

The Harlem Charrette

University of Georgia - College of Environment and Design



The Fixer Uppers

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THE 2003 HARLEM CHARRETTE
UGA'S CHARRETTE DESIGN TEAM MEETS HARLEM, GEORGIA • APRIL, 2003

THE FIXER UPPERS IS A 1935 FILM STARRING STAN LAUREL AND OLIVER HARDY

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Sons of the **DESERT** song

We are the sons of the desert
Having the time of our lives,
Marching along, two thousand strong,
Far From Our Sweethearts and wives
God Bless them.

TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP

The Boys are marching,
And Dancing to this melody

LA LA LA LA LA
LA LA LA LA LA LA LA
Sons of the desert are we.



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Our report is broken into three main categories:

- streetscape issues,
- historic preservation and
- new ideas.

To a certain extent these categories are arbitrary and only serve as a way to organize the series of improvements we suggest. All sections of this summary and our drawings are interrelated and should be viewed as a single approach for community revitalization.

Appendices:

1. Interim guidelines
2. Vinyl Siding Policy
3. Mobile home/ workforce housing strategy
4. Convenience store prototype
5. DCA Smart growth contact sheet

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Introduction

Charrette...

Charrette is a French word that translates as "little cart." At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students would be assigned a tough design problem to work out under pressure of time. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as little carts (charrettes) carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded. Today, "charrette" has come to describe the rapid, intensive, and creative work session, usually lasting a week or more, in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American cities.

Charrettes for New Urbanism, Victor Dover

The City of Harlem - Mayor, City Council, City Administrator, Historic Preservation Commission, and the Better Hometown Committee — invited the University of Georgia's College of Environment and Design Public Service and Outreach Program at the School of Environmental Design (UGA,CED,PS&O at SED) to conduct a community design charrette.



This charrette pulled together a team of professionals and students to assess local conditions, brainstorm with local residents, escape to an isolated cabin to generate visions, and to produce some exciting new ideas for making Harlem a better place to live and visit.

Our recommendations for appropriate change in Harlem are summarized in this document and are best expressed through the accompanying drawings and plans that were produced during our stay in Harlem. A friendly warning is needed to remind readers and residents that these concepts are just that - CONCEPTUAL. We offer our analysis as a service to the community. Our ideas are our own and some of them might not be readily achievable. A phased process of implementation is the only way to make changes like the ones we suggest work. There will be many "on the spot" decisions that will have to be made that might not be



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included in this report. We encourage you to make those decisions in the "spirit" of this report. Base your decisions on the conservation of resources (natural, cultural, human, built, financial and labor) and the retention of existing community fabric. Additionally, some of our ideas might not be the unanimous approach that would be selected by all Harlem citizens. This is why this document and the charrette process is one that provides a vision of how change might look but does not mandate those changes. Use our work with that in mind.

We must thank Ann Blalock and Jack Hatcher for their excellent preparation for and local coordination of the team's visit. The Central Savannah River Area Regional Development Center's Anne Floyd was also instrumental in making the team's visit a reality. The ball is now back in Harlem's court. The impending TE streetscape project means that change will be happening soon, that's good. The impending growth wave from Augusta means that insensitive change could also happen, however that change can be (and must be) creative and compatible. The mistakes of nearby communities where visual character and local identity were lost can be avoided in Harlem. You can have your cake and eat it, too! The power is local. As a famous shoe advertisement chastises - Just Do It!

Pratt Cassity
Pratt Cassity April, 2003
Director - PS&O



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Streetscape

The city of Harlem has secured funding from the **Transportation Enhancement fund (TE)** to improve the road related character of Main Street. The following recommendations are related to the preliminary work already conducted for the corridor. These suggestions relate to **visual character and historic appearance**, not to transportation engineering goals - such as wide radius corners, pedestrian and vehicular separation, or higher speed limits.

1. The charrette team agreed that lower speeds (**traffic calming**), on-street parking, fewer highway signs, pedestrian-scaled lighting and better identified crosswalks would enhance Harlem more than the typical streetscape solutions that other towns have adopted.
2. Well-marked, on-street parallel parking is appropriate in commercial districts. It adds a sense of enclosure for pedestrians walking along sidewalks and shows life and energy for a downtown area.
3. The intersection of US 78 and Main Street is becoming less and less pedestrian friendly. All improvements related to this intersection should result in a safer and better-identified crosswalk. The introduction of a bakery/coffee shop (somewhere to eat breakfast) on the **northwest corner of the intersection** will contribute activity to slow traffic down and encourage people to spend more time and investigate Harlem. This is the spot to lure the passerby to the other attractions on Main Street. As part of a new graphic identity program for Laurel and Hardy event programming, a new simplified mural (one that is easy to repair and reproduce) should tower above the corner lot and catch the eye of drivers along US 78. This intersection



Old photograph of Main Street



Intersection of US 78 and Main Street

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should not be widened any more than absolutely necessary for turning from Main Street onto US 78. **Large paved roadway surfaces discourage pedestrian use and encourage more sprawl related franchise design solutions.** Strongly reinforced concrete corners can withstand trucks that might cut the corners too closely.

4. Harlem can capitalize on its quaintness by requiring new highway commercial architecture to build within a common design vocabulary. **Design guidelines** enforced through a design review overlay and/or historic district will assist the city in making sure that new development contributes to community character. Even franchise designs can be made more local with design alterations that reflect local character. (See Appendix 4.)

5. Sidewalk improvements should be made with a combination of materials. Concrete sidewalks are the historic solution for most turn of the century downtowns. Many communities have found that hexagonal and other concrete pavers make repairs easy for utilities beneath the sidewalks. **Completely brick sidewalks are rarely applicable for Georgia towns.** If brick is used in new streetscape work it should be limited to accents and crosswalks.

6. **Streetlights** - globes and standards - have caused much debate among preservationists and planners alike. Many communities opt for more ornate reproduction lights for historic districts, while others gravitate to a more contemporary solution. The best solutions tend to be the less recognizable - not completely "space age" but certainly not "phony Victoriana". Many simple standards made of high-quality forged metal with simple acorn or orb shaped globes are just right for eclectic commercial and residential districts. A key thing to realize



Design Guidelines



Brick sidewalks are rarely applicable for GA towns

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about streetlights in historic areas is that spacing becomes the important factor. Lights that are spaced too close together give a surreal quality to downtowns. Therefore, the cost of most streetlight projects in Georgia could be reduced by one-third if fewer street lights were installed. A streetlight pattern that establishes cones of downward light from zone to zone is more effective and attractive than a glaring, over lit, consistently illuminated street. Downward projecting light can be achieved through fluted shades reminiscent of early twentieth-century streetlights. Many communities have found success with additional lighting being directed at signature buildings, while street lighting is kept to a minimum.



Lot behind Masonic building



7. The addition of better-marked parking along the Main Street and the redesign of the space behind the Masonic building will result in a more managed parking situation. Preliminary work on the TE Project shows this area as functional but bland. **We propose that this lot be seen as a Park that happens to have cars in it, rather than a place to store vehicles. Care must be taken to make the new parking behind the Masonic building as much of a pedestrian-friendly area as car-friendly.** The unified design incorporating the rear facades of the buildings, the parking area and an eventual open air pavilion on the site of the old depot will help bridge the railroad gap in town and serve as a midway point between the Hardy Museum and the new Oliver Hardy Theatre (former Columbia Theatre) complex.
8. An arborist should assess all existing street trees and make suggestions for pruning, fertilization and/or replacement. The team recommends that Harlem's Main Street commercial district (between City Hall and US 78) retain those trees that are already there but plan for no additional trees. If sidewalk shading is needed, canvas building awnings can be added that are appropriate for historic areas.

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9. The street trees in residential areas should be large shade trees such as Willow or Water Oaks, Dogwoods or Trident Maples. Drought resistant native varieties should be the rule when street tree selection occurs. When non-native varieties are selected, like Crape Myrtle, they should be used as accents that can be maintained as focal elements. (Remember: do not prune Crape Myrtles).



Residential area

10. The set-back for buildings in the residential areas, even for commercial functions there, should always maintain the residential pattern, spacing, height, roof shape and landscape improvements that would be associated with houses. The buildings within the commercial areas of town should appear as commercial buildings - no set-back (zero lot line), flat or low pitched roofs, display windows, and appropriate human scale signs.



Commercial area

11. Along the highway commercial area (US 78) a uniform connection of plant materials would help define the approach into the center of town and make drivers realize that they have "arrived" somewhere. The team suggests a strong edge of an evergreen native plant be maintained along this corridor. Wax Myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) is a good selection. This shrub-like tree can be maintained as either one - a shrub or a tree. It can appear dense and solid when a screen is needed or can be "limbed up" to provide sight lines through to businesses or residences.



Space behind the Feed and Seed building.

12. Discussion has occurred regarding the open space behind the Feed and Seed (former Ford dealership) building. This space should be reserved for use as overflow parking or associated outdoor activities of the retail function. Trees should remain at this location and at the Magnolia House. (Remember: do not prune and remove lower limbs of mature Magnolias!)

Preservation in Harlem

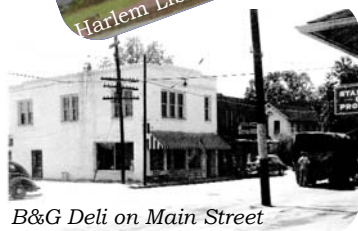
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Historic Preservation

Newspaper article showing building restoration



B&G Deli on Main Street



Example of possible infill building

Historic preservation is the theme of the charrette and the key to Harlem's attractiveness. Preservation efforts are well underway with some great examples of sensitive rehabilitation and commitment to downtown and neighborhood revitalization. The model for good preservation is easily seen in many of the residential building projects in town. The local library project is one that should show skeptics that building retention and compatible additions are good for local sense of pride and community appearance. Preservation also entails good stewardship.

