

Rally and Press Conference to preserve 2 Columbus Circle

Hellskitchen kitchen@hellskitchen.net

Fri, 18 Dec 1998 02:50:35 -0500

- Previous message: [Hell's Kitchen Debates Tonight!](#)
- Next message: [Community Board 4 -- January 1999 Schedules](#)
- **Messages sorted by:** [date] [thread] [subject] [author]

RALLY TO PRESERVE 2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE AS AN ART MUSEUM ON THE WESTSIDE
Committee For Environmentally Sound Development (212) 877-4394

Sunday, 11 a.m. December 20, 1998
At West 58th Street and Broadway
In front of the edifice

Participating:
Elected Officials, Artists, Architects, and Preservationists

Committee For Environmentally Sound Development (212) 877-4394
Press Advisory Contact: Olive Freud
December 17, 1998 (212) 877-4394

2 Columbus Circle - Huntington Hartford Museum

A rally and press conference to preserve 2 Columbus Circle will be held on Sunday, 1998 at 11 a. m with Councilmember Tom Duane, Councilmember Ronnie Eldridge, U.S. Jerrold Nadler, U. S. Representative Carolyn Maloney, State Senator Franz Leichter Catherine Abate, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, and Assembly Member Scott Stri

This unique Edward Durrell Stone structure with Middle Eastern details was origina house the Huntington Hartford Gallery. The Westside wants the building to be pres original purpose as an art museum. An Art Museum would be a welcome addition to th Cultural Corridor. We urge that the Mayor choose the Dahesh Museum as the next own architectural keepsake.

Not only is the art world backing the Dahesh, but also environmentalists concerned overdevelopment at Columbus Circle deplore the addition of the proposed Trump Hote

=====

Will the West Side's most unusual building be preserved as a museum or razed for a hotel?

THE ART OR THE DEAL
From the Manhattan Spirit, Dec. 3, 1998
By Monica Rivituso

There's no denying it, the 10-story concrete structure that stands as the southern Columbus Circle has had its share of criticism. Then again, the building at 2 Colu with its sleek, white Vermont marble skin, concave facade and engraved edges, is a as a "gem" by preservationists, museum curators and elected officials.

What the city thinks of the building has yet to be revealed, but ultimately, it's administration's vote that counts.

For about six months, 2 Columbus Circle has been sitting vacant. Two years ago, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) put out a request for proposals for the site. The city has been pondering the building's fate. A decision is expected soon, as it reportedly whittled the choices down to two: The Trump Organization and the Dahesh

The proposals couldn't be more different: Trump wants to raze the structure and build a new one while the Dahesh wants to move into it and make it a museum. There are strong emotions throughout the question of what should be done with 2 Columbus Circle. One thing a decision could potentially change the shape of the gateway to the Upper West Side.

Two Columbus Circle was designed by renowned architect Edward Durell Stone and built in the 1960s for Huntington Hartford, a wealthy businessman. His vision? The Huntington House of Modern Art. Today, people remember this museum as an offbeat institution that few other museums wouldn't show. The city came into ownership of the building after the Huntington Western company gave it to New York in the mid '70s. But the future of the building, recently, was home to the city's Department of Cultural Affairs, remains to be seen.

"No decision has been made yet," EDC spokesperson Janel Patterson said, declining to elaborate further. "It's the policy of the EDC not to discuss pending decisions."

Patterson did say that proposals were being evaluated on more than their financial merits. EDC is examining how the site would be developed in each proposal, including the impact on the neighborhood. "It's more complicated than dollars and cents," she said, refusing to disclose the prices each party was willing to pay for the site.

Donald Trump, who hopes to demolish the building and build a luxury hotel directly across the street from Trump International Hotel and Tower, not unsurprisingly thinks his plan is the best for the site and the city.

"I know that as a hotel we have many more jobs to offer and much higher taxes to offer than the city," Trump told the Spirit.

The proposed hotel would rise no taller than the building's current height, according to who refuted the widespread notion that it would be a 30-story structure. He added that the job would be a "beautiful, aesthetic" job, even though he admits the site is restrained.

The building sits on a tiny island, bordered by Eighth Avenue, Broadway, Columbus Street. And, according to information from the archives of the architect Stone, no two buildings on the site are alike. Although the lot can't handle the type of towering structure that Trump is proposing, he still describes the location as a "gem."

