Midtown East down 24%
- Broadway (72nd-86th Street) up 5%
- **125th Street BID up 14%**

125th St. (5th Ave - Morningside Ave)



Rental Estate Board of New York, 2018

125th Street has become a **highly prized location** to national retailers



What contributed to this *success*?

First Ingredient - Transportation

- **4 bus lines** and **10 subway lines**
- 4/5/6 line on 125 is **in the top 10% of busiest subway stations in NYC**
- **over 25 million people** use the 4 subway stops on 125th street annually

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

New York City's Busiest Subway Stations

Average weekday subway ridership [Related Article](#) »

Q 125 STI

STATION (TRAINS)	BOROUGH	CHANGE FROM 2013	PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM 2013	2014 AVERAGE RIDERSHIP	2013 AVERAGE RIDERSHIP	2011 AVERAGE RIDERSHIP	2010 AVERAGE RIDERSHIP	CLOSED FOR PART OF 2014
125 St (4,5,6)	Manhattan	743	2.53%	30,168	29,425	28,341	27,990	
125 St (A,B,C,D)	Manhattan	1,033	3.77%	28,428	27,395	25,084	24,584	
125 St (2,3)	Manhattan	393	2.56%	15,744	15,351	14,101	13,878	
125 St (1)	Manhattan	82	1.03%	8,077	7,995	7,468	7,243	

SHOWING 1 TO 4 OF 4 ROWS

Note: Some stations were closed for part of the year, thus skewing the percentage change.
Source: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Second Ingredient - High population density and strong buying power

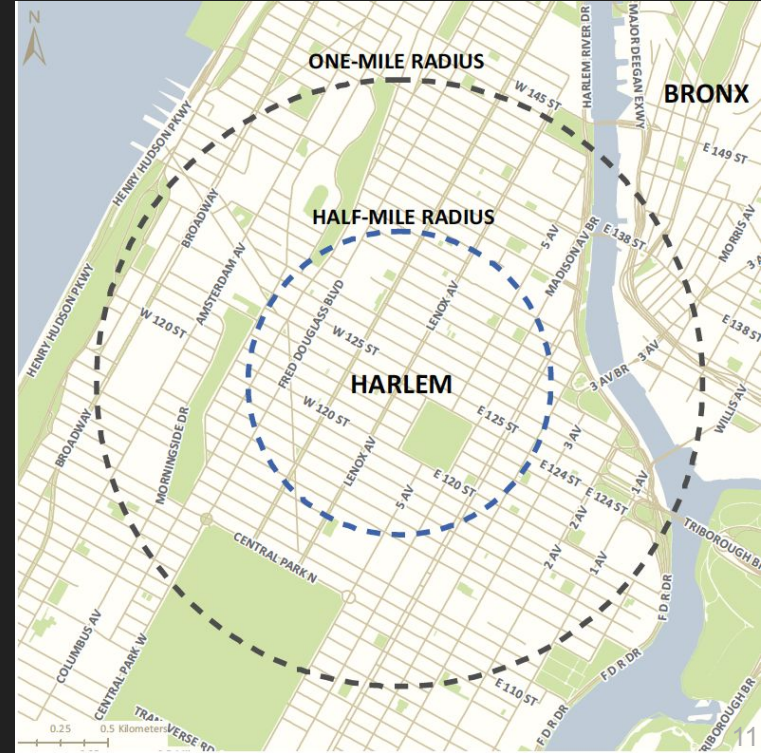
Within Half-Mile Radius

Population of **53,944**
Buying Power **\$2.1 bln.**

Within One-Mile Radius

Population of **220,218**
Buying Power of **\$4.8 bln.**

In Central Harlem South alone...
Income Density (per acre) - **over \$3 bln.**



125th St. has also benefited from an **active and well-managed BID** (since 1993)

Vision: To become a **multi-dimensional destination with a range of uses** including commercial, retail, business, social, residential, educational, civic, hospitality, and religious, with a **strong emphasis on culture and culture-related commerce.**

Programs

- Public Safety & Security Program
- Healthy & Clean Campaign
- Sanitation and Street Maintenance Program
- BID Sponsorship Banner Program
- Harlem Holiday Lights Celebration
- Retail Think Tank
- BID Member Marketing and Promotion Program





**Many New York City retail corridors share
125th Street's core strengths...so what
explains 125th Street's success relative to
its peers?**





Hypothesis: 125th Street's relative success is attributable to its status as the main street of one of America's premier 'cultural corridors' - a status that makes the street more attractive to locals and also attracts consumers from across New York City, around the United States and around the world.

What is a “Cultural Corridor”?

A Cultural Corridor is a place that has historically been identified with a dominant culture and ideally remains a dynamic center of that culture.

Because of that, it attracts people who want to immerse themselves and/or experience that dominant culture from a retail perspective.

