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Children's Museum finds room to grow

Heading to a bigger space in Hudson Square

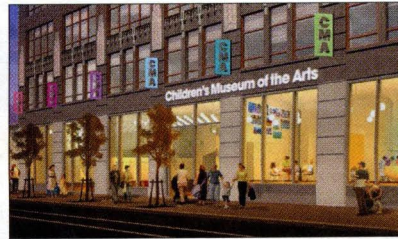
BY MIRIAM KREININ SOUCCAR

THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM of the Arts, the SoHo institution where kids exhibit works they create with the help of professional artists, is growing like a fifth-grader. The museum will announce on March 21 that it has raised \$5 million of the \$6.4 million needed for a new, 10,000-square-foot home at 103 Charlton St. The space, which will open in the fall, will be triple the size of the museum's current location at 182 Lafayette St., where it has been since its 1988 inception. The groundbreaking will take place on April 19.

"In the past five years, there's been enormous growth in the demand for our programs," said David Kaplan, CMA's executive director. "We literally haven't had the room to serve everyone."

Mr. Kaplan estimates that CMA's attendance could reach nearly 100,000, or double its current amount, in its new home. The facility, designed by Dan Wood and Amale Andraos of Work AC, includes two extra art labs for school groups, a new media lab, and a 2,000-square-foot exhibition gallery.

The new media lab will help CMA attract more teens, who have typically shied away from the museum because they felt it catered too much to younger kids. It will also offer more space for birthday parties and allow the organization to more than double the number



of schools it works with from its current 30. CMA's free programming for teenage mothers, homeless families, and families impacted by autism spectrum disorders will also double.

The move will be a boost to the Hudson Square neighborhood. Ellen Baer, president of the Hudson Square Connection, the area's business improvement district, said the BID has been trying to create a more vibrant community that will keep people around after work.

"[CMA] will bring more families from TriBeCa, SoHo and the Village here," Ms. Baer said.

Mr. Kaplan estimates the museum's roughly \$1.9 million annual operating budget will grow by about 40% in the first couple of years after the new facility opens. Even though 70% of the budget comes from earned revenue, he isn't worried about bringing in more funds.

"Our biggest moneymakers are the school partnerships and the art colony programs we run during the summer and school breaks," he said. "Once we get more space, we'll be able to do twice as much." ■