1. **B&G Deli and Catering** is one such example. This building has been well-maintained, undergone sensitive renovations and contributes to street life along Main Street. This building should serve as the model for local commercial building upkeep. In the accompanying drawings, we have shown an infill building next to the Deli. This conjecture shows a prototypical building type for new buildings, typically called "infill," along Main Street.
2. Many local residents and businesses have been good stewards of their properties, however that will not always be the case, especially with eminent growth barreling down from the northern portion of the county. The Harlem Historic Preservation Commission (HHPC) is in the process of identifying local historic resources. Once that process is complete, it should serve as the basis for designating a LOCAL historic district and listing properties in the National Register of Historic Places. In the locally designated district zone, a permit would be required to make significant changes to properties. This is particularly important in relationship to infill. The HHPC will need design guidelines to make decisions about retaining

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character defining features in different areas in Harlem. Design guidelines will ensure fairness and consistency among commission members, changing administrations, outside developers and building owners. An interim set of guidelines is included with this report.

(Appendix 1) One pressing issue regarding historic preservation in Harlem is the perpetuation of artificial siding. This is especially true in the neighborhoods. A policy regarding siding will be one of the first duties of the HHPC. We have included in the Appendix a copy of the Siding Policy from Chapel Hill, North Carolina as a model. *(Appendix 2)*



Existing buildings of Tracy Luckey Pecan Co. in Harlem



Design solution to unify facades and create a more attractive corner

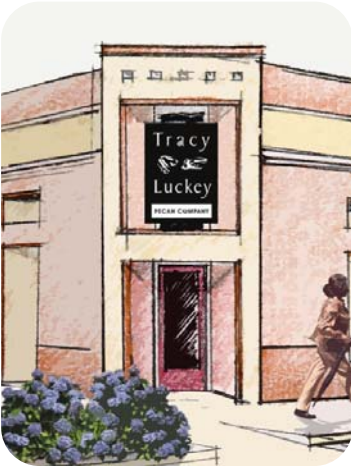
- 3. The Tracy Luckey Pecan Company** is a true gem for giving Harlem a historic feel. The large manufacturer in a downtown is often portrayed in books and movies as the quintessential element to represent the soul and heart of a small town. Your industry, while no longer a major player in the local economy, nevertheless harkens to a bygone era. The continuation of the production facility will be important to marketing local identity to outsiders. Ideas to consider regarding the facility include:

Preservation in Harlem

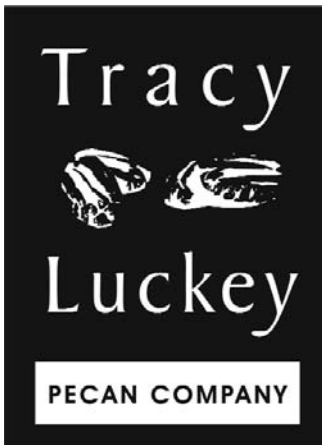
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Street level retail



Example of possible signage.



Existing conditions of Kay's Pharmacy



Proposed design for Kay's Pharmacy

- a. Unifying the exteriors of the buildings facing Main Street and the railroad. The Main Street and corner facades need to be designed to reflect their former historic character. If photo documentation is not available for the buildings, then a scaled down, simplified, vernacular look should be substituted. If photo documentation is available, the building's exterior should be replicated.
 - b. The addition of a street level retail operation should be considered along Main Street where pecan products and souvenirs could proudly be sold.
 - c. The parking area located to the rear along the railroad tracks should be maintained as clean, simple, and screened, and if possible, parking. This lot can be used as overflow parking for festivals and events.
 - d. Signage for the facility should have an early twentieth century style. Reproductions of historic signs for the business are encouraged.
 - e. Information on this business, and other unique businesses in town, should be part of community marketing and promotional materials.
4. **Kay's Pharmacy** - This building and its location are a focal point for downtown. Future work on the building should include a more historically accurate appearance. The corner entrance should be reestablished or maintained as a closed door. Corner entrances are important parts of older downtown buildings. The removal of the wood shake shed roof is paramount for compatibility. A simple canvas awning should be installed if shade is needed for the sidewalk or building. A unified exterior paint scheme

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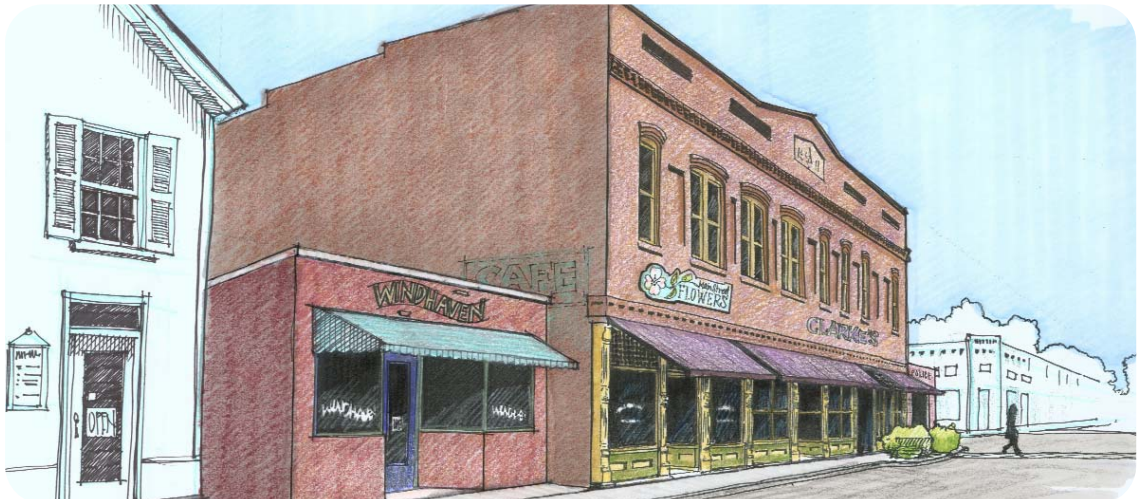
Historic photograph of Masonic building



Existing conditions of Masonic building

would unite the very visible but secondary side of the structure. This location is even more important since it frames the view of the water tower, a locally important community symbol.

5. **Masonic Building** - A prince of a structure! This building, along with the Magnolia House across the street, is the historic star of downtown. Every effort available must be directed at their proper rehabilitation and creative use. The addition of downtown residential space creates a vibrant mixed use. The upper floors of the Masonic Building would make very good loft apartment space. Historic preservation tax credits could be used to rehabilitate it and the Magnolia House into market rate apartments for folks who want the benefits of a small town but do not want to bother with the upkeep of a yard. Street level retail in the Masonic building must be maintained with fresh window displays that are rotated often. Rear entrances to the building should be enhanced and used as alternative access and egress for the shops facing Main Street. The rear of the building should be related to the work being done to the parking area. A unified design would intensify the role of the Masonic building as a centerpiece in Harlem.



Proposed design for Masonic building and its surroundings

New Ideas for Harlem

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New Ideas

To jump start the recognition that change is happening, some new and very different ideas were generated by the team. These new ideas should help to create a new spirit of doing things differently.

1. **The New Old Railroad Depot and Park(ing lot)** - The location of the current fire station is an important focal point for future community activity.



Historic photograph of Depot



Proposed structure honoring the historic depot.

Honor the historic depot by creating a new depot that acknowledges the former design and shape of the depot, yet allows for modern creativity and use. The New Old Railroad depot, perhaps named the Oliver Hardy Harlem Depot Pavilion, can be an open-air pavilion that will serve as a meeting place for festivals, farmers markets, and other community activities. The new design will spark pedestrian activity in the surrounding areas. Take advantage of the open space along the railroad bed and design a park environment around the pavilion, complete with sidewalks and safe areas in which to view passing trains. The unsightly parking area behind the Masonic building can be well integrated into a larger plan for this entire area. The Park(ing lot), the pavilion and visual connections to the existing park behind the Women's Club can serve as an excellent space for visitors to eat, congregate, and appreciate historic Harlem at the town's crossroads.



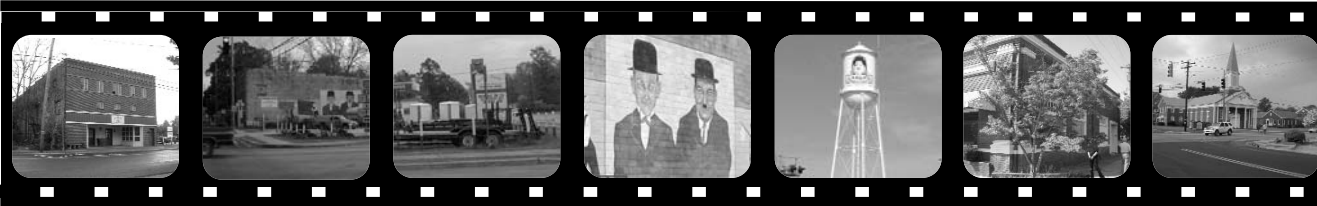
Back of Masonic building



Proposed park(ing)

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Old newspaper article about Opera House and Films in Harlem

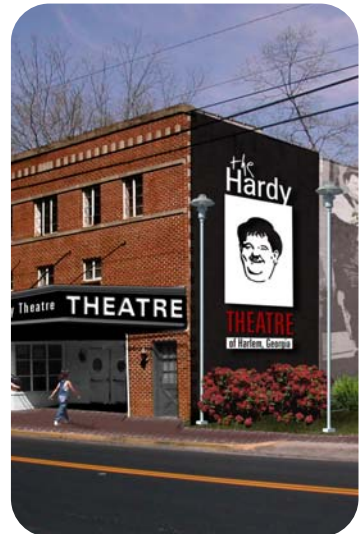
- 2. Columbia Theatre** - The old theatre's exterior appears in good condition. A little fix-up and clean up would pave the way for the reconstruction of the marquee and the renaming of the theatre as the Oliver Hardy Theatre. Brought back to its original design, the theatre can serve as an excellent visual entranceway into Harlem's historic streetscape from US Highway 78. The addition of performing space, community meeting space, and a place to see vintage Laurel and Hardy films is another opportunity to snag tourists passing Harlem. The theatre could be a part of a total Oliver Hardy experience along Main Street. The restored Columbia and the museum would anchor the walk down Main Street, and the Railroad Depot Pavilion would serve as a place to stop along the way.



