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The National Jazz Museum in Harlem grew out of the Harlem Visitors Center project which proposed a portal to Harlem for New Yorkers and tourists alike. More than simply a traditional visitors center, the project endeavored to become a living institution in Harlem and New York City. A direct outcome of this study was a request for proposals issued by the New York City Economic Development Corporation for a new building for a cultural institution with the intention to extend the duration and breadth of the visitation experience in Harlem. Through this process, The National Jazz Museum in Harlem was awarded the 50 foot by 200 foot site across from the historic Apollo Theater. Subsequently, through a competitive process issued by the institution, we were selected as the architects of the new facility. The ground floor acts as an seamless extension to the sidewalk of 125th Street, offering a visitors information portal operated by NYC & Co., casual performance venues, a café-bar-restaurant and a grand seating stair up to the second floor museum. A black box theatre sits below grade for jazz performances, theatre and cinema and is available for community use. An urban farm shares the roof with an amphitheatre which tips up to form a north facing skylight allowing natural light to extend into the space on all floors. Fundamental to the proposal is the creation of an institution that draws New Yorkers which will in turn make it a destination for tourists. This institution declares itself and Harlem as the home of jazz music celebrating both its history, its living present and its future for generations to come.