As the main street of the traditional "Capital of Black America," 125th Street is a prototypical Cultural Corridor

"[Harlem] is a place of importance that is equal in terms of black history as Paris and Rome are to white history." (*Historian Michael Henry Adams*)

Harlem has remained a focal point for black culture while it has evolved over time

'20s and '30s: Jazz, Harlem Renaissance

'60s: Political Resistance, Civil Rights Movement

'80s and '90s: Harlem Shake, Hip-Hop



Today, 125th Street (and its surrounding environs) remains the focal point of **Diaspora and African-American** cultures



Sylvia's Restaurant



Harlem Fashion Week 2017



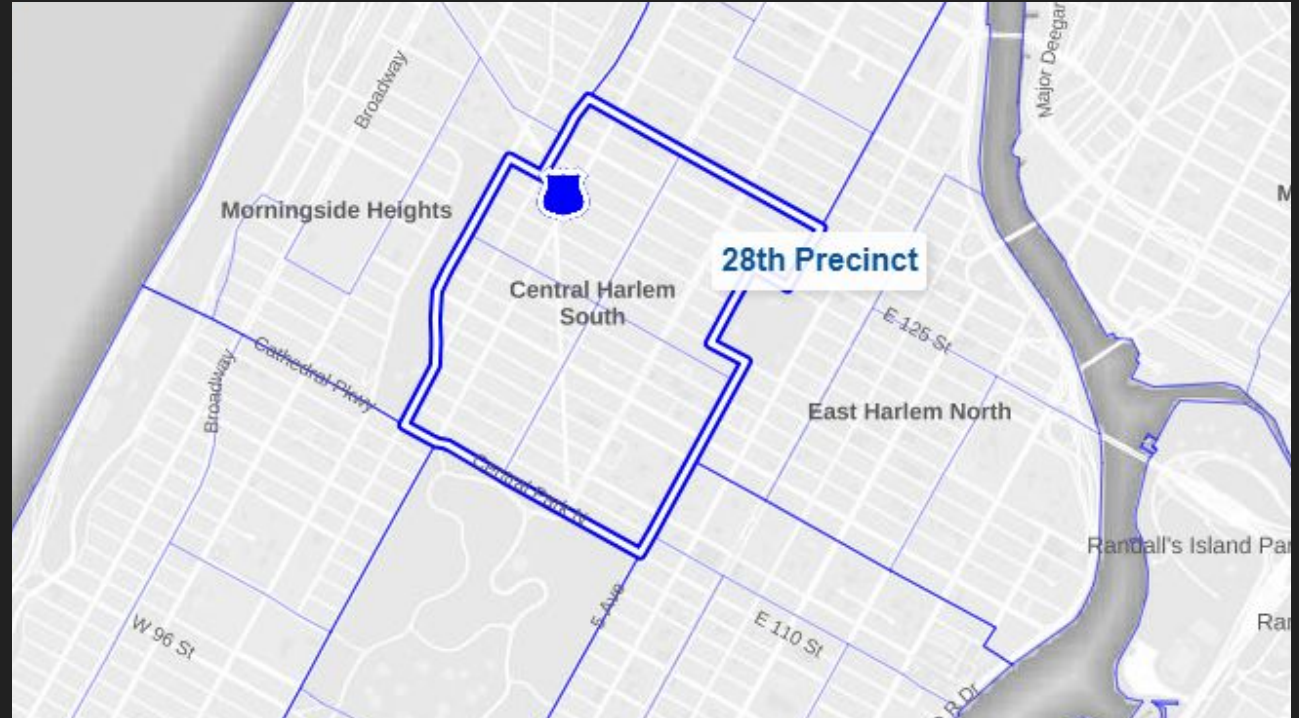
Jimmy Jazz



Though 125th Street and Harlem remain a premier Cultural Corridor, the street and neighborhood have undergone substantial change over the last 20 years

Safety across Central Harlem has markedly improved

Since 1993,
there was a
70.5%
decrease
in crime

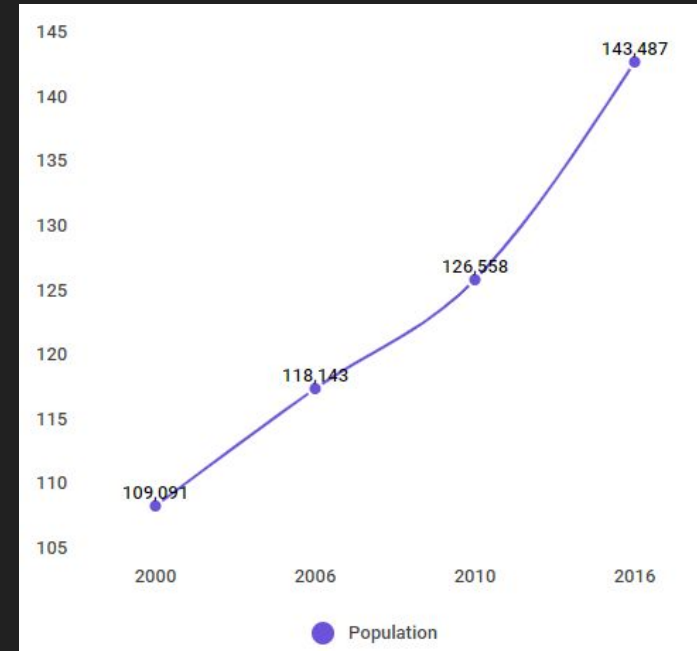


And the neighborhood has experienced explosive population growth

Population **increased by 32%** in Central Harlem since 2000

- Population **aged 65+** **decreased by 8 percentage points**
- **Foreign-born** population **decreased by 7.5 percentage points**