Old Theatre - Existing conditions



Historic marquee reconstructed



Proposed design for Theatre

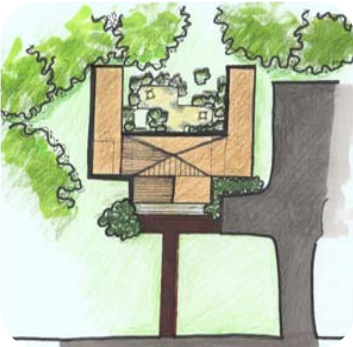
- 3. City Hall** - The current location is excellent, with ample parking and adequate set back from the street. In order to maintain the rear courtyard and residential feel of the building, expand city hall by adding wings out to the sides and back, maintaining the symmetrical

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Plan view of the City Hall with addition



Existing facade



Existing facade



Proposed design for Museum

character of the building. The former drive-thru window thus becomes part of the new space and the new wings frame the existing courtyard area behind city hall. Remove the asphalt drive leading to the former drive-thru window and re-turf or, even better, create a native plant garden. In addition, add traditional residential plantings at the foundation of the building to soften it and add interest. Using Georgia native plants would be particularly appropriate since they are more likely to be drought-tolerant and should require less maintenance than non-native plants. The character of the rear courtyard can be enhanced with a small stone patio and seating areas. Moveable tables and chairs would provide a peaceful place for employees and visitors to eat lunch and talk. A mix of sun and shade would offer a comfortable location for any weather.

- 4. The Laurel and Hardy Museum** - The current Laurel and Hardy Museum is well suited to its current location. However, it still looks like the old post office. Harlem should take advantage of its great location and attract even more visitors with a new and unique façade design. As the images of the new design indicate, the silhouettes of Laurel and Hardy should be simple, with clean lines, and consistent with the current black and white theme. The consistent graphics should be repeated throughout town and especially incorporated as a new more easily maintained mural on the side of the old Columbia Theatre. By eliminating the uniformity of the brick façade and adding color, the museum will develop its own visual distinctiveness. The new design on the front and side facades will pay homage to the film industry instead of the postal industry. A few visual adjustments will indicate the unique contents of the museum and will certainly be appreciated by Laurel and Hardy fans.

Charrette Conclusion

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Conclusion

Georgia's Harlem. When students first heard we were doing a charrette in Harlem, the comments were abundant about making flight arrangements to New York City. Now there is no doubt that we are talking about the Harlem with Luckey Pecan, memories of the Hatcher's Store, fond recollections of the inns and guesthouses and the colorful characters who came to town, and of course, Oliver Hardy!

Fortunately Harlem is in the 'path of progress', a growth corridor barreling from metro Augusta, and has been spared (thus far) from the ravages of sprawl related demolition and insensitive new development. The charrette's timing is fortuitous. There are now efforts to unify the community's image, revitalize downtown and make Harlem a destination rather than just a bedroom community for Augusta. The work of folks at City Hall, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Better Hometown Committee and local citizens has prepared the community for great things to happen. UGA's College of Environment and Design is proud to be a part of this process.

Oliver Hardy's first words on film are 'Now I'll tell ya, we're gonna have meat, we're gonna have a great big juicy steak!' We hope this report follows that pattern, juicy and meaty enough to secure a well preserved and sensitively enhanced future for Harlem.



(l-r) Eleonora Machado, Melissa Roberts, Pratt Cassity, Jennifer Lewis, Sara Hoffman and Melissa Knauer.

The Harlem Renderings

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The Renderings

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THE 2003 HARLEM CHARRETTE
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The Museum

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The Museum:

Signage for the Laurel & Hardy Museum:

Existing conditions:



lacks focal point

Does not look like a museum

Lack of signage makes it hard for visitors to find it

Existing conditions

The Design team suggestions are illustrated on the following pages. The main change is to create signage that easily identifies the museum. Create interesting façade details utilizing existing structure details. Paint is the only major change suggested for the façade of the museum.

The sign will be the identifier. Taking the well-known faces of Laurel and Hardy, this cut-out sign does not need to say a lot. Their faces will do the job.



Banner design



Signage Design for Museum

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Existing façade of the Laurel and Hardy Museum

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This illustration above shows façade with new paint (by leaving the white rectangles unpainted, the façade looks like a film strip).

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The new landscape and light posts complete the project.

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Option with hardscape

The B&G Deli

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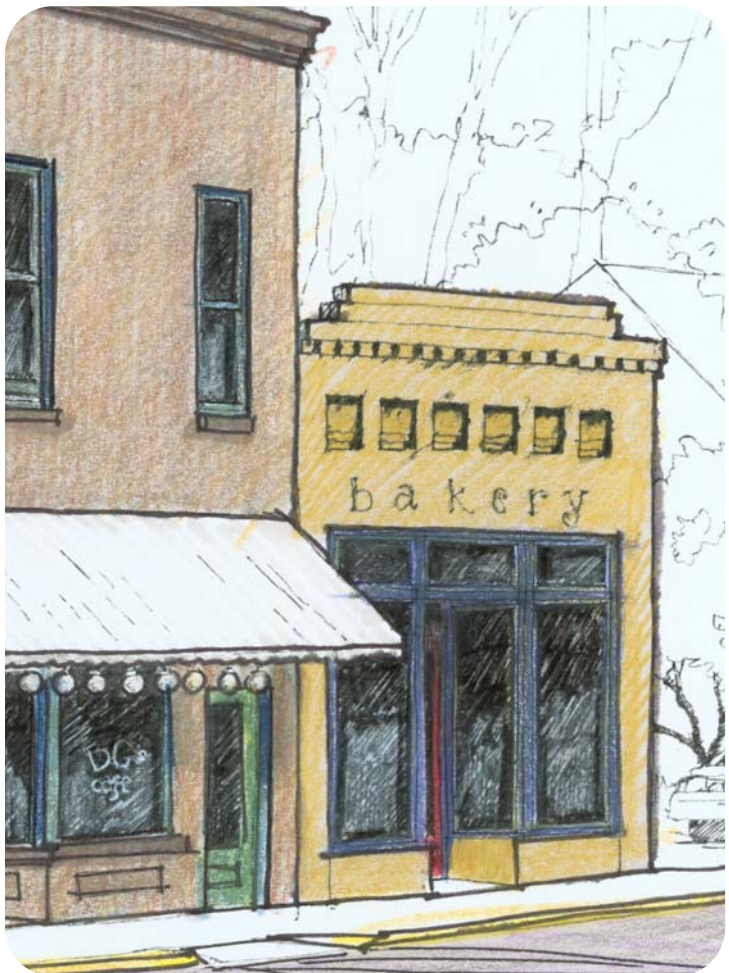


