

## Greetings, Neighbor...

In preservation—really in any kind of advocacy fueled by hope and passion against steep odds—loss is a daily fact of life. But some touch us more deeply than others. The recent death of **Norman Marcus** (1932-2008)—planner, teacher, Upper West Sider—was one such loss. Norman was and remains a guiding light for so many of us striving to forge a city as it ought to be. LW! had the privilege of working closely with him to preserve the Central Park West skyline and adjacent brownstone midblocks. In testimony before the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, Norman declared Congregation Shearith Israel's latest bid to develop a luxury condo high-rise on its currently low-rise West 70th Street site **“a harbinger of importance to the Upper West Side...a harbinger because there are at least a half dozen other institutions waiting to apply the precedent.”** (See Shearith Israel update below.) Though generally soft-spoken, Norman had a voice that carried louder and farther than most, given his profound expertise in planning and government (Norman was for over two decades the General Counsel for the NYC Department of City Planning).

As this newsletter went to press, we learned of another sad loss — **Dorothy Miner**, who died on October 21. Dorothy was Counsel for the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission from 1975 to 1994 and a mentor to preservationists, especially those who attended Columbia's Historic Preservation program where she taught for many years. Like all true landmarks, Dorothy and Norman are irreplaceable.

  
Arlene Simon, *President*

  
Kate Wood, *Executive Director*

## At Deadline: Congregation Shearith Israel

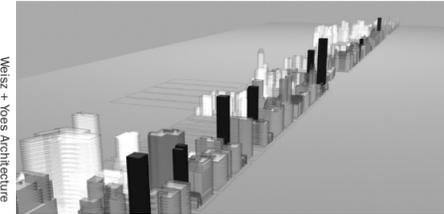
On Friday, August 29, as New York was shutting down for the long Labor Day weekend, the NYC Board of Standards and Appeals issued a formal 20-page resolution approving Congregation Shearith Israel's (CSI's) application for 7 zoning height and setback variances to construct a new community house with 5 floors of luxury condos stacked on top—a building that will tower over the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue (an Individual Landmark designed by Brunner & Tryon and built in 1897) right next door and the 4-story brownstones that define this historic midblock of West 70th Street (in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District). The Board's approval rewards CSI's decades-long effort to exploit the real-estate potential of its prime Central Park West location.

Contextual zoning (83% of CSI's proposed development site sits in a low-rise R8B district) and landmark protection are ceilings developers have been pushing against for decades. And now, 5 floors or 50 floors, the sky's the limit for nonprofits with valuable properties in traditional, low-rise communities in Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, Staten Island and Manhattan. Despite hard economic times, the City's budget will remain dependent on Wall Street and commercial real-estate. Agencies will be under ever more pressure to approve applications like CSI's throughout the 5 boroughs. It doesn't take a microscope to spot this trend. With this approval, the City has opened the door to luxury condos towering over nonprofits in every previously protected neighborhood in the city.

Visit [www.landmarkwest.org/advocacy/70st.html](http://www.landmarkwest.org/advocacy/70st.html) for more information on LW's legal challenge.

## Central Park West's Iconic Skyline Silhouette: Potential Futures

If Central Park is the Upper West Side's "front yard," then Central Park West may well be our neighborhood's front door. If this statement hits a competitive nerve among our Riverside Drive neighbors...good! LW's



CPW, view north from W. 64th St. showing potential development

current efforts to analyze and predict future development patterns along Central Park West could just as easily apply to many other historic, architectural vistas in our city. The urgent need to study Central Park West emerged, however, out of a series of proposals to alter the avenue's iconic skyline—the primary "face" the West Side presents to the rest of the city—and change the character of the parkside rowhouse midblocks, including development schemes recently put forward by Congregation Shearith Israel on 70th Street and the New-York Historical Society between 76th and 77th Streets (see our Fall/Winter 2007 Newsletter, pp. 2 and 3).

**Robert A.M. Stern called buildings like these ...a chain of monumental gateways to the West Side...a testament to the low-scale Classical urbanism of the City Beautiful movement.**

Seeking to get ahead of this development curve on a global rather than piecemeal basis, LW! embarked on an ambitious project to identify "soft sites" along Central Park West and forecast possible development scenarios based on observation of trends in the City's permit-granting process. We enlisted Weisz + Yoes ([www.wystudio.com](http://www.wystudio.com)), an architecture and urban design firm with experience working for both community groups and private developers, to conduct the study (they found 10 "soft sites" in all), produce 3-D digital models showing current and future buildouts, and summarize their findings in a report, *Central Park West Skyline: Potential Futures*. Community Board 7, former City Planning Commission General Counsel Norman Marcus, and zoning consultant Gerald George have been indispensable advisors, together with the scores of individual donors who recognized the relevance of anticipating—and potentially shaping—development before it hits the pages of the *New York Times*.

To ensure that the report serves a higher purpose than catching dust on the bookshelf, we are working to clarify its findings and hone its recommendations through close consultation with colleagues in preservation, architecture, planning and real estate as well as informed members of the community at large. If you are interested in a presentation of the study and 3-D digital models, please contact us at 212-496-8110 or [landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org](mailto:landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org). We value your input!

**On June 25, 2008, architectural historian (and newly appointed director of Columbia University's graduate program in Historic Preservation) Andrew S. Dolkart led friends of LW! on a sold out walking tour of Central Park West, highlighting its importance.**

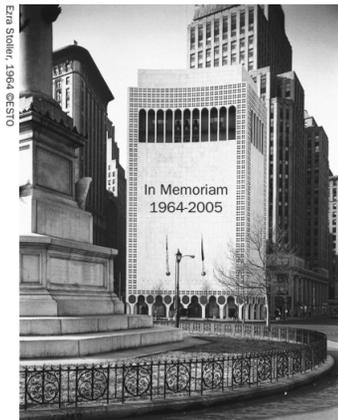
## 2 Columbus Circle: A Preservation Battle to Remember, Lessons to Be Learned

In two powerful articles timed in sync with the opening of the new Museum of Arts and Design at 2 Columbus Circle in late September, *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff condemned the destruction of the original Edward Durell Stone building. And he isn't particularly fond of the new building either.