Population - Central



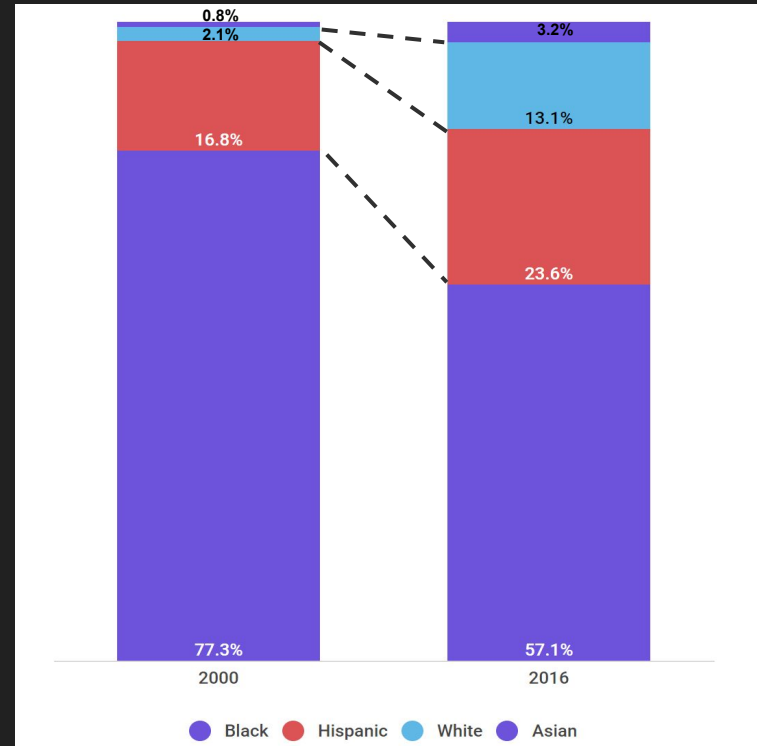
Source: NYU Furman Center, 2017

At the same time, the racial makeup of the neighborhood has begun a **dramatic shift**

Proportion of **White**, **Hispanic** and **Asian** residents **increased**

Proportion of **Black** residents **decreased**

Race & Ethnicity - Central Harlem

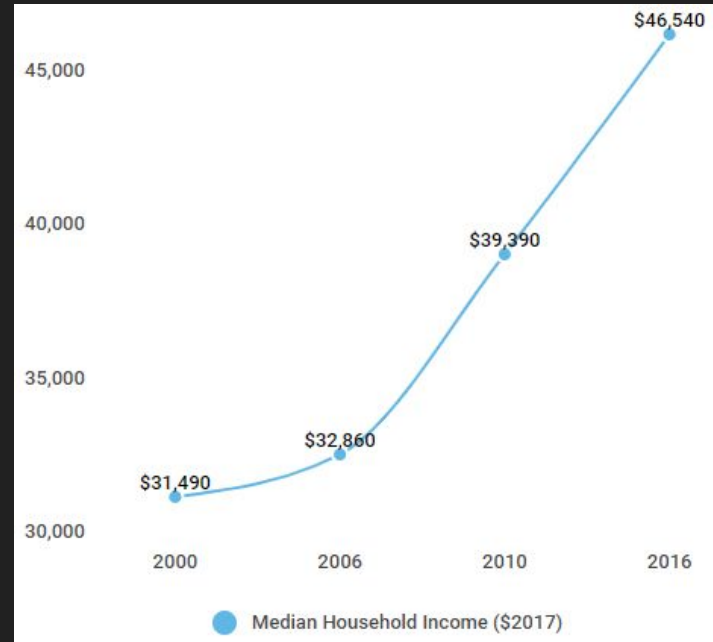


Source: NYU Furman Center, 2017

Along with **significant growth** in median household income

Median household income has **increased by 48%** in Central Harlem since 2000

Median Household Income (\$2017)



Source: NYU Furman Center, 2017

Putting aside the loaded terminology of "gentrification", the changes occurring in and around 125th Street are among the most dramatic in New York City

Classification of Sub-Borough Areas

<i>Sub-Borough Area</i>	<i>Percent Change in Average Rent, 1990 to 2010-2014</i>	<i>Average Household Income in 1990 (\$2015)</i>
New York City	22.1%	\$ 78,500
<i>Gentrifying</i>		
Williamsburg/Greenpoint	78.7%	\$ 53,550
Central Harlem	53.2%	\$ 39,650
Lower East Side/Chinatown	50.3%	\$ 54,350
Bushwick	44.0%	\$ 42,500
East Harlem	40.3%	\$ 47,300
Morningside Heights/Hamilton Heights	36.7%	\$ 61,500
Bedford Stuyvesant	36.1%	\$ 46,150
North Crown Heights/Prospect Heights	29.9%	\$ 56,600
Washington Heights/Inwood	29.3%	\$ 55,650
Mott Haven/Hunts Point	28.0%	\$ 32,250

Source: NYU Furman Center, 2015

The City and State have invested heavily in local amenities and institutions



Harlem Studio Museum



Apollo Theatre

These changes and changes in zoning have attracted significant private investment, including from institutional owners



***Columbia University
Jerome L. Greene Science Center***

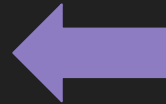


AMC Magic Johnson Theatres



How have these changes impacted 125th Street?

In many ways, 125th Street is a stronger retail corridor than it has been in many decades



However, as the corridor has strengthened, it and the surrounding neighborhood have witnessed the loss of some of the key indicia that marked the area as a Cultural Corridor

The key question for the continued success of 125th Street and the BID is how to **accept and even encourage change**, while also maintaining its status as a cultural corridor

Harlem's 125th Street Is Going "to Look Like 34th Street" Next Year. Is That a Good Thing?

BY REBECCA BAIRD-REMBBA APRIL 12, 2017 12:11 PM

REPRINTS



Our Steps to Answer This Question

1. Case studies

- Lower East Side, NYC
- Brixton, London
- Mission District, SF

2. Interviews

- Patrons
- Businesses
- Community Leaders

Case study: Lower East Side, NYC

Is it historically comparable to Harlem?