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B&G Deli and Catering

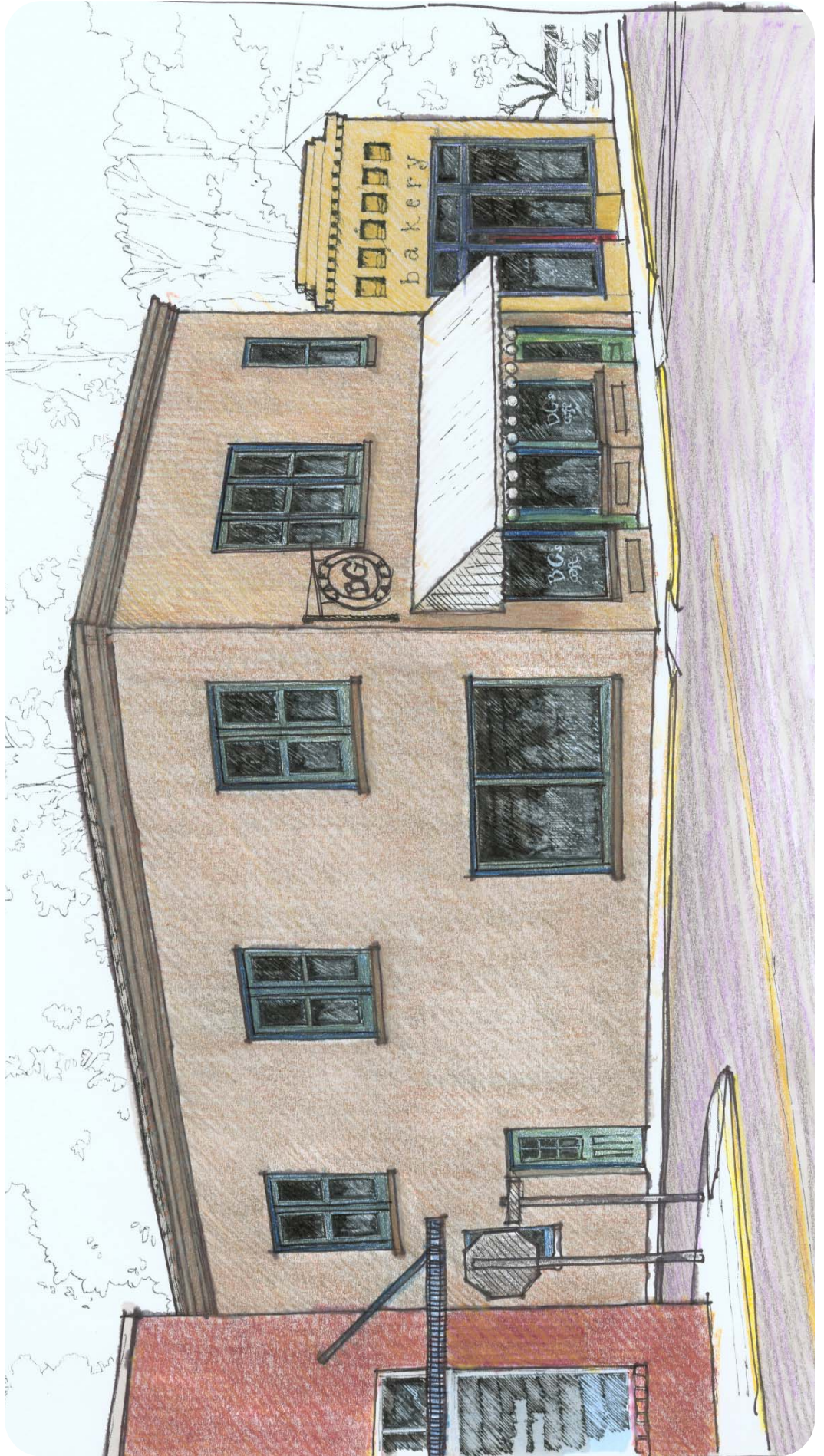
This building should serve as the model for local commercial building upkeep. It has been well-maintained, undergone sensitive renovations and contributes to a lively street life along Main Street.

A small infill building has been added next to B&Gs as an example of what a historically appropriate building would look like if added to the streetscape.



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The Kay Pharmacy

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Kay's Pharmacy

This building and its location are a focal point for the downtown. Re-establishing the corner entrance, unifying the exterior with a simple paint scheme, and removing the wood shake shed roof will help improve this building and be a perfect accompaniment to the symbolic Laurel and Hardy water tower above it!



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The Depot

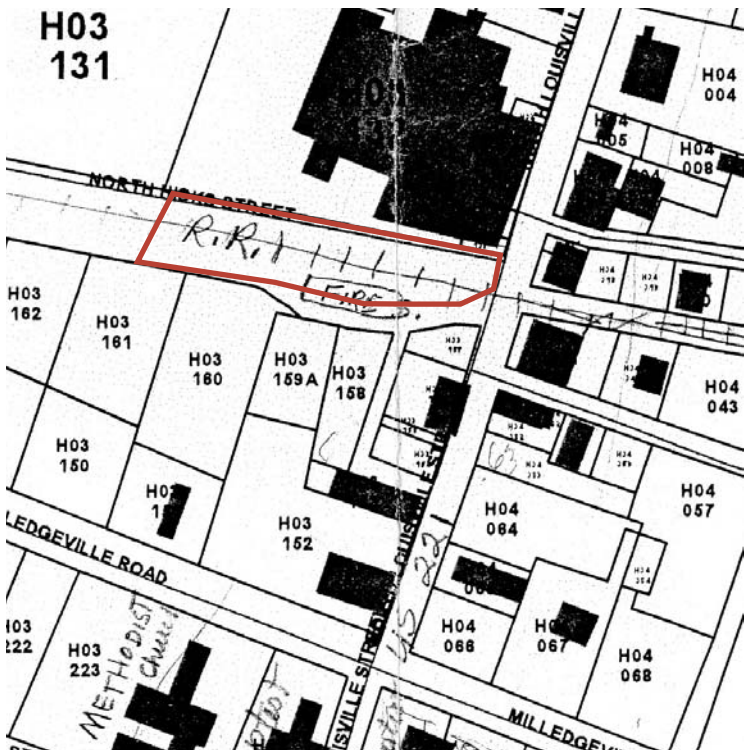
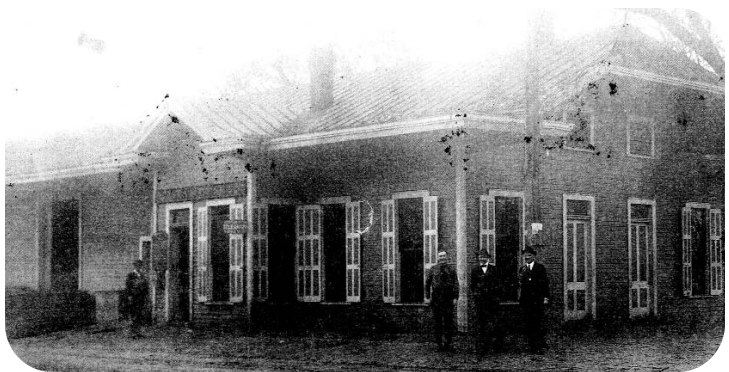
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The New Old Railroad Depot

The location of the current fire station is historically important and vital for future community activity. An open-air pavilion that acknowledges the former design and shape of the depot should be created in this historic area. It can then serve as a meeting place for festivals, farmers markets and other activities.



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The Hardy Park^(ing)

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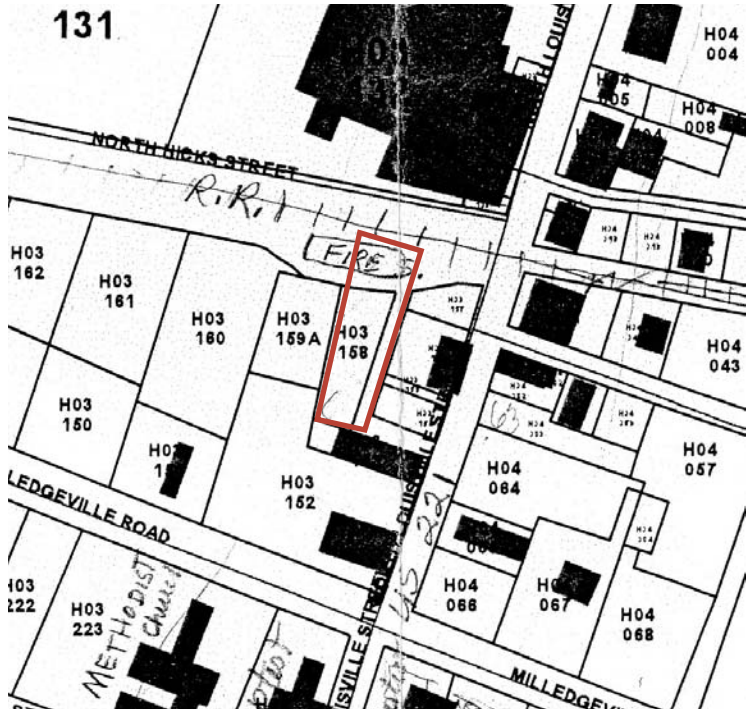
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The Hardy Park

The unsightly parking area behind the Masonic building can be well integrated into a larger plan for this entire area. The Park(ing lot), the pavilion and visual connections to the existing park behind the Women's Club can serve as an excellent space for visitors to eat, congregate, and appreciate historic Harlem at the town's crossroads.



This wall can be used as a mural portraying images of Oliver Hardy's time in Harlem.



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The Tracy Luckey Pecan Co.

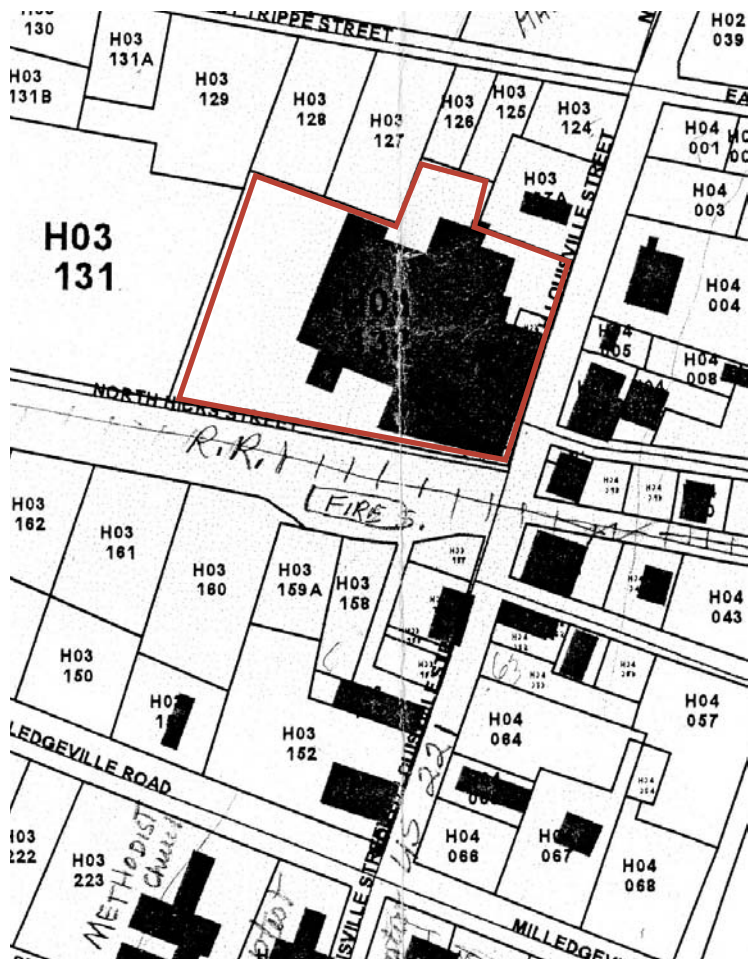
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The Tracy Luckey Pecan Co.

