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## +FIND IT

**EAST HARLEM's** boundaries run from East 96th Street to East 142nd Street, and Fifth Avenue to the East River.



The neighborhood's Graffiti Wall of Fame was the first legal wall for graffiti artists to show their skills.

(PHOTOS: LUC BASSOMPIERRE)

## East Harlem: A slice of 'real' NYC

Diverse nabe seeks to balance old and new

BY LEVI GIBIAN FISHMAN  
Special to amNewYork

East Harlem has gone by many monikers: Jewish Harlem, Italian Harlem, Spanish Harlem, La Cuna ("the crib") and El Barrio ("the neighborhood").

Each new ethnic group brought its own food, language and heritage.

"There are levels and layers to our culture," said Marina Ortiz, a longtime resident and executive director of the nonprofit East Harlem Preservation. "You can't put East Harlem in a box."

As a neighborhood of immigrants, East Harlem was for a long time made up of



A musician drums outside a deli on 108th Street and Lexington Avenue.

working-class families who enjoyed the area's affordable housing and familiar ethnic flavor.

A history of violence led to urban decay and flight, and now both the city and private organizations are

developing empty lots and abandoned buildings into large-scale apartments and retail space.

The challenge is finding a balance between the old and new while safeguarding the neighborhood's roots.

### Did you know?

A dog is buried under the sidewalk in front of the Engine 35, Ladder 14 fire station on 124th Street and Third Avenue. The spot is the final resting place of the firehouse's beloved pet dog, marked by a metal nameplate on the sidewalk that reads "Otto."

"New York City is supposed to be a melting pot," Ortiz said.

"But people don't always long to get rid of their culture and history."

Gloria Dawson moved into the neighborhood two years ago and soon began a blog called East Harlem NYC.

"The area feels real," she said. "It's the sort of area that I always imagined living in when I thought about living in New York City."



Relax at East Harlem Café.

### Real estate

From full-amenity luxury apartments to traditional brownstones, East Harlem offers a full price range for both renters and buyers.

### To rent

**\$1,400**

A newly renovated one-bedroom on 110th Street and Third Avenue

Contact: Kevin Geloso at kevin@kgpropertiesny.com

**\$1,700**

A 750-square-foot two-bedroom on 105th Street between First and Second avenues

Contact: Dina Sussilleaux at dina.sussilleaux@corcoran.com

**\$2,195**

A two-bedroom with private terrace on 114th Street and Pleasant Avenue

Contact: Christine Martiani at cmartiani@ccrny.com

### To buy

**\$649,000**

A 1,100-square-foot condo with one bed and 1½ baths on 117th Street between First and Pleasant Avenues

Contact: Brian Armstead at brian.armstead@corcoran.com

**\$740,000**

A two-bed, two-bath condo in a doorman building on 104th Street between First and Second avenues

Contact: Brian Armstead at brian.armstead@corcoran.com

**\$699,900**

Pre-war brick townhouse with three living levels and private rear patio on Sylvan Court, off 121st Street between Lexington and Third avenues

Contact: Maryann Regal at maryann@barakny.com

**YOU MUST:** Explore 116th Street from Fifth Avenue to Pleasant Avenue. The street has everything: Bikram Yoga, a hookah bar at The Kiosk, at least a dozen Mexican restaurants, a renowned cuchifritos stand and live music at Orbit and Camaradas.

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## TO EAT

East Harlem might be known for its Latin American food, of which there is plenty, but don't assume that's all it has to offer.

**Café Ollin**  
 339 E. 108th St.,  
 212-828-3644

This small Mexican restaurant is easy to miss. Tucked away on 108th Street, the humble café is big on both flavor and portions. Wash down your grub with a Mexican coke — Coca Cola bottled in Mexico and sweetened with sugar instead of corn syrup.