- **Dominant ethnic group: Jewish**
Jews were the dominant sub-culture among the area's Eastern Europeans (around 400,000 people)
- **Socio-economic group:** lower-class immigrants
- **Culture & politics:** Capital of Jewish America represented by kosher style" delis, shops, theatres, music, synagogues, yeshiva day schools, unions

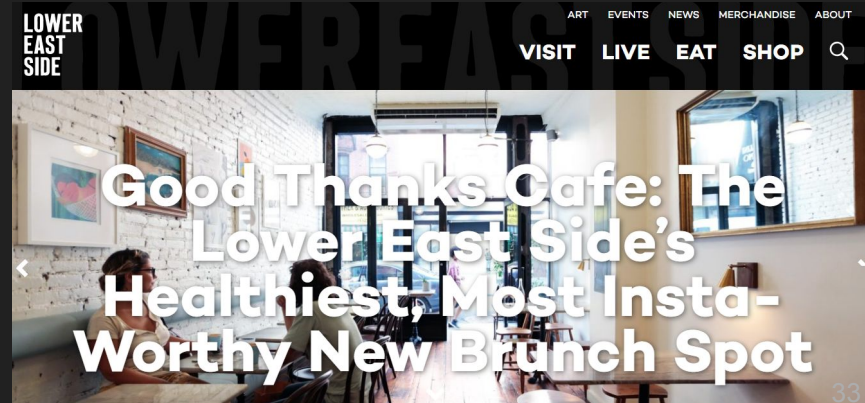


Case study: Lower East Side, NYC

What was the challenge it faced?

Changes in the neighborhood

- **Dominant group left LES:**
 - after World War II: influx of African Americans and Puerto Ricans
 - by the 1960s: many Jewish and eastern European groups left the neighborhood
 - by the 1980s: middle-class residents coming to the area - students, artists
- **Creation of Lower East Side BID** (now - Partnership) in 1993
- **Surge of retailers with no particular identity** and catering to higher class of residents
- **New developments in the area** - average rent increased by over 50% since 1990



Case study: Lower East Side, NYC

How would we evaluate it today? A success or a failure?

Limited success:

There are a few remnants of the past (some stores, museums, restaurants, etc) **BUT**

a) they are few and far between

b) LES is not an active center of Jewish culture anymore (a great neighborhood, but not a cultural corridor)

In 2008, The National Trust for Historic Preservation placed the LES on their list of America's Most Endangered Historic Places

Lesson learned:

To remain a cultural corridor, it is important to **preserve a critical mass of history and link it together;** and maintain **cultural dynamism**

Case study: Brixton District, London

Is it historically comparable to Harlem?

- **Dominant ethnic group:**
Afro-Caribbeans
Since the 1950s- Brixton became the Capital of Afro-Caribbeans in Britain, known as “Little Jamaica”
- **Socio-economic group:** lower-class immigrants and natives
- **Culture and politics:**
 - Center of the British Black Panther movement (BBP) between 1968 - 1973
 - Home to the Black Cultural Archives since 1981
 - Home to the famous “Brixton Market”



Case study: Brixton District, London

What was the challenge it faced?

Changes in the neighborhood

- **Demographic evolution:**
 - Before 2000s: Whites and Afro-Caribbeans
 - After 2000s: Influx of Asians and South Asian residents with high purchasing power due to cheap housing and proximity to the London city center
- **New developments in the area** - average property purchase prices increased by 76%
- **Increase in new shopping and entertainment venues.**
- **Local businesses closing down** due to increased competition & rental prices.
- **Displacement of local residents** who are priced-out, to other London districts with cheaper rent options



Case study: Brixton District, London

How would we evaluate it today? A success or a failure?

Success:

Thanks to the presence of initiatives such as the Brixton Business Improvement District (BID) and Brixton Economic Action Plan which seek to:

- a) Keep the history of the Afro-Caribbean culture with museums, churches and historic buildings being preserved
- b) Maintain the cultural dynamism of the area by promoting events such as fashion shows, food street markets, historic exhibitions

Lessons learned:

To preserve Brixton as a cultural corridor, a series of measures have been put in place to ensure 'inclusive growth', including:

- a) Support Brixton's Businesses
- b) Link Residents to Opportunity
- c) Recognize and Nurture Social Value
- d) Enhance the Local Environment and Improve Infrastructure

Case study: Mission District, San Francisco

Is it historically comparable to Harlem?

- **Dominant ethnic group:** Chicano/Latino

1980s & 1990s saw an influx of migrants from Central and South America and with that, Central American banks/business that would set up headquarters and outposts

- **Socio-economic group:**
medium-medium/low class

- **Culture & politics:** large Chicano/Latino population, sprawling arts scene
The Mission remains the cultural nexus and epicenter of San Francisco's Mexican/Chican@, and to a lesser extent, the Bay Area's Nicaraguan, Salvadoran and Guatemalan communities

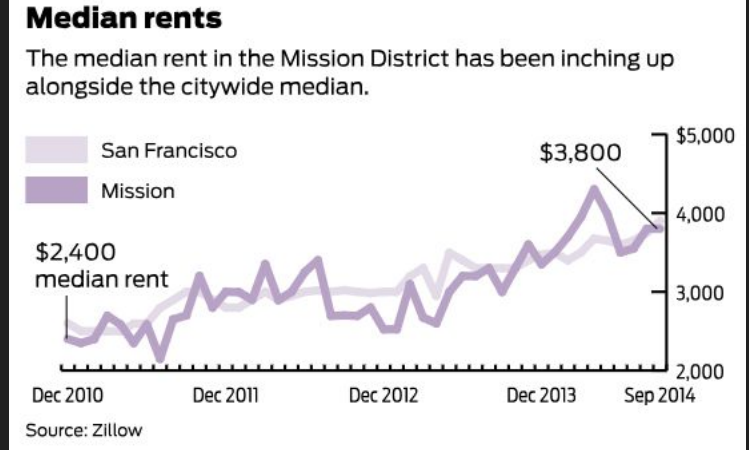


Case study: Mission District, San Francisco

What was the challenge it faced?

