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Bell Pharmacy, at the corner of Haddon and Kalgho avenues in Camden, has been family-owned and operated since the 1930s. PHOTOS BY PHAEDRA TRETHAN/COURIER-POST

Embracing the retro

A new (old) look for Camden family pharmacy

Phaedra Trethan
CHIEF WRITER/COURIER-POST
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

CAMDEN — The pharmacy at the corner of Haddon and Kalgho avenues looks a bit like a fortress.

There's good reason for that, or at least there was: Bell Pharmacy had seen fire, ruin and armed robberies over the last five decades, and for years, its owners and employees felt unsafe. So they worked behind windows that were covered up, and behind reinforced partitions with slots for talking to customers or sliding currency and products back and forth.

But a lot has changed in Camden, said Anthony Mininelli, who's owned Bell Pharmacy with his sister, Marian Morton, since 1997.

"We've seen wonderful things happening downtown and along the other end of Haddon Avenue," where street improvements and a new charter school have added to the landscape around Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, said Mininelli.

"You get so used to the static nature of things, but sometimes you have to really look around you to see changes," he said. "You look at your own physical presence with new eyes."

But simply, with so much change happening



Anthony Mininelli and his sister Marian Morton co-own Bell Pharmacy and plan to restore the storefront with a more welcoming facade, windows and lighting.

"We see ourselves as stewards of something that belongs to Parkside, and to Camden. We want to make certain that tradition continues."

Anthony Mininelli
Co-owner of Bell Pharmacy

See PHARMACY, Page 6A

Advocates eye review of public funding of NJ charter schools

Jean Ribbach and Abbott Koloff
TOPIC WRITER
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Education advocates and civil rights groups called on state legislators to investigate the way charter schools buy real estate and how well state agencies oversee these transactions and the public money that goes into them.

The request for a joint Senate and Assembly oversight committee with subpoena power comes in reaction to an investigation by NorthJersey.com and the USA TODAY Network's New Jersey detailing how millions of public dollars routinely pay for buildings that are used by charter schools but which are owned privately.

The five-part series showed how lax oversight by multiple state agencies and laws in the law governing charter schools created the current situation, where information is often hidden and schools can become entangled in questionable deals with high fees and can pay rents to support groups that far exceed building costs.

The largest charter operators have been allowed to monopolize hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid, using methods that are now under IRS scrutiny.

The Education Law Center and eight other advocacy groups asked Senate President Stephen Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin in a letter to swiftly create a joint oversight committee to hold hearings and call witnesses in a "full and thorough investigation." The letter said the committee should be given subpoena power and have the ability to refer matters to the state attorney general.

"At a time when our public schools are chronically underfunded and additional resources are urgently needed for school facilities projects in school districts across the state, any misuse, waste and/or neglect of taxpayer dollars devoted to public education is a serious matter warranting legislative investigation and, where necessary,

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Riley Carter, left, and Thomas Bole, center, help Jerry Whitaker and Sunday through wreckage caused the night before outside of Haddon. Miss. JIM LITTLE

USA TODAY

Storms head to Northeast

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