The Tracy Luckey building complex gets a face lift. The corner building opens its doors to commercial sales of pecan goods. It's a very prominent corner on Main Street and it will be a great way of showing off local products. The visual character of that block will be enhanced by unifying the architecture style of the buildings that belong to the company.



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The Harlem Charrette

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The Masonic Building

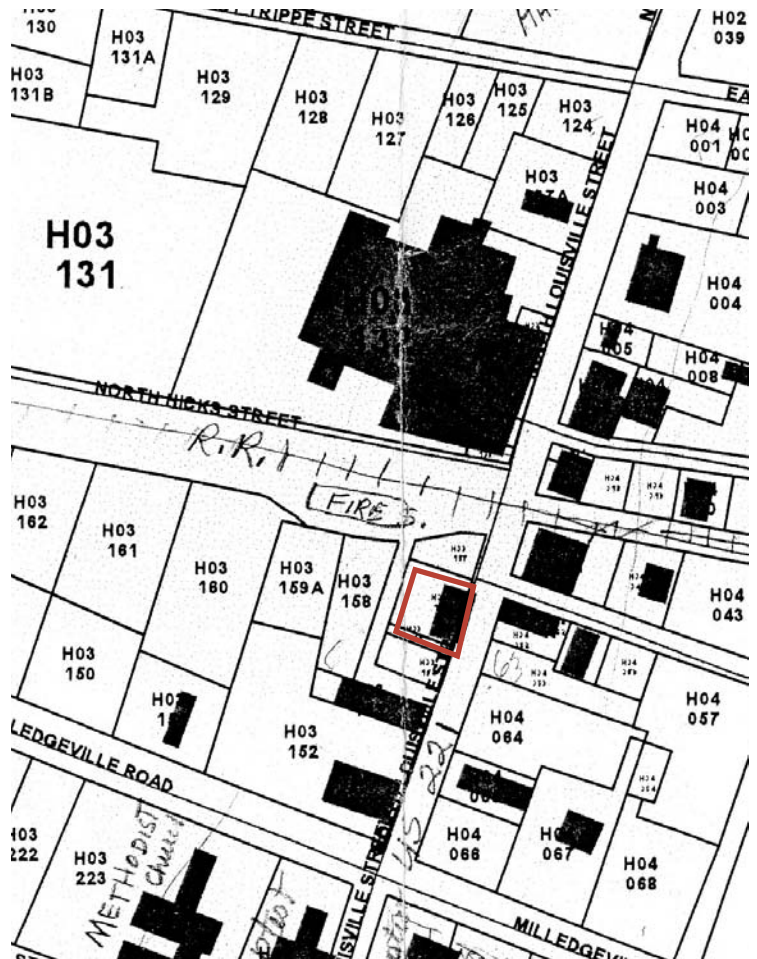
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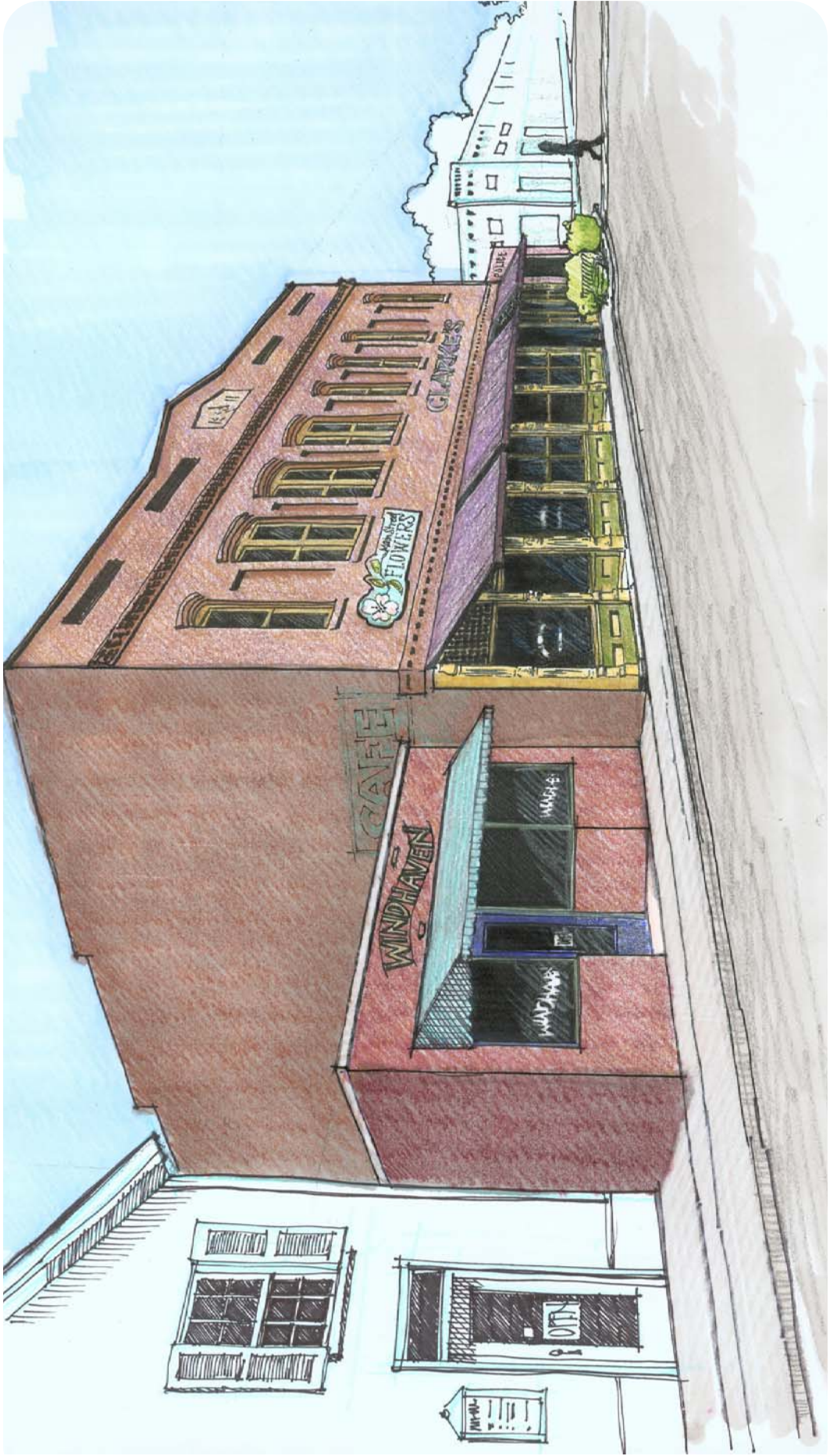
The Masonic Building

The Masonic Building is a star in downtown Harlem. Every effort at the building's proper rehabilitation and creative use should be made. Loft apartments on the upper floors while maintaining retail space on the street level fronts would be an ideal strategy for the future of this building.