**Patsy's Pizzeria**  
 2287 First Ave.,  
 212-534-9783

No self-respecting pizza lover can live in, visit or pass through New York City without eating at

the original Patsy's, a New York City landmark. Open since 1933, the founder Pasquale "Patsy" Lanceri supposedly learned the craft from Gennaro Lombardi, owner of Lombardi's. The interior hasn't changed much since the restaurant's opening, and it's still a cash-only business. The coal-blackened crust and sweet pizza sauce make for an unforgettable slice.

**The Love Café**  
 283 Pleasant Ave.,  
 212-369-6916

What started as a coffee truck in the East Village is now a storefront in East Harlem. As you wait for Jay to brew your coffee or Pat (who grew up in the neighborhood) to make you a sandwich, check out the artwork on the walls, which is all done by local artists and all for sale.

**La Fonda Boricua**  
 169 E. 106th St.,  
 12-410-7292

The place to go for traditional Puerto Rican food, such as mofongo and arroz con pollo (La Fonda's version beat out Bobby Flay in an episode of the Food Network's "Throwdown"). After dinner, stroll across the street to the FB Lounge for a cocktail and some live music.

## Did you know?

Academy Award-winning actor Burt Lancaster was born and raised in East Harlem, as was Tito Puente, the "King of Latin Music."

**The Kiosk**  
 80 E. 116th St., 212-348-9010

This Moroccan restaurant is owned and operated by a New York-born chef who learned his trade in Casablanca. After dinner stick around to enjoy East Harlem's only hookah service, available until 2 a.m.

## TO PLAY

Live music abounds in East Harlem, whether you want something Latin-flavored or jazz-inspired. You also can find readings, children's theater and Latin dance lessons.

**Amore Cubano**  
 2018 Third Ave.,  
 212-996-1220

Sit at the bar and sip a mojito or sangria while listening to live music every night of the week. Come by on Sundays, when both music and dancing starts at 5 p.m.

**Creole**  
 2167 Third Ave.,  
 212-876-8838

There's no cover charge for the jam sessions on Tuesdays and open mics on Sundays at this jazz supper club. Weekends get crowded, but they attract some of the most popular up-and-coming musicians around.



Aspiring writers gather twice a month at East Harlem Café.

(LUC BASSOMPIERRE)

**East Harlem Café**  
 1651 Lexington Ave.,  
 212-996-2080

This café is also a music venue, performance space and school. On the first and third Tuesday of each month, the café turns into a writer's circle — a workshop open to writers working in any genre at any level.

**El Museo del Barrio**  
 1230 Fifth Ave.,  
 212-831-7272

The leading Latino cultural institution in New York offers exhibitions and performance art. Along with touring and permanent collections, it also houses theater space, called the Teatro Heckscher. Museum admission

is free on the third Saturday of every month.

**Santo Rico Dance School**  
 2403 Second Ave.,  
 212-289-1302

Want to learn the mambo? Follow the beat up the stairs to this third-floor dance studio, where, on weekends, anyone can participate in an open class.

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	4	2 BEDROOM	\$653.00	\$18,000 - \$31,680

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To request an application, mail a **POSTCARD TO:**

East 102nd St Realty LLC, P.O. Box 3628, New York, NY 10163  
Request must be postmarked by June 25, 2010.

Complete applications must be returned to a different post office box that will be listed on the application, and must be postmarked by July 23, 2010.

Applications not sent via regular mail or postmarked after

July 23, 2010 will be logged in after all other applications.

Applications will be selected by lottery.

Priority will be given to applicants who live or work in New York City.

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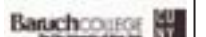
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**The Demolition Depot offers unique treasures.**

## TO SHOP

East Harlem isn't known for amazing shopping, but business in the area has been diversifying in recent years.

### Casablanca Meat Market

127 E. 110th St., 212-534-7350

The sign out front says they've been open since 1949, but the owner insists they've been around longer. They sell homemade sausage and some beautiful cuts of meat. The bullhorns that hang above the counters are gifts from satisfied customers.

### The Demolition Depot/Schmuck Brothers

#### Did you know?

Scenes from "The Godfather," "Midnight Cowboy" and "The Taking of Pelham One Two Three" were shot at the now demolished Filmways Studios on East 127th Street between Second and Third avenues.

