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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2009

\$6 beyond the greater New

## Momentum in South Harlem

By IRWIN ARIEFF

**A** MINI-BOOM is rippling along Frederick Douglass Boulevard in South Harlem, with the Douglass, a 38-unit luxury condominium at West 114th Street, the latest to join the scene.

Known not too long ago for its abandoned buildings and stubborn street crime, the area now has amenities like a yoga studio and a pet day care center.

Heading north from Central Park, the area along Frederick Douglass Boulevard from West 110th to West 138th has long been viewed as ripe for renewal. Several developers are banking on it, even as the recession keeps a lid on asking prices.

Fueled by the A, B, C and D subway lines that run beneath it, the mile-long stretch is gaining momentum from new restaurants and businesses. Recent arrivals include a Starbucks, a Dunkin' Donuts and a Chase bank. A Best Yet Market is to open next month at West 118th Street. And Starwood Hotels will open a midpriced boutique-style hotel in May at Frederick Douglass Boulevard and West 124th Street.

Before the recession, a high-end apartment in South Harlem was going for as much as \$800 a square foot. Today, it might be \$600 to the low \$700s, said Stephen G. Klieger-

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ELI WASHINGTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**NEW ON THE BLOCK** The amenity-filled Douglass condominium came on the market in late November.

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man, the executive director of development marketing for Halstead Property, which is handling the Douglass. Other real estate professionals estimated the decline in South Harlem at 10 to 25 percent.

"These price points are relatively similar to downtown Brooklyn or Fort Greene," Mr. Kliegerman said, "but here, you are in Manhattan."

While many were predicting last year that the Harlem market would slide into the \$400 to low-\$500 range per square foot, "it never really came to that point" and prices have now bottomed out and are stabilizing, he said. "A lot of buyers who were actually pushed out of Harlem a year or two ago because prices rose so quickly are now able to come back because prices are a little bit more reasonable."

Adding to the area's allure are 25-year real estate tax abate-

**New restaurants and businesses on a mile-long stretch.**

ments granted a number of new buildings, including the Douglass, under the city's 421-a plan, which rewards projects that set aside some apartments at reduced prices for low-income buyers.

The Douglass (thedouglass-condo.com), which came on the market in late November, offers one- to three-bedroom units



**73 UNITS** The Livmore, on Frederick Douglass Boulevard and West 115th Street, is scheduled to open in January.



**MODEL APARTMENT** Units at the Douglass, also on the boulevard, have hardwood floors and high-end appliances.

ranging from 762 to 1,355 square feet and from \$529,000 to \$969,000, putting the average price in the mid \$600s per square foot.

Amenities at the Douglass include hardwood floors, granite countertops and high-end appliances, among them washers and dryers.

The four penthouses have 12-foot ceilings, skylights and private terraces. There's also a shared courtyard and fitness room. Basement parking spots are being sold separately, for \$50,000 each. There is a subway stop at 116th Street; Central Park starts four blocks south, and Morningside Park is a block and a half to the west.

During its first four weeks on the market, interest in the Douglass was very strong, even during the snowstorm last week, said Sheree Yellin Satos, the building's sales manager. "Offers have been made on six properties, four of these have been accepted and there are negotiations on a few more," Ms. Yellin Satos said, declining to say precisely how many more.

A second luxury condo, the Livmor (livmor.com), with 73 units and the same 25-year tax abatement, is due to open officially in January at 301 West 115th Street.

"We have had a great deal of interest, even before the printing of the offering plan," said Dawn Tsien, an executive vice president at Prudential Douglas Elliman, which is handling sales for the Livmor.

It will offer one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments from 808 to 2,100 square feet and priced from the mid \$400,000s to \$1.1 million or \$1.2 million, some with private roof terraces. Amenities will include a yoga studio, a media room with projection TV, a children's play space and a kitchen for catered events.

"I consider the Franklin Douglass Boulevard corridor to be an extension of the Upper West Side at this point," Ms. Tsien said. "Many years ago, some people said you couldn't go above 68th Street, and now it is even above 125th Street."

Ms. Tien described potential buyers at the Douglass and for Harlem in general as "people who are perhaps priced out of the Upper West Side. It is like any emerging neighborhood," she said. "People have been moving to these various areas because of the attraction of the size of the apartments and the affordability of the product."

The crime rate in the South



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUBY WASHINGTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**91 UNITS SOHA 118, at West 118th Street, came on the market in early 2008. Two-thirds of market-rate apartments have sold.**

Harlem area is roughly comparable to that of the Upper West Side precinct directly to the south, according to police figures. In the 28th Precinct, which stretches from Central Park North to 127th Street between Morningside and Fifth Avenues, there have been 869 crime complaints so far this year.

The 24th Precinct, which runs from 86th Street to 110th between the Hudson River and Central Park West, has recorded 946

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## Brokers say prices declined but never went into a slide.

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crime complaints so far this year.

The Douglass and the Livmore join condominiums like SOHA 118 at 301 West 118th Street. SOHA 118 (soha118.com) is a 15-story building with 91 apartments ranging from one- to four-bedrooms. The building opened its doors in early 2008 and about two-thirds of its market-rate units have so far sold.

The Corcoran Group, which is handling sales, shows two- to four-bedroom apartments at 1,100 to 3,400 square feet and ranging in price from \$740,000 to \$3 million. A four-bedroom penthouse, going for \$3 million, is at 3,400 square feet said to be one of the largest condos available in Harlem at this time.

"At the beginning of 2009," said Vie Wilson, a senior vice president at Corcoran, "the market wasn't doing much of anything. But within the last six months,

six apartments have sold. There has been more interest, more people coming to see, more people making offers."

The emerging luxury market is drawing almost every category of potential buyer, agents said, including families, young professionals, single women, gay couples and empty-nesters seeking to move back into the city.

"There are probably 15 or 20 new condo or co-op buildings that have popped up between 110th and 125th along Frederick Douglass Boulevard in the past six or seven years," said Eric McLendon, a senior sales associate at Corcoran. "It is good for the neighborhood and it's good for buyers as well, and the spring market is poised to be a big one. Any buyer that comes up here is going to spend much less than in other parts of the city and get more, and these luxury buildings are attracting a wider audience."

"Harlem Guy," a blogger at HarlemCondoLife.com, a Web site dedicated to "all that's great about Harlem," calls southern Harlem "truly spectacular."

"You have new condos, new stores and new restaurants springing up," he said in a telephone interview, concealing his real name, he explained, to ensure that he and his fellow bloggers can write honestly.

"It takes just half an hour to get home from Midtown by cab or train, and it's a true melting pot, just what New York is meant to be. If you're a local, you may feel priced out or unhappy over all the recent real estate activity. But from what I see and hear, there is plenty of room for everyone in Harlem; it's a huge piece of New York."