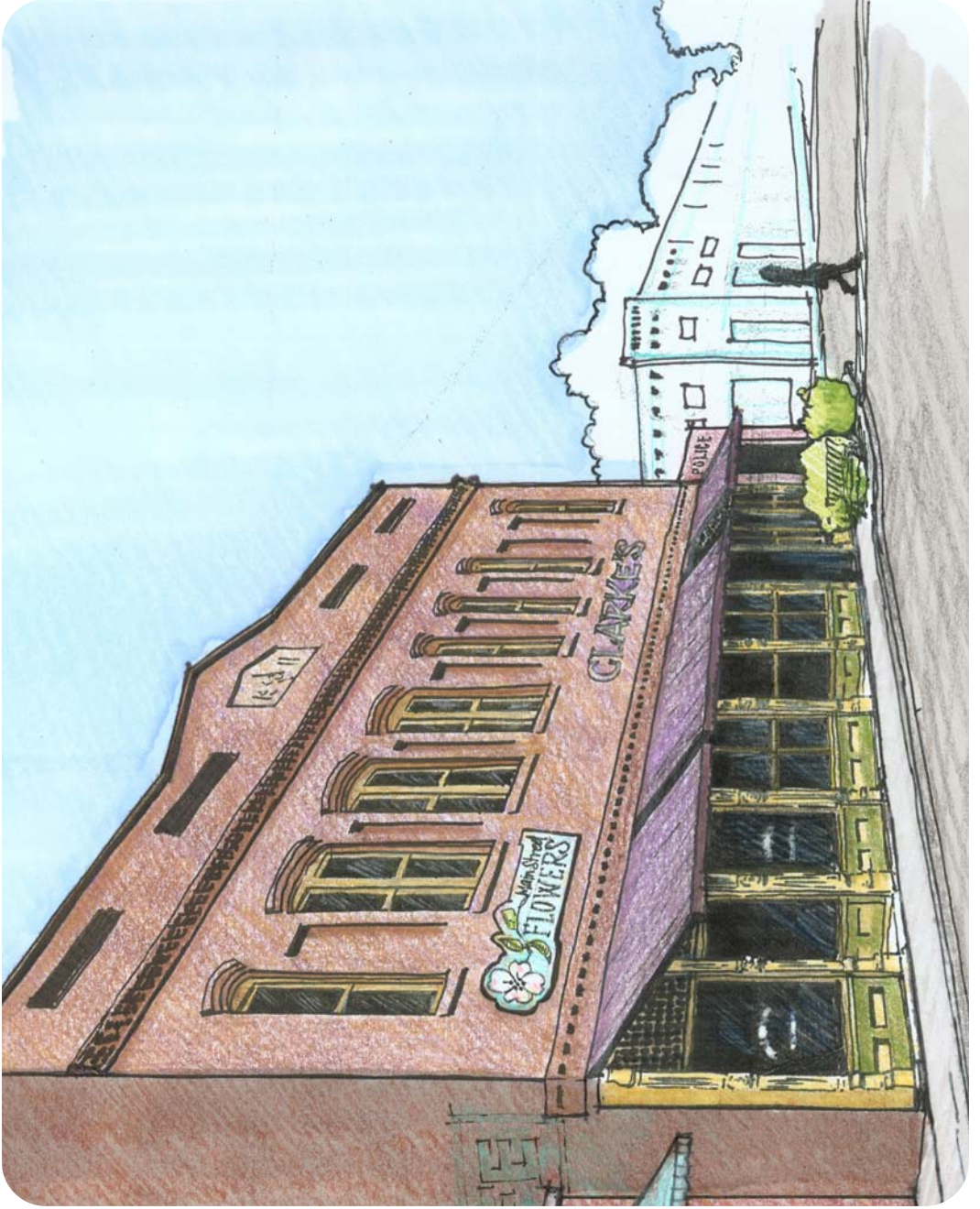
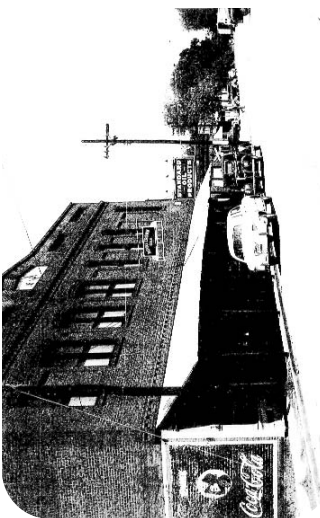
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The Harlem Charrette

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The Theatre

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The Oliver Hardy Theatre

The exterior of the Columbia Theatre appears to be in good condition.

Reconstructing the marquee and renaming it the Oliver Hardy Theatre can serve as an excellent visual marker and entranceway from US 78 into Harlem's historic streetscape. It would be one stop in a series of

Laurel and Hardy experiences along historic Harlem Main Street.