216 E. 125th St., 212-860-1138

The depot has four floors of incredibly ornate and unique home decorations. Light fixtures on the ground floor, stained glass on the second and doors on the third; the fourth is filled with porcelain sinks, tubs and toilets. If that's not enough, visit Schmuck Brothers right across the street.

### Raices Dominicanas Cigars

2250 First Ave., 212-410-6824

Marcos Lopez, who studied agricultural engineering in the Dominican Republic, recently opened this cigar shop where he hand rolls all of the cigars from special tobacco blends. Visitors are encouraged to stick around and enjoy a cigar. You can also bring in your own bottle of wine.

### Casa Latina

151 E. 116th St., 212-427-6062

For nearly 50 years, this music shop has been the backbone of the neighborhood's Latin music scene. The store is packed with instruments, new Latin music and hard-to-find classics. A picture of owner Vicente Barreiro with legendary musician Eddie Palmieri hangs above the counter. Tito Puente played at the wedding of Barreiro's daughter Cristina.

### Claudio's Barber Shop

358 E. 116th St.

Claudio Caponigro, one of the few holdovers from the neighborhood's Italian heyday, has been cutting hair in East Harlem for nearly 60 years. Take a seat in one of his antique barber chairs and enjoy a \$10 haircut, \$15 if you also want a traditional straight-razor shave. But don't bother calling for an appointment because he doesn't have a phone.

## TO SEE

There is plenty to do in East Harlem that won't cost you any



Keith Haring painted his famous "Crack Is Wack" mural at the height of the crack epidemic.

(PHOTOS: LUC BASSOMPIERRE)

more than subway fare.

### 110th Street Block Association Garden

Northeast corner of 110th Street and Madison Avenue

When the weather is nice, bring your instrument of choice to this garden and jam with artist, musician and gardener Jurgen Landgraf. This German immigrant has been running the garden for four years. Hanging all around the garden are his paintings, and they are all for sale.

### Frente Feroz

Northeast corner of 125th Street and Park Avenue

It's easy to miss this site-specific, second-floor art project. Silhouettes of what look like garden-variety monsters are backlit by a

revolving assortment of different colored lights. The whole installation is best viewed in the dark of night.

### "Crack Is Wack" playground

Northeast corner of 128th Street and Second Avenue

The mural reading "Crack Is Wack" was painted by Keith Haring in 1986, during the city's crack epidemic, on the handball court walls.

### Rao's Restaurant

455 E. 114th St., 212-722-6709

Even though you'll never eat there (you have to be invited), you can sit at the bar and have a drink. Or stand outside and watch the parade of luxury vehicles and the



The backlit Frente Feroz is best viewed in the dark of night.

occasional celebrity.

### 118th and Pleasant

Sonny Corleone got revenge on his wife-abusing brother-in-law,

Carlo, by beating him to a bloody pulp in an infamous scene shot on the stoop of an apartment on 118th Street and Pleasant Avenue.