Changes in the neighborhood

- Like NY, SF has a **challenge with affordability**.
- San Francisco **tech boom is reshaping the neighborhood**
- **New residents are moving into neighborhoods** they wouldn't have traditionally and are attracted to neighborhoods with character.
- Businesses that serve the new population are pushing the incumbent businesses out.
- Like Harlem, there is still **a critical mass of the incumbent population but they are facing pressures**



Case study: Mission District, San Francisco

How would we evaluate it today? A success or a failure?

Too Soon To Tell:

- Efforts have been made to maintain it as a cultural corridor - Calle 24 is now a Latino Cultural District. However, businesses are still at risk of displacement

Lesson learned:

To remain a cultural corridor, it is important to **preserve a critical mass of locally-owned and culturally-focused businesses, and include the current residents and business owners in future planning for the neighborhood.** The intent is not to stop progress but to ensure that the progress does not steamroll the cultural corridor.



Lessons Learned from Case Studies

1. 125th Street's **history** needs to be **clear, accessible and of critical mass.**
2. 125th Street **has to be a dynamic area** and reflective of the culture; it has to **be current.**
3. 125th needs to be **marketed so people are aware of it.**

2. Interviews

- **Patrons**
- **Businesses**
- **Community Leaders**

Lessons Learned are Consistent to What the Community Says

50+ hours

- Interviews with business owners/retail workers, patrons and community members
- Walkthroughs



People come to 125th Street because it is an important Cultural Corridor

Visitors to 125th Street say:

- “I love everything about 125th street. I appreciate the historical community and I think that what the street offers is convenient, particularly because I live in the area and grew up here ”
- “ 125th Street is the cultural corridor of Harlem”
- “ Harlem is the Mecca to the World”
- “We came to Harlem because it’s famous and iconic. We want to find a place where we can listen to Gospel music”




The importance of 125th Street's status as a **Cultural Corridor** is recognized by retailers

125th Street retailers and property owners say:

- “History keeps things successful” (*Atmos*)
- “Harlem is the mecca, it’s where everything happens, but business is also community-driven” (*Footaction*)
- “People come for the history and legacy of 125th Street and realize they can shop as well. Therefore, they end up doing two things at once.” (*Jimmy Jazz*)
- “125th Street’s strong ties to Black culture will keep it relevant if it can be harnessed.” (Mukaram Taheraley - BID Chair)
- “[Harlem] has always been historically considered the center of Black culture of America, and has always been an important, major commercial thoroughfare; a concept which didn’t exist” (Drew Greenwald - Harlem USA)

How can 125th St. maintains its unique status as the main street of one of America's most important cultural corridors and thereby retain its competitive advantage as a prime retail destination?

Recommendations Categories

1. Preserving the 125th St. Area's History and Making it Accessible to Users 
2. Ensuring the Continued Cultural Dynamism of 125th St. 
3. Marketing and Communicating 125th St. as the Main Street of a Strong and Vibrant Cultural Corridor 

To Consider Across the Board

Different approaches can be considered for implementation of recommendations given limited resources:

- Future capstone groups.
- Interns or new personnel.
- Competitions and request for proposals to find partners.
- Full delegation of activities to third parties.

PRESERVE HISTORY THROUGH EXHIBITS



Why:

Given there is a demand to learn about Harlem's history from people who come to 125th Street, ensuring this history is accessible in existing and/or planned museums is important.

Who:

Led by the BID or others to seek existing and/or planned museum partners to develop a plan. BID could then advertise this space on their website and other platforms.

What:

Work with existing and/or planned museums to ensure there is a space that highlights and explains important aspects of Harlem's history, and 125th Street in it.

Where:

Examples of potential spaces include:

- **Studio Museum** (under reconstruction) currently features artists of African descent and work inspired by black culture.
- **Museum of the Urban Civil Rights Experience** in the Urban League headquarters is in development.

PRESERVE HISTORY THROUGH A STAND-ALONE MUSEUM



Why:

Given people come to 125th Street to learn about Harlem and 125th Street history, ensuring there is a museum devoted to it is a way to address this demand.

Who:

Led by the BID and/or others to seek to find a space and lead the process of choosing cultural partners.

Examples of museum partners could include:

- Museum of the City of New York
- Studio Museum
- National Museum of African American History and Culture (D.C.)
- MoCADA

What:

Create a pilot involving a space with rotating exhibits curated by existing museums or scholars to explore if there is a demand for a permanent museum.

For example, a two-year pilot with four 6-month curated exhibits.

Where:

Potential locations could include:

- **Spaces in public institutions** (ex. George Bruce NY Public Library, State Office Building, Mart 125)
- **Vacant store spaces**

PROMOTE EVENTS & CONFERENCES ON 125TH STREET



Why:

Given people come to 125th Street to learn about Harlem and 125th Street history, ensuring events and conferences highlighting the importance of this area are happening on and around the 125th Street is a way to address this demand.

What:

Work to encourage organizations that host events highlighting important historical and cultural movements in Harlem to have all or a portion of their events and conferences take place on 125th Street.