← historic photograph

← original marquee

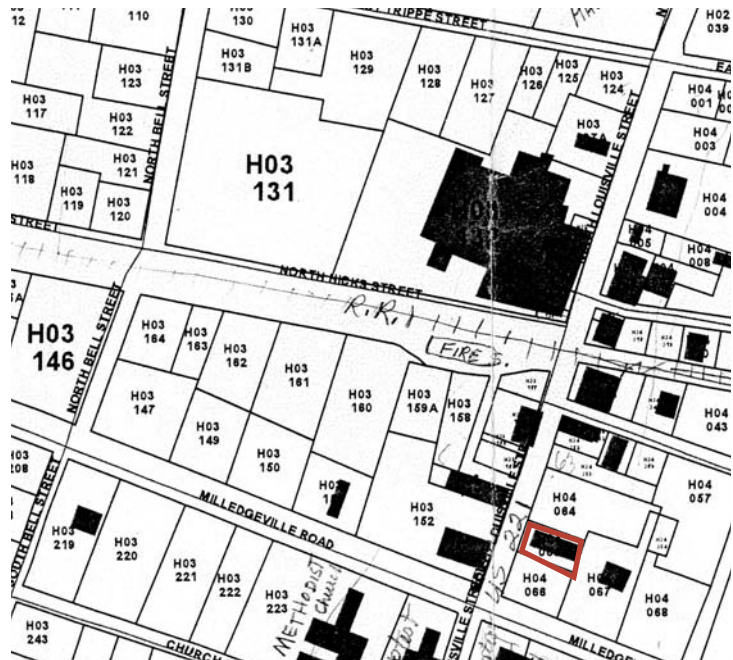


← existing conditions

← area for new mural

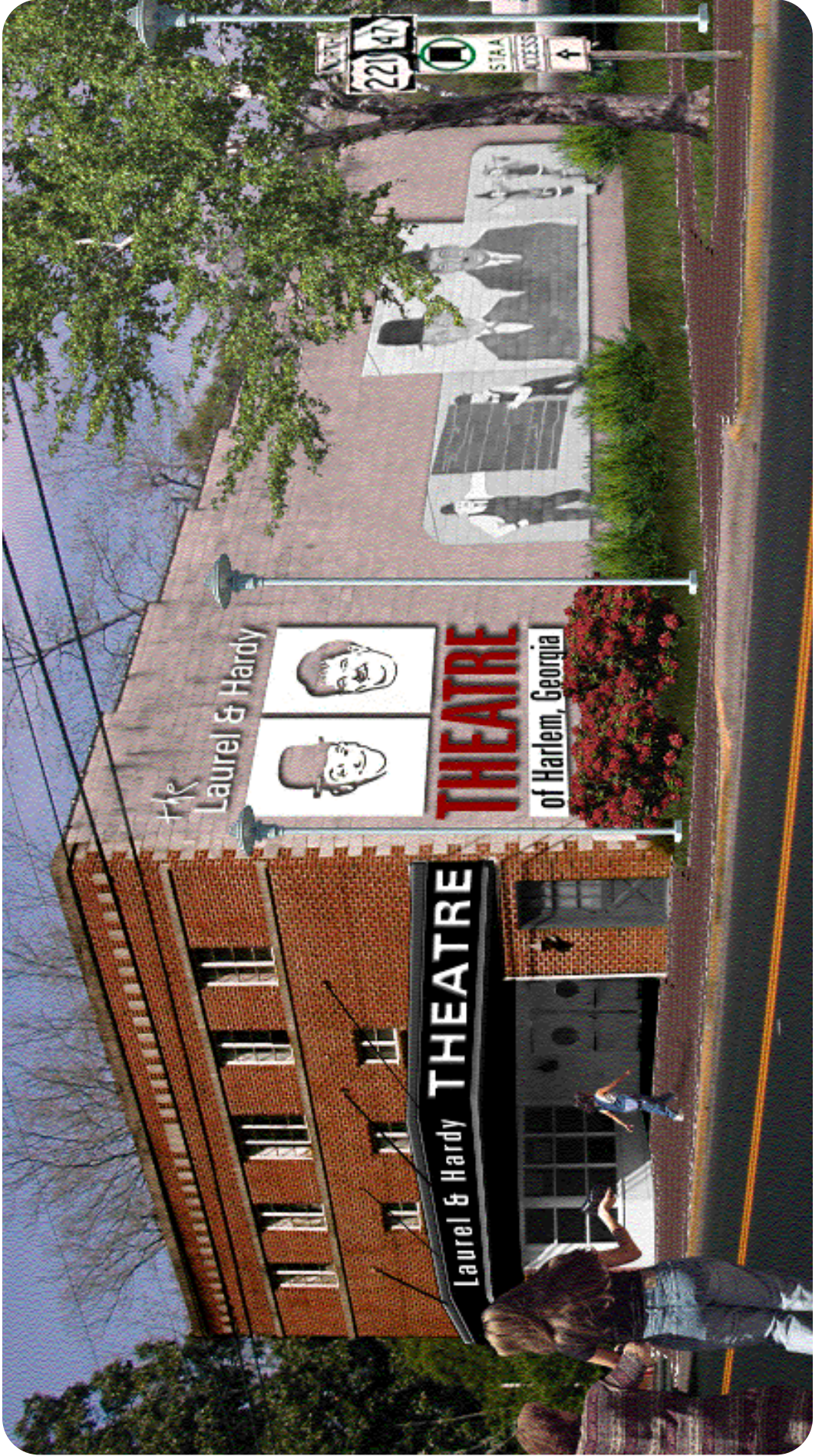
← area for new signage

← reconstruct marquee



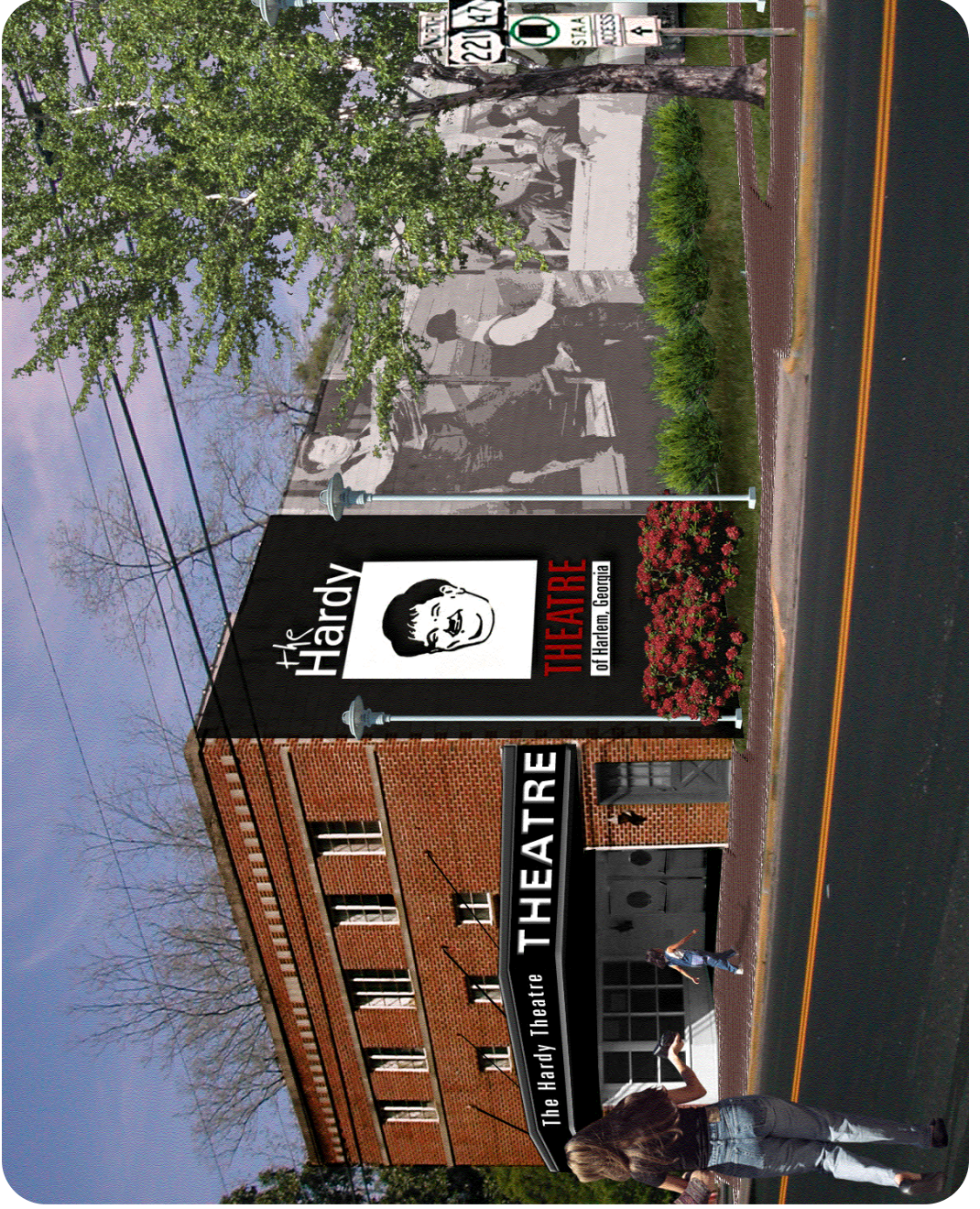
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The Coffee Shop

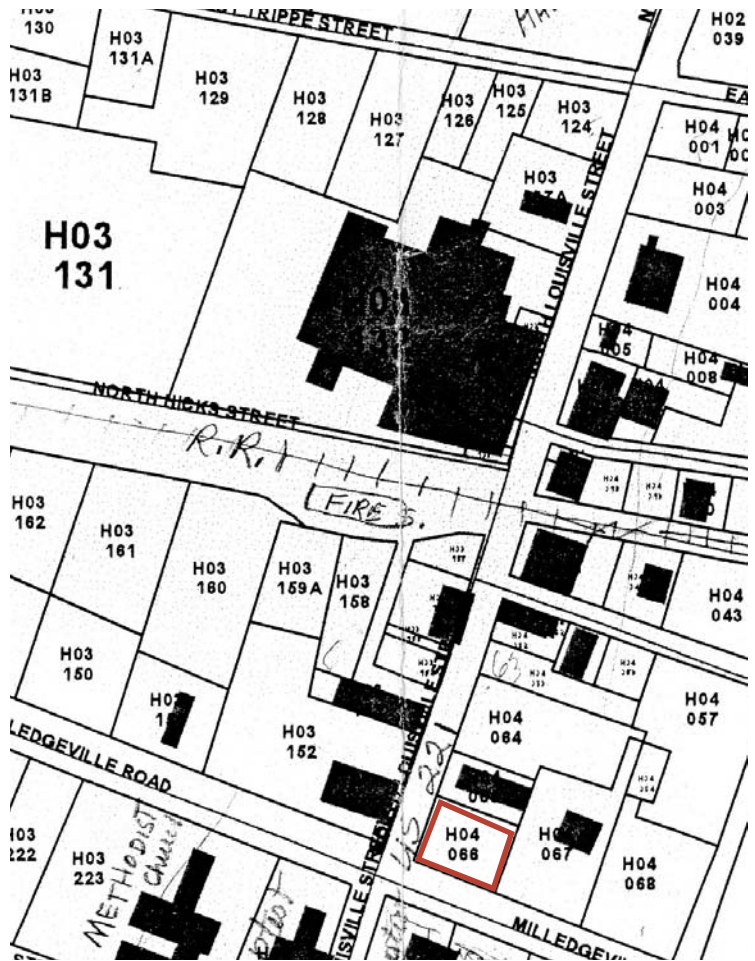
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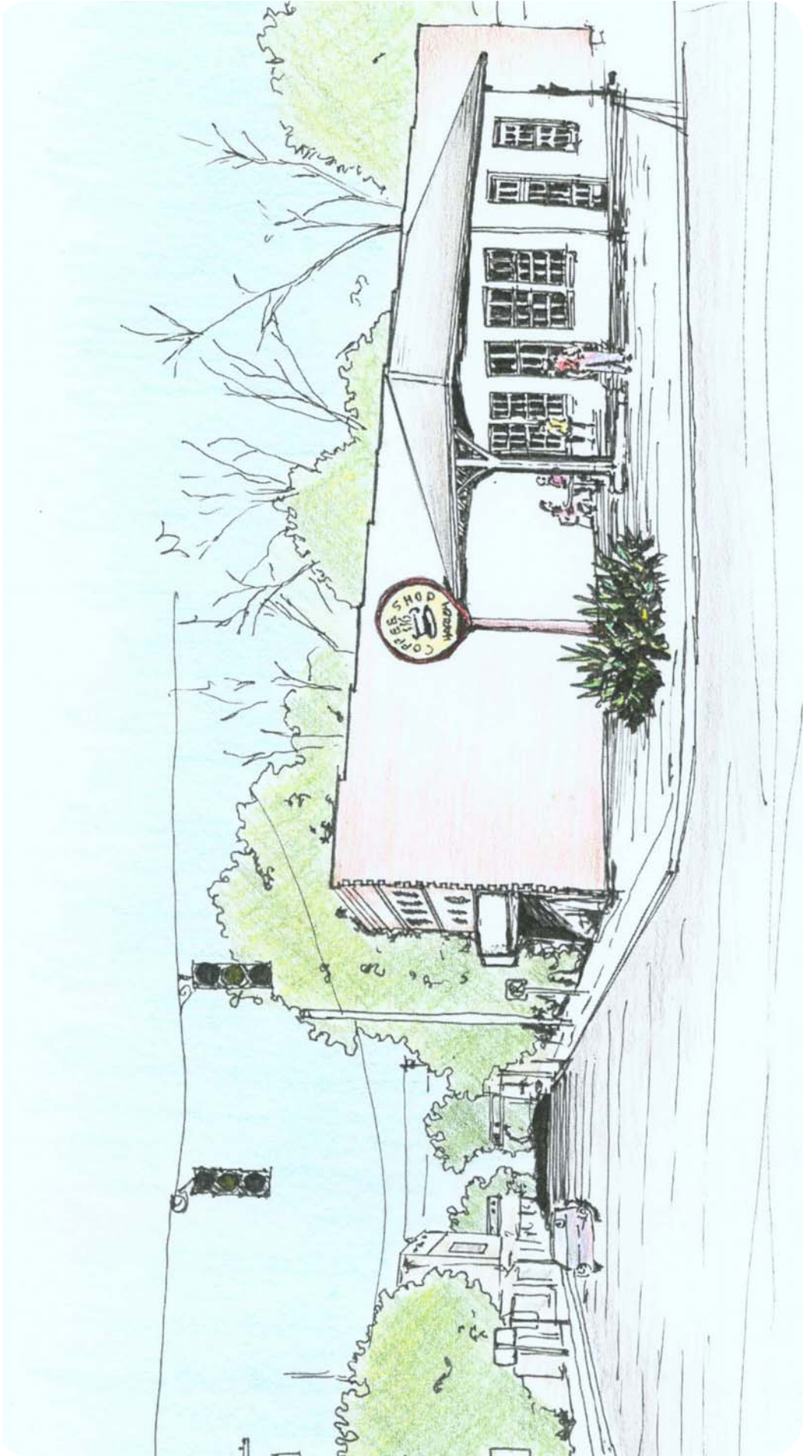
Coffee Shop / Bakery

The intersection of US 78 and Main Street should be a starting-point for the Harlem Downtown experience. The addition of a coffee shop/bakery will add activity to the corner, help slow the speed of passing traffic, and give Harlem residents another place to linger.