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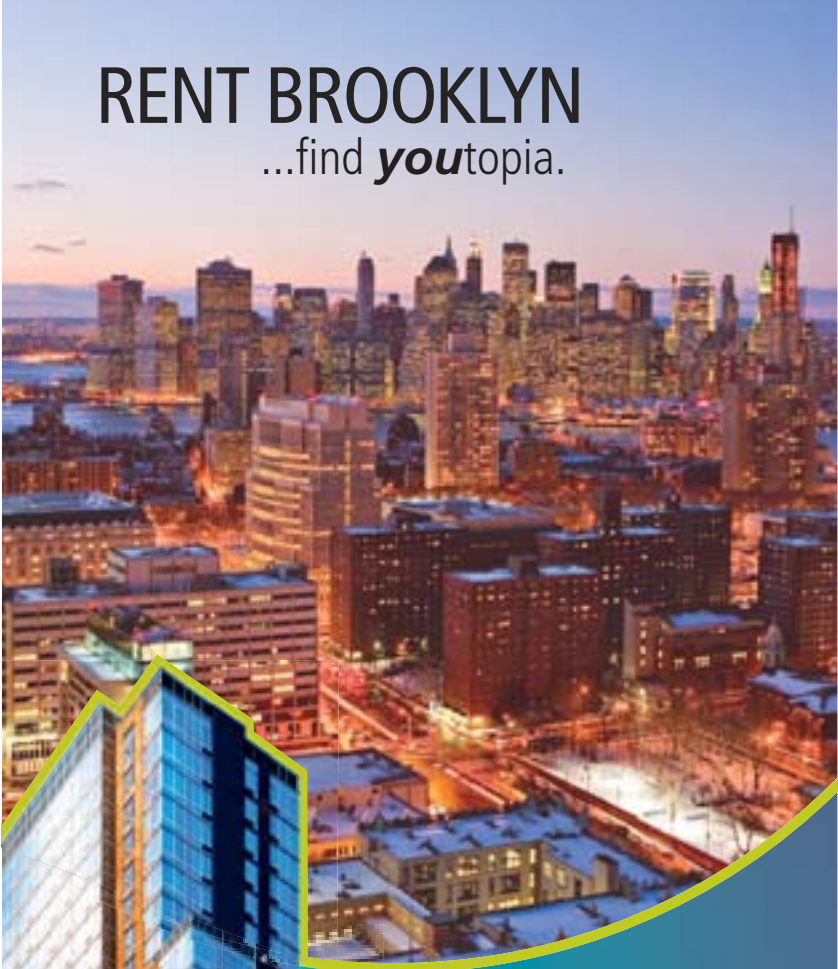
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# Inside E. Harlem's transformation

Artist and musician Dave Mendez, 30, has resided on East 110th Street his entire life. He lives with his wife in the same apartment he grew up in.

**How has East Harlem changed over the years?**

I can remember the big influx of Mexican immigrants to the area in the '90s. I don't remember seeing

many white people then except for my teachers and people looking to buy drugs. The words "luxury" and "condo" didn't exist in East Harlem.

**What impact have these changes had on the area?**

They have brought needed attention to many problems in the area, like crime, sanitation and education. The streets are relatively clean compared to how it used to be, and there are more police roaming the streets.

**Who lives here? [You'll find]**

those who can't afford to live other places and want to be close to the "downtown" area, artists, musicians, writers, actors, social outcasts, along with everyday families just trying to survive.



Life in the area is celebrated in the 1978 mural "The Spirit of East Harlem." (PHOTOS: LUC BASSOMPIERRE)

**What attracts people to the area?**

Cheaper rent is a big draw for most everyone. But many people are just raised here, leave, and then come back with a family to raise themselves. And by leave, I mean going to the Bronx or Brooklyn.

**What deters people from moving here?**

Crime. The lore of it more than actual crime. Sure, things happen



Mendez

here, but things happen everywhere. It's the city.

**If I had a few hours to kill, what should I do?**

Visit the original Patsy's Pizzeria, then take a stroll up 116th Street to see where salsa was born in the '50s. Yes, it all happened near Park Avenue, next to Casa Latina music

store. Then check out the graffiti hall of fame on 106th Street.

**What do you think East Harlem will look like in five years?** It's going to be an extension of the high-priced Upper East Side.

**What would you change?**

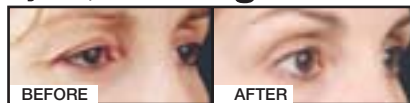
I would make people appreciate where they are. Be part of what's here. Please don't kill it so you can have an overpriced cup of Starbucks and eat your pretty Pinkberry yogurt. You can find that anywhere. Find something local and help it grow.

(LEVI GIBIAN FISHMAN)

**The buzz** The rapid development of large apartment complexes and big-box retail stores has some in the neighborhood wondering if local residents will eventually be priced out. But Marina Ortiz of East Harlem Preservation, which works to promote and preserve the area's cultural history, thinks there is room for gentrification as long as there is no displacement.

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