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Harlem Visitors Center proposes a portal to Harlem for New Yorkers and tourists alike. More than simply a traditional visitors center, the project endeavors to become a living institution in Harlem and New York City. Responding to a brief authored by the New York City Economic Development Corporation and the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, the 50 foot by 200 foot site of the former Mart 125 across from the historic Apollo Theater is to house a new building programmed with the intention to extend the duration and breadth of the visitation experience in Harlem. A collaboration with a financial consultant and a programming consultant yielded a set of solutions which posited a cultural institution together with residential uses to create a microcosm of the Harlem experience on the site while ensuring the economic viability of the endeavor as a whole. Besides the basic amenities of a visitors information portal with free internet and restrooms, the center offers performance venues, rehearsal space and a café-bar-restaurant for one of three institutions under consideration: Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company; Classical Theatre of Harlem; and Jazz Mobile. Fundamental to the proposal is to create an institution that draws New Yorkers which will in turn make it a destination for tourists. Exposure to other living Harlem institutions at this outpost provokes further visitation throughout Harlem and hence tourist retention in the District.