But critics of his plan say that another luxury hotel, let alone another Trump hotel, is an overkill at Columbus Circle.

Predictably, Trump disagrees. "The other site [Trump International Hotel and Tower] is the most successful hotel in the country," Trump said. "It's rated No. 1 in New York and they'll play off each other."

But not if the Dahesh Museum gets the nod from the city. The museum, which collects academic art from the 19th and early 20th centuries, is now squeezed into a cramped gallery of a midtown building on Fifth Avenue. Not only isn't there enough office space for educational programs or even the museum's permanent collection. Of the art that the museum owns, none are currently on display, according to Dahesh Director Farmer.

Citing a confidentiality agreement that was signed when the museum submitted its proposal to the city, Farmer wouldn't elaborate on the bid price or plans. He confirmed that the museum's city officials two weeks ago to make its case again for the site and that officials are still talking about setting a specific time as to when a decision would be made.

"We're proposing to take it [2 Columbus Circle] back to its original use," he said. "The auditorium space in the building could be a community resource for groups."

Farmer is also a fan of the building itself. "It really kind of fits right in and

the circle," he says. "For instance, it has a curved facade that echoes the circle the other buildings have."

James Draper, a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, says 2 Columbus Circle moment in architecture," and would like to see the building reconnected with it's as a museum. There's also a question of how Columbus Circle would look if the buil

"I think it would look gloomy without it," he said.

Two Columbus Circle was one of the earliest reactions to the high, modernist struc built out of steel and glass at the time, according to accounts. In a way, the bac such constructions has had a renewed vigor on the West Side, as various projects h sprouting up one of them Trump's 16-building development on the Hudson River. For preservationists, 2 Columbus Circle holds the same significance now as it did when

"Environmentally, we're choking here with too much development. It's infuriating, who are let loose," said Olive Freud, vice president of the West Side group, Commi Environmentally Sound Development. She notes that 2 Columbus Circle was built as a there's an opportunity to have a world-class museum move in. "The only ones who wa down are Trump and [Mayor Rudolph] Giuliani."

The Mayor's office did not return calls for comment.

Despite one developer's plans to raze 2 Columbus Circle, many say there's been a g support to save the structure. "The building has a lot of friends," Farmer said.

Indeed, Freud's group favors supporting the Dahesh's bid for 2 Columbus Circle, an opposed to Trump's plan for the site. "It's really criminal to destroy a beautiful architecture," Freud said. "The city has done it before Penn Station for one."

Freud isn't the only admirer of the building. In a letter to the mayor dated Nov. elected officials urged the building not be demolished. "We would like to see the site preserved. Many believe it should be landmarked. We also feel the building sh worthy cultural institution, as it was originally intended to do," the letter stat

Councilwoman Ronnie Eldridge, who supports preserving 2 Columbus Circle, expressed that numerous requests for meetings with city officials regarding the building hav unanswered. Too much in this administration is done in secret, according to Eldrid certainly one of the earliest and longest examples of that," she said. "You get wo while."

Assemblyman Richard Gottfried also supports preserving 2 Columbus Circle. "I think is to preserve the building and second, once it's preserved, use it as a cultural said. "I think it's really inappropriate the secrecy that has covered this whole b

City Councilman Tom Duane, who is the state Senator-elect for the district that th in, sent his own letter to city officials. "As the city struggles to come up with traffic problems at Columbus Circle, and as the mammoth Coliseum Project moves for that it is of the utmost importance that we do not continue to overburden the infr this area," Duane wrote.

"My hope is that the city will recognize the need for a use at Columbus Circle, wh impact on traffic infrastructure and which adds to the mix of cultural institution Duane told the Spirit.

Despite the hopes of West Side officials and residents, there's a pessimistic assu throughout the community that Trump will get the site. Furthermore, a rumor is swi city will award it to the developer as a consolation for his losing the bid on the Coliseum project. However, no one is able to point to any concrete evidence to sup speculation. Needless to say, Trump disagrees with it.

"I don't think so at all. This [2 Columbus Circle] is something that I have always said. "In a strange way, I like this site even more."

-
- Previous message: [Hell's Kitchen Debates Tonight!](#)
 - Next message: [Community Board 4 -- January 1999 Schedules](#)
 - **Messages sorted by:** [\[date \]](#) [\[thread \]](#) [\[subject \]](#) [\[author \]](#)