Who:

Led by the BID and/or others to (1) find organizations that host and/or sponsor events related to Harlem, (2) identify spaces where these events can take place on 125th Street, (3) and match the two.

Potential content partners could include:

- Schomburg Center
- Columbia Institute for Research in African-American Studies

Where:

Examples of spaces to host events in could include:

- Columbia's "The Forum" space (Manhattanville campus)
- George Bruce NYPL space
- State Office Building space
- Harlem Children's Zone space (for kids events)

PRESERVE HISTORY THROUGH HISTORICAL PLAQUES



Why:

Interviewees frequently cited Harlem's history as a draw, but there is no easily accessible history information along the corridor. The BID should help produce accessible historic markers on 125th Street that visitors will study, inducing them to linger.

Who:

Led by the BID in collaboration with:

- Building owners devoting space
- Historians (Michael Henry Adams, etc.) to develop content

What:

Develop historical plaques at relevant sites with QR codes linking to more information online. These could be integrated into an app walking tour.

For example, the BID can pilot with around 10 plaques and measure how many people scan the QR code to then roll out the program more extensively.

Where:

The plaques would be placed in strategic locations based on historical events and places of cultural significance. Physically, the locations could include:

- Building facades
- Open spaces

PRESERVE HISTORY THROUGH WALKING TOUR APP



Why:

Tourists come to 125th Street to experience its history, but do not know how to find it. The BID will increase visitor stickiness if they are walking around the corridor at the direction of an app.

Who:

Led by BID in collaboration with historians for curating content. Platforms to host the content could include:

- Free apps that contain databases of walking tours to which the BID could add its own: Echoes, PocketGuide, BaladoDiscovery, Walking Tour by Livesgood, Sidewalk
- Travel sites such as TripAdvisor and Free Tours by Foot
- The existing 125th Street mobile app

What:

Establish a formal partnership between the BID and an existing walking tour app company to add multiple Harlem-focused walking tours. Tours would be integrated with the historical plaques.

For example, the BID can pilot with two tours, culture and civil rights, then expand to other themes.

Where:

Apollo Theater and other prominent places on 125th Street will display QR codes directing people to the app. Advertisement for the app can also be included on banners and other assets that are branded by the BID.

ADD 125TH STREET TO NATIONAL REGISTER



Why:

Adding a street to the National Park Service (NPS) Register of Historic Places generates publicity and opens up grant opportunities without any capital investment. Unlike New York City's landmark laws, appearance on the Register involves no regulations on alterations.

What:

Lobby NPS to add 125th Street to National Register of Historic Places. The traditional process is to make a request to the New York State Historic Preservation Office National Register Unit, which then petitions NPS.

Who:

Led by BID in collaboration with local elected officials.

- The state has a dedicated official to handle requests
- NPS, which ultimately makes the decision
- Local electeds can help lobby at the state and national level

Where:

Designation should apply to the entirety of 125th Street, to recognize multiple cultures' heritage, preventing the campaign from snowballing into stakeholders wanting more areas added to the Register to recognize other ethnic histories, which could undermine the effort.

INJECT LOCAL CULTURE INTO CURRENT BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS



Why:

To create a sense of cultural authenticity along 125th street and to uplift current businesses and makers who are preserving the dynamic culture people associate with Harlem, and encourage others to join in.

What:

Create an “Authentically Harlem” seal for businesses to display on their window indicating that X% (e.g. 10%) of their merchandise or music is representative of the neighborhood. Could also have an annual award ceremony to celebrate cultural innovation in business

Who:

Led by the BID in partnership with makers and businesses such as Atmos Shoes and Harlem Makers Collective participants.

Where:

All businesses along 125th street are eligible to participate.

FOSTER CULTURAL ESTABLISHMENTS: POP-UP SHOPS



Why:

In addition to national retailers, people are looking for things that they can't find anywhere else. Despite lower vacancies than in other retail corridors, there are still empty places that can be filled by pop-up shops which would keep alive the historical mark and maintain the cultural dynamism of Harlem's black identity.

What:

Create culturally relevant establishments such as arts, music and ethnic cuisine pop-up shops to enable aspiring local artists and entrepreneurs to showcase their work and talent.

For example, a program can be created through which BID owners that have a vacant space could work with a vetted group of vendors that curate spaces for pop-up stores or exhibition space for arts and goods that are made in Harlem by local residents.

Who:

Led by the BID , collaborating potentially with:

- Implementers: Harlem Makers Collective
- Partners: Businesses and restaurants along 125th Street; Record Labels; Property Owners

Where:

BID owners as well as private property owners along 125th Street who have vacant spaces for rental.

ORGANIZE A FESTIVAL AND COMPETITION OF LOCAL FILMS



Why:

Visual storytelling is a popular method of communication and advertisement. Furthermore, it is part of the creative industry that the BID is promoting.

What:

Organize a festival and competition of local films where members of the community are invited to submit 10-min films following a specific theme which the BID can decide on. In order to keep it accessible by everyone, the competition can have certain guidelines such as to only shoot using a smartphone. These would then be shown at a film festival.

For example, the theme can include: “What does Harlem mean to me?”; “Harlem-grown”.

Who:

This can be led by organizations at local schools and other cultural institutions. Examples could include:

- Film Society and Picker Center at SIPA
- The Columbia Film School
- The Apollo Theater
- Design Exchange organization or other NGOs that work on visual storytelling

Where:

The viewing of the films can be organized at Columbia University’s Miller Theater or other venues followed up by discussion about the significance of 125th Street. The festival can also rotate at different locations in New York such as the Lincoln Film Society. The videos should also be prominently displayed on YouTube.