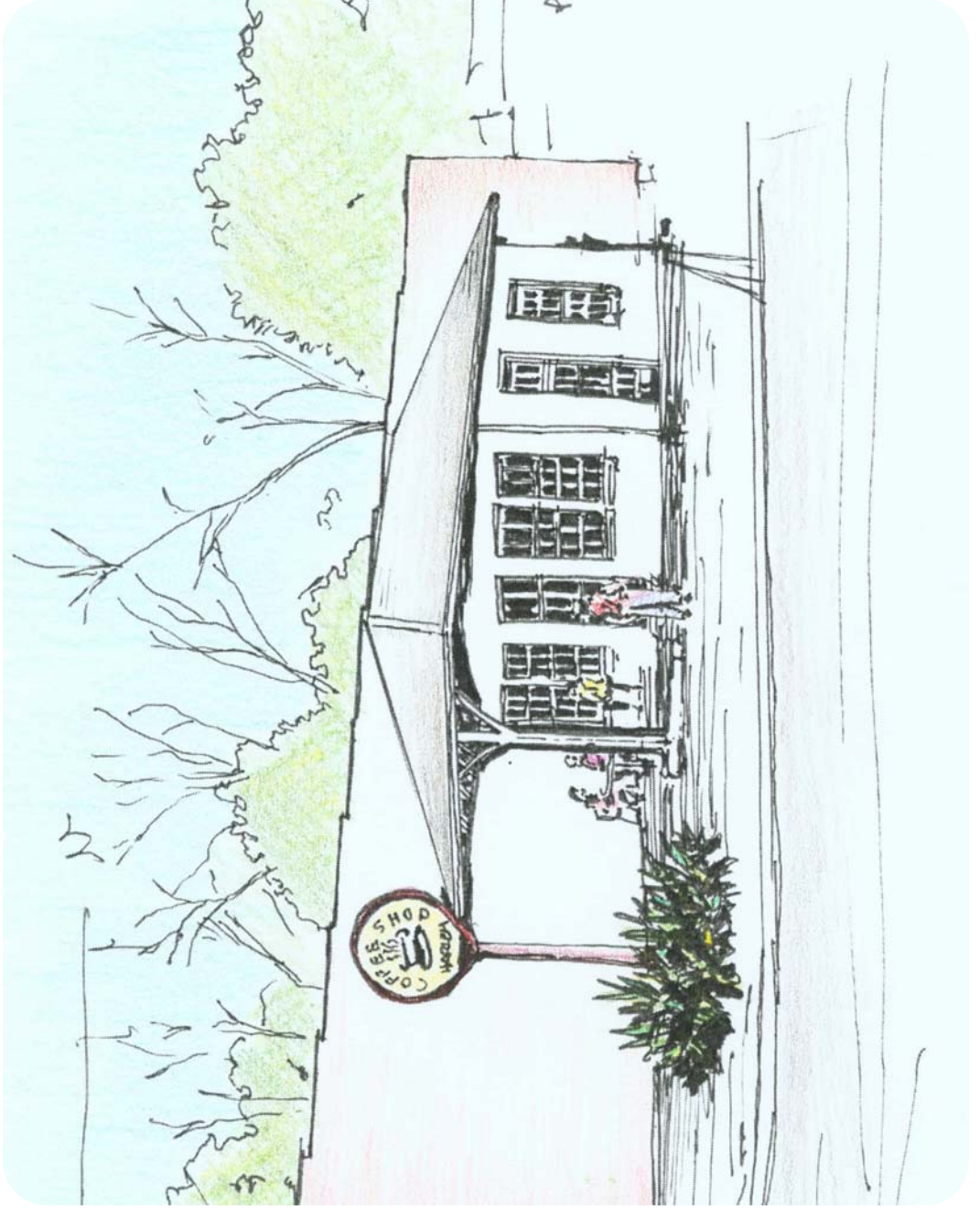
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The Harlem Charrette

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The Harlem Farm Supply

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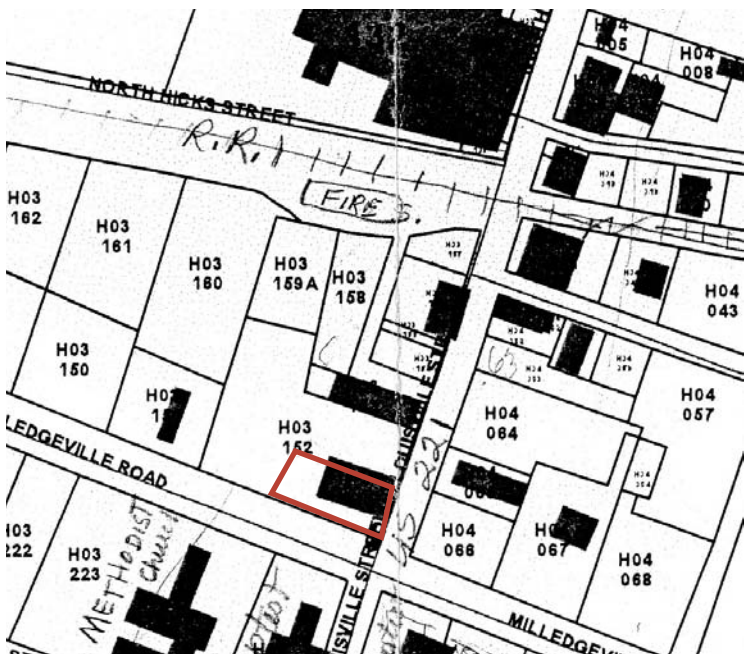


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The Harlem Farm Supply

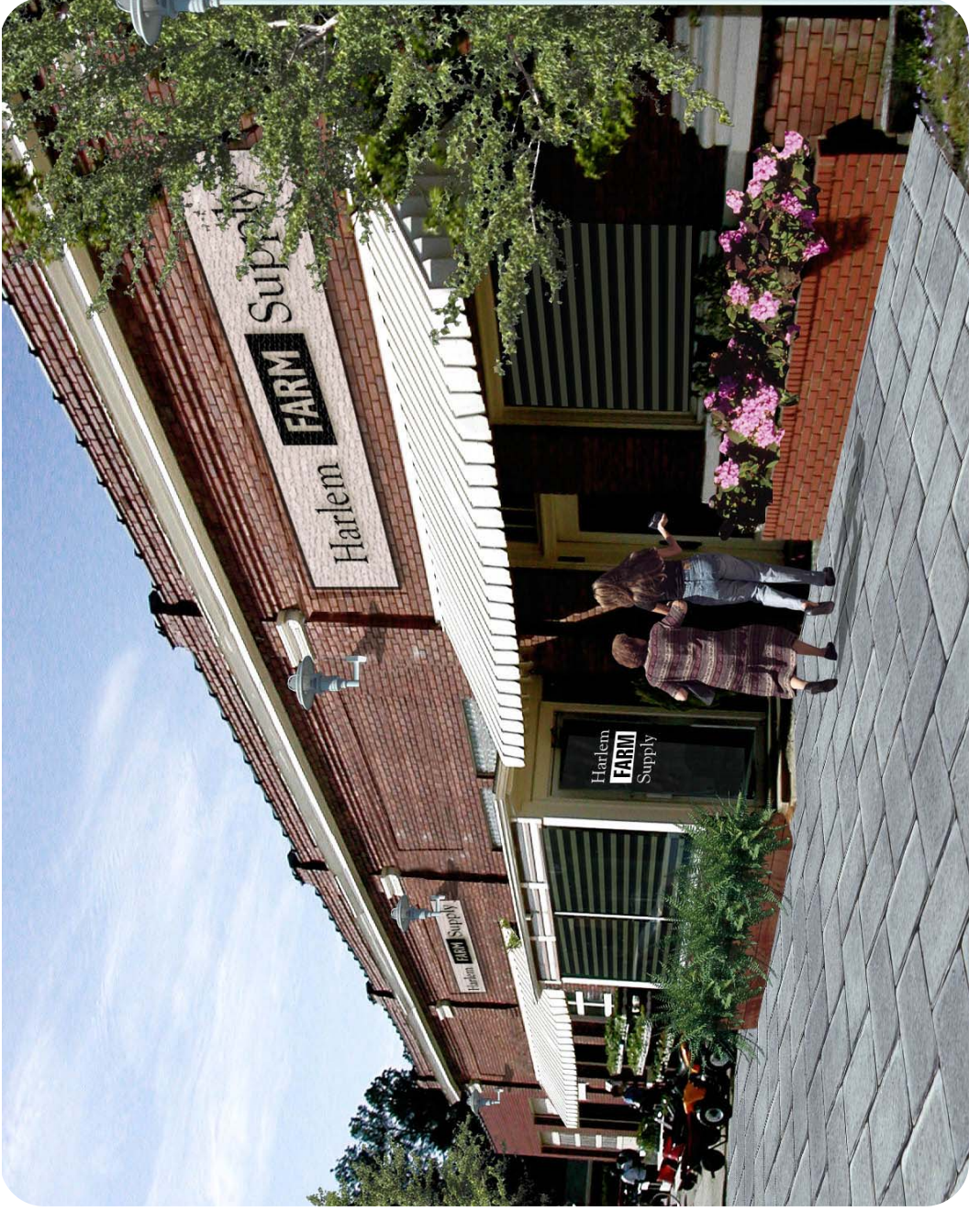
The old Ford dealership, now Harlem Farm Supply, is a great example of adaptive use and should serve as the model for other now empty buildings in Harlem. The changes made to the building to adapt it to its new function have been sensitive and have caused little impact to the historic fabric of the structure.

New signage more emblematic of the early 20th century would better tie the building to the historic appearance of Harlem. New uses that might be planned for the building should take their cue from the current occupants treatment of the exterior. The area surrounding the building, while adequate, could be enhanced with a better unified landscape scheme and new semi porous pavement in front. The area behind the building is well screened from the street and can be used as outdoor sales, parking or dining. This building provides major anchoring for the end of Main and all efforts must be made to keep it as an active and strong retail presence.



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The **Harlem** Charrette

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