

RENAISSANCE

Architecture and Placemaking in Central Harlem

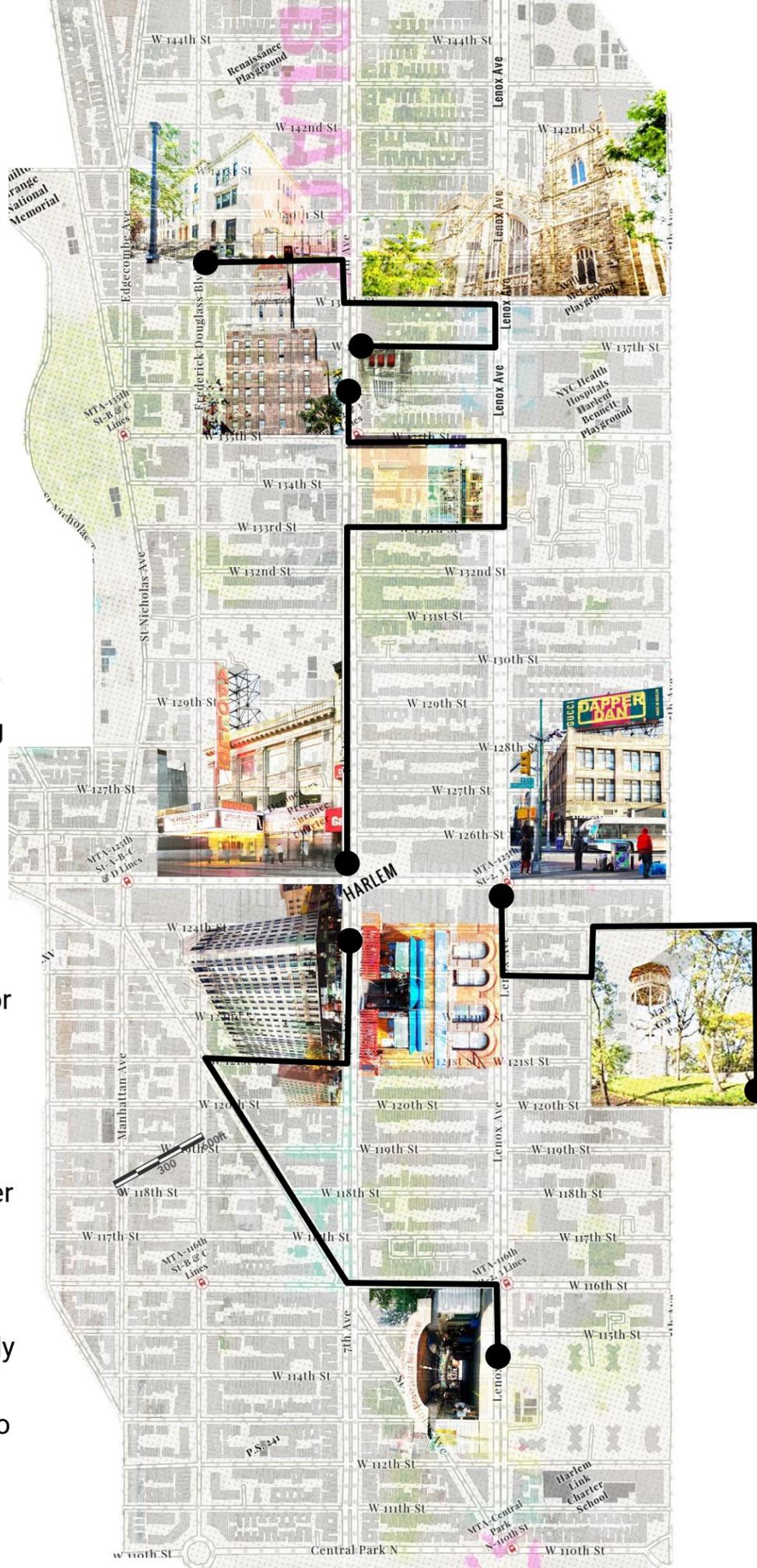
It is true the formidable centers of our race life, educational, industrial, financial, are not in Harlem, yet here, nevertheless are the forces that make a group known and felt in the world. —Alain Locke, “Harlem” 1925

We intend to study the landmarks in Harlem to understand the triumphs and challenges of Black placemaking in America.

The backdrop to this proposal is the national story of inequality, both past and present. Harlem’s transformation into the Mecca of Black culture that we recognize today was enabled by failed white speculation and shrewd business by Black figures such as Philip Payton Junior. The Harlem Renaissance blossomed out of the neighborhood’s Black and African identity, enabling Black artists and thinkers to flourish in the 1920s and beyond. Yet, the cyclical forces of speculation, rezoning and rising land values undermine this flourishing and threaten to uproot Harlem’s poorer and mostly Black population, while landmark designations seek to preserve significant portions of the neighborhood.

Our proposal is a week-long series of walks through Harlem. We will focus on a selection of buildings to understand the (often adverse) conditions out of which they emerged into iconic Black institutions. For each walk, we will employ on-site sketching, research, and discussion to document and illuminate the stories of these buildings. The buildings are grouped according to three interconnected themes: religion, culture, and people. We anticipate these buildings and their stories will not only catalyze further research but illuminate the broader narrative of race in America.

RAMSA has a lot to learn from Harlem in considering Black placemaking and tradition. We hope to familiarize the firm with not only Harlem’s notable buildings, but the complex conditions that have rendered Harlem an iconic nexus for Black America. Finally, we hope to position Harlem’s current challenges as a case-study of the role that the built environment plays in our nation’s reckoning with inequality.



Religion

1. Abyssinian Baptist: Charles W. Bolton & Son, 1923
2. St Philip's Episcopal: Tandy & Foster, 1911
3. Mother AME Zion: George Foster Jr, 1925
4. Greater Refuge Temple: Costas Machlouzarides, 1968
5. Majid Malcolm Shabazz Mosque: Sabbath Brown, 1965

Culture

6. Paris Blues: Owned by the late Samuel Hargress Jr.
7. Apollo Theater: George Keister, 1914
8. Studio Museum: David Adjaye, 2021
9. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: Charles McKim, 1905; Marble Fairbanks, 2017
10. Showman's Jazz Club

People

11. Hotel Theresa: George & Edward Blum, 1913
12. Dapper Dan Gucci Atelier: owned by Dapper Dan
13. Strivers Row: James Brown Lord; Bruce Price and Clarence Luce; Stanford White, 1893
14. Harlem YMCA: James C. Mackenzie Jr, 1932
15. Marcus Garvey Park: Built 1840, renamed 1973

Bibliography

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- f. *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 2019