COMMISSION AN ADVERTISING VIDEO OF HARLEM AND 125TH STREET



Why:

A new video promoting Harlem and 125th Street shot with new technology, sends the message that Harlem is still vibrant and will attract more people to 125th Street. There are older videos on YouTube with a similar purpose that need to be replaced.

What:

A promotional video of Harlem and 125th Street, including aerial shots, displays of arts and culture, the many businesses on 125th Street, and interviews with local people

Who:

Commissioned by the BID and executed by a capstone project or in partnership with NGOs such as Design Exchange. It can also be turned into a competition where members of the community submit videos.

Where:

Shot all over Harlem and 125th Street and shown at a special event organized by the BID. The video should also be available on the BID's website and across all social media platforms.

CREATE A 125TH STREET LOYALTY PROGRAM



Why:

People enjoy discounts and it encourages them to visit the stores on 125th Street. Furthermore, participating in a game-type of activity is another element that the BID can promote for tourism purposes and that makes people have a experience other than shopping.

Who:

Implemented by the BID and in partnership with businesses. Stores along 125th Street will offer discounts and these will be provided by the BID upon proof that people have done specific actions.

What:

Offer discounts at different stores on specific days or as a result of actions that show engagement with assets and people on 125th Street. This can be built into a loyalty program for people who continue to accomplish actions to make them feel invested in the community.

For example, People can take a picture in the State building plaza while jumping, doing the Harlem shake dance, and trying on specific type of clothes at local stores. It can also include taking the proposed walking tour.

Where:

The BID will be providing discount codes that will be redeemable at different participating stores. The challenge and loyalty program should be advertised on social media and on the BID's web and mobile application. Furthermore, businesses should be encouraged to promote the program in their stores.

INFUSING BUSINESSES ON 125TH ST. WITH ART



Why:

Many businesses along 125th street do not visibly reflect the prevailing culture. This makes it harder for shoppers to feel like they are on a cultural corridor.

What:

Establish a competition for local student/professional artists that could give them the chance to create murals on the walls within stores (or hang them) that highlight elements of Harlem's culture.

Who:

The competition could be managed by an institution focused on the arts such as:

- Harlem Arts Alliance,
- Columbia's School for the Arts
- City College of NY Art Department

There can be collaboration with other community-based organizations.

Where:

All stores could be considered, but could particularly consider businesses that visitors may not easily identify with the Harlem culture

CREATE ART GATES ON 125TH STREET



Why:

There are few events that attract tourists to 125th Street at night. The security gates at night also give off a forbidding appearance.

What:

Establish a competition to design murals on the gates of select small businesses that highlight elements of Harlem's culture in a thought-provoking way.

Who:

The competition could be managed by an institution focused on the arts such as:

- Harlem Arts Alliance,
- Columbia's School for the Arts
- City College of NY Art Department

There can be collaboration with other community-based organizations.

Where:

Locations could be prioritized based on their proximity to existing nightlife on 125th street and/or areas that the BID would like to target as new centers for nightlife.

ORGANIZE LIGHT SHOWS ON 125TH STREET



Why:

There are few events that attract tourists to 125th Street at night and light shows usually don't require changes to the physical space and thus is easier to implement.

What:

Establish a competition, which will create a projection light show that can be displayed on the facade of a building or and/or multiple buildings, with the show embodying the culture of 125th Street.

For example, this show could occur on on a regularly scheduled, periodic basis, similar to Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall 3-D light show.

Who:

The competition could be managed by an organization that focuses on light art, such as Parsons, but done in collaboration with local partners that prioritize community voices.

Where:

Locations could be prioritized based on their proximity to existing nightlife on 125th street and/or areas that the BID would like to target as new centers for nightlife.

CONDUCT MARKET RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION



Why:

Having more robust data and on-going market research could improve the BID's ability to inform strategy and decision-making.

What:

Collect qualitative and quantitative data on an annual basis to rigorously segment customers/visitors along 125th Street, and contextualize the corridor within a broader retail landscape, to better inform marketing strategies.

Who:

The BID could potentially partner with a local market research firm or business graduate schools including

- CUNY Baruch
- Fordham
- Columbia
- NYU

Where:

This could occur along 125th Street, but the research teams could consider general consumer trends outside of the BID-area as well.

ENHANCE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY



Why:

Social media has become a major source of information, including where to shop and where to visit. However, there are ways in which the BID's use of social media can be improved upon.

For example, the BID has many existing platforms on social media, including duplicate accounts on Instagram, but more can be done to ensure consistent content and clearly show what each platform is trying to accomplish.

What:

Audit of the content of each existing social media platform handled by the BID, including amount of content created and assessment of popular content. The next step is to come up with a plan to maximize the effectiveness of social media moving forward.

For example, Facebook can be used strictly for event promotion, the two Instagram accounts can be consolidated, and tweets can come out at least once per day. The YouTube channel can also be revisited to ensure a clear narrative and efficient categorization of videos. The Harlem Happs app does not have reviews on the apple store, thus, through social media, people can be encouraged to review it to attract other users.

Who:

Led by BID staff with support from future capstone teams or collaboration with tech company initiatives. Examples could include:

- Silicon Harlem
- Grow with Google

Where:

The most popular social media platforms should be targeted which include:

- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Facebook

ALLOCATE MORE TIME TO SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT



Why:

Efforts to revamp social media used by the BID could require someone who dedicates significant time to communications and marketing given the number of existing social media platforms and demand from BID members for increased marketing support. This was reflected in the survey responses from business leaders and store managers.

