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Building support for a building

The battle between preservationists and the city over 2 Columbus Circle is about to get noisy again. Preservationist group **Landmarks West!** has just hired The Advance Group, the consulting firm that helped union workers at the Plaza Hotel rescue more rooms from condo conversion.

“We plan to run a campaign similar to the one we ran to save the Plaza,” says Ken Frydman, a consultant for The Advance Group, who promises a lot of “coalition building.”

The initial goal is to get the Landmarks Preservation Commission to reconsider its decision not to hold hearings on the 41-year-old building, whose eccentric design by Edward Durell Stone has attracted celebrity defenders such as architect Robert A.M. Stern.

Meanwhile, the Museum of Arts and Design is moving forward with plans to make the building its new home, complete with a new facade. “We’re on schedule,” says Laurie Beckelman, director of the new building program at the museum, adding that construction will begin in the fall.

Club corrects its politics

The controversial Harlem Club is finally opening next month at 143 Madison Ave., more than one year after it created an uproar over policies that require female members to be “pretty and in great shape, 21 to 35 years of age, single with no children and college educated,” according to publicity materials.

To appease critics, owner Thomas Lopez-Pierre is launching a number of social clubs within the space that are based on professional achievement rather than looks. “A number of businesswomen came to me and showed me how I could generate more revenue by being socially responsible,” says a contrite Mr. Lopez-Pierre. The Minority M.B.A. Club, the Minority Lawyers/Doctors Club, the Minority Fashion Club and others will meet once a month.

In keeping with his dual mission, Mr. Lopez-Pierre plans to launch a digest-sized magazine for members that he describes as one part Black Enterprise and one part Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue. The January debut issue will feature Stacie J. of The Apprentice on the cover--in a bikini, of course.

Mets score better ratings

With the Mets playing about .500 ball for a change, games on WPIX are hitting a home run for the station. So far this season, household viewership jumped 26%, compared with the same period a year earlier, according to Nielsen Media Research. While the team isn't breaking any performance records, new star players Pedro Martinez and Carlos Beltran are providing a boost. With television advertising stuck in a soft spot, "the Mets are a very positive thing for us right now," says Betty Ellen Berlamino, WPIX's general manager.

Now that games are back on Time Warner Cable, ratings, which dropped 50% on Fox Sports New York and 26% on MSG Network, should recover. Meanwhile, the slow-starting Yankees saw their ratings rise 10% on WOR year-to-date, compared with last year's ratings on WCBS, though YES Network game ratings have slipped 13%.

Arts groups in the market

Four nonprofits that focus on art from different cultures are teaming up to buy a building in lower Manhattan and create the Center for Art Tradition and Cultural Heritage, or CATCH.

The project is being spearheaded by City Lore, a folklore and oral history center on the Lower East Side. Other participants are the World Music Institute, which presents international performers; the Center for Traditional Music and Dance, which develops festivals for immigrant communities; and the Society for the Educational Arts, which runs a Latino children's theater.

The coalition is planning to raise about \$8 million and is looking for 55,000 square feet of space. The center would have a 300-seat auditorium, a gallery and office space. It would also serve as an incubator for small ethnic nonprofits to help them get started.

"There aren't many things that New York City doesn't have culturally," says Steve Zeitlin, executive director of City Lore. "But there is no center for cultural heritage that brings together all the immigrant groups in a contemporary way."

Covering beats for feminism

Hip-hop quarterly magazine *The Ave* is unveiling its first women's issue this week. The self-proclaimed "street movement in print," which launched a year ago, plans to explore the lack of feminism in hip-hop and the growing problem of AIDS within the black community, particularly among African-American women. Bronx rap queen First Lady Remy Ma, who is on the cover, will discuss her role in the spreading of oversexed images of women in hip-hop, and her responsibility as an artist to change that.

While hip-hop publications often feature tattooed, gun-toting artists, insiders say the culture has a large, underserved female following. "Because women in hip-hop are often relegated to the background, we thought it only right to dedicate an issue to bringing women into the forefront," says Anslem Samuel, editor in chief.

GRAPHIC:

Art Caption: DESPERATELY SEEKING CIRC: The struggling New York Sun is offering New Yorkers two weeks of free delivery in a bid to boost its circulation. It peaked in March 2004 at 53,000, but fell in September to 45,000, according to the last official numbers released by Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Art Credit: 2 Columbus Circle preservationists will take a page from Plaza workers.

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