What:

Delegation of social media management responsibilities to a particular individual and allocation of more time to keep accounts updated and interact with users online to send the message that the BID is active and responsive to what happens on 125th Street.

For example, potential personnel could include hires from outside the BID, existing staff that allocates more time to social media, or an intern with interest in taken ownership of social media and contribute to the ongoing promotion of 125th Street. The Hootsuite tool can be used for managing the multiple platforms.

Who:

The BID will be in charge of finding the right person to allocate more time to social media management.

Where:

The selected person needs to work at the BID offices to ensure quick feedback on efforts and leverage proximity to 125th Street to identify events, people and assets that should be promoted for drawing people to the area.

CREATE A DEDICATED HASHTAG (#)



Why:

Hashtags (#) are a popular way to categorize and label places and experiences. By having a dedicated hashtag, 125th Street can have free advertisements by whomever uses the hashtag and it should be tied to any existing messages that the BID is promoting.

Who:

A competition led by the BID and with the participation of people from the community. Hashtags are submitted and voting is online. This can be done on a social platform and determined by number of “likes” received. The BID can also choose the hashtag internally to push for culture.

What:

Come up with a hashtag (#) that is representative of the location, cultural vibrancy, and that is marketable. It's preferred to use any existing hashtags that the BID may be already advertising. The chosen hashtag will be displayed across all social platforms as well as the BID website and the mobile application.

For example, proposed hashtags could be:
#AllYouNeedIs125 #MadeAt125 #125Harlem
#Harlem125.

Where:

In addition to the online platforms, the hashtag should also be included on any murals, posters, and material produced by or promoted by the BID. Local businesses should also feature the hashtag inside their store.

CONDUCT TRAINING ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Why:

Some BID members are more tech savvy than others. The use of tech platforms makes online promotion more effective and makes it more difficult for those who do not use it to compete with online retail. Therefore, all BID members would benefit from increased knowledge on social media usage.

What:

Conduct workshops periodically to teach businesses how to leverage social media to attract people to their stores and contribute to larger efforts to make 125th Street “stickier.”

For example, this can be done once every six months for more comprehensive trainings and once every three months for shorter lessons. The BID can also have a repository of resources such as digital marketing firms and other trainings that members can access.

Who:

Led by the BID with participation of BID members. Collaboration could include:

- Local schools
- Vocational training institutions
- Grow with Google
- Silicon Harlem

Where:

The training needs to be conducted in a physical space with AV capabilities.

Trainings could be held in various locations depending on the number of participants including:

- WeWork offices
- Classrooms of nearby public schools or colleges

BECOME PROACTIVE ON REVIEW ENGINES



Why:

People are increasingly referring to review sites such as Yelp, TripAdvisor, Foursquare and Google Reviews to help them make their decisions on where to shop, where to eat, and where to visit. The BID can help make sure that retailers and institutions along 125th Street are prominently displayed and active online.

What:

Leverage review engines to increase reviews of businesses on 125th Street which is free advertisement as well as a feedback mechanism to address any complaints and build on strengths.

For example, stores should be encouraged to ask people who visit their business to review them online, upon check out and through in-store messaging. There can also be a competition on most improved ratings among businesses along 125th Street.

Who:

Led by the BID with participation of BID members. Collaboration could include:

- Grow with Google
- Silicon Harlem
- Review engines themselves

Where:

List of popular review websites that should be targeted:

- Yelp
- Foursquare
- TripAdvisor
- Facebook
- Google Reviews

CONCLUSION

Presentation Summary

What makes 125th Street special over similar retail strips is its deep connection to African-American and diaspora cultures.

Through case studies and interviews with local stakeholders, it has been determined that the continued success for 125th Street, and the BID, requires finding the right balance between accepting, and even encouraging change, while also leaning into its status as a cultural corridor. The recommendations all fall under the following premises:

- 1) 125th Street's history needs to be clear, accessible and of critical mass;
- 2) 125th Street has to be a dynamic area and reflective of the culture—it has to be current;
- 3) 125th needs to be marketed so people are well aware of its status as a cultural corridor.

Presentation Summary (Continued)

Specific recommendations include featuring exhibits and historical plaques to commemorate Harlem's history, injecting culture into establishments through locally-made goods and local music, utilizing vacant spaces for pop-up shops, infusing arts on the streetscape, and finally, an active and innovative marketing and communications campaign.

125th Street and the surrounding community have the opportunity to embrace the changes and leverage its stronghold as a retail destination, while also remaining a main cultural corridor that attracts locals and people from around the world.

Summary of Proposals

- Preserve History Through Exhibits
- Preserve History Through a Stand-alone Museum
- Promote Events & Conferences on 125th Street
- Preserve History through Historical Plaques
- Preserve History Through Walking-tour App
- Add 125th Street to National Register
- Inject Local Culture Into Current Businesses
- Foster Cultural Establishment: Pop-up Shops
- Organize A Festival and Competition of Local Films
- Commission an Advertising Video of Harlem and 125th Street
- Create A 125th Street Loyalty Program
- Infusing Businesses on 125th Street with Art.
- Create Art Gates on 125th Street
- Allocate More Time to Social Media Management
- Create a Dedicated Hashtag
- Conduct Training on Social Media
- Become Proactive on Review Engines
- Organize Light Shows on 125th Street
- Conduct Market Research and Data Collection

This is NOT about creating Ye Olde Harlem or a Theme Park version of 125th Street – it is about **accepting and embracing change**, while also **keeping 125th Street “special”!**