On September 26, 2008, Ouroussoff wrote,

...this is not the bold architectural statement that might have justified the destruction of an important piece of New York history. Poorly detailed and lacking in confidence, the project is a victory only for people who favor the safe and inoffensive and have always been squeamish about the frictions that give this city its vitality...We're left with an image of a New York that has been scrubbed of any real meaning.

Then, the very next day, Ouroussoff struck again with a second article "New York City, Tear Down These Walls", putting the "new" redesigned 2 Columbus Circle in the same category as Madison Square Garden, Trump Place and the Javitz Center—buildings that he says ought to be knocked down because they "not only fail to bring us joy, but actually bring us down." Read on...



The result? Everybody lost. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission was too cowardly to render a verdict and never reviewed the case. The building was turned over to the Museum of Arts and Design, which gutted it to make room for new galleries and stripped away its white marble exterior."

*The above is excerpted from "New York City, Tear Down These Walls," by Nicolai Ouroussoff, the New York Times, September 28, 2008. The full article and more is available at [www.landmarkwest.org/saveipc.html](http://www.landmarkwest.org/saveipc.html)*

# The New York Times

## The Missing Landmarks Commission

*The New York Times, Editorials/Letters, Saturday, October 18, 2008*

Late last month, the Museum of Arts and Design reopened in its new home at 2 Columbus Circle. That home is the controversial reworking of Edward Durell Stone's eccentric building — much loved and much hated by New Yorkers ever since it was finished in 1964.

The Times's architecture critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, dubbed Stone's original building "a die-cut Venetian palazzo on lollipops." To us, it looked almost Moroccan, as if the casbah had gone high-rise.

Brad Cloepfil's bland redesign — which somehow suggests the technological polish of a desktop computer — will stir no such emotions, except as a potent symbol of the failure of the preservation process in this city.

Despite a public debate over the fate of Stone's building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission never held a public hearing. The commission's chair — with the encouragement of the Bloomberg administration — had the matter shelved. In June 2005, the city issued a permit to destroy the old facade and rework the building.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission should be a vital part of the planning process in New York City. Instead, it has become a bureaucratic black hole, the place where requests for evaluation — the formal nominations of buildings or districts to be landmarked — go to get filed and forgotten.

There are hundreds of requests from all across the city waiting to be acted upon. Some have been held up for years. Moving as slowly as it does — and nearly always without public hearings — the landmarking process is routinely outflanked by developers. What is clearly missing is the political will needed for the landmarks commission to do its job. For that, it must have the full backing of the mayor, who appoints the commissioners.

No one wants to see the city frozen by overly rigid landmarking. But New York is such an extraordinary place because of both its past and its future. The commission — in full consultation with the public — should play a critical role in balancing the two.

## Books In Brief



**Unexpected New York. Photography and text by Chester Burger (Goodwin Publishers, New York 2007).**

For the seasoned New Yorker or visitor looking for the history that waits undiscovered right under our noses, this beautifully illustrated book "takes you to 87 New York City places you thought you knew—and surprises you 87 times with true stories you've never heard before" (visit [www.unexpectedny.com](http://www.unexpectedny.com)). Upper West Sider Chester Burger delights both mind and eye with his photographs and "Did you know...?" stories, collected through years of walking and documenting the streets of New York.

## The Tip of the Iceberg: Quick Project Updates

**LW! Honored for Youth Education: Keeping the Past for the Future (KPF).** LW's school-based education program (which reached over 1,200 students on the Upper West Side this past school year) received an Award of Merit for Best Practice in K-12 Architectural Education from the American Architectural Foundation. This honor reinforces our confidence that teaching children about the pleasures and benefits of preservation just makes good sense if we are ever to move beyond our present tear-down, throw-away culture. While kids learn about recycling paper and plastic already...through KPF, they discover the value of conserving buildings, too! For more information on bringing KPF into your child's classroom, call 212-496-8110 or email [debigermann@landmarkwest.org](mailto:debigermann@landmarkwest.org).

**First Baptist Church Benefits from Pro Bono Architectural Services:** Together with **Page Ayres Cowley Architects** and structural engineering firm Robert Silman Associates, LW! is working with members of First Baptist Church (W. 79th St. & Broadway, designed by George Keister and completed in 1893) to consider the building's potential and maintenance concerns. Gustavo Carrera and Jobie Hill, two architects in Cowley's office, are logging community service work for First Baptist—on the firm's clock—in order to take their architectural licensing examinations. Donating professional expertise is an important way in which firms can help congregations like First Baptist by giving them the facts and knowledge they need to preserve, maintain and, if necessary, even update their buildings to keep them vital parts of our community.

**St. Michael's Church:** This past spring, one of New York's most remarkable religious ensembles—St. Michael's Episcopal Church Complex at W. 99th St. and Amsterdam Ave.—got on track to become the Upper West Side's 54th Individual Landmark (there are nearly 2,700 officially designated landmarks between W. 59th and 110th Sts., including historic districts, up from only 337 in 1985 when LW! was founded). Designed by architect Robert W. Gibson and built in 1891, St. Michael's earned a public hearing before the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) in 1980. But opposition from the church leadership condemned this beautiful house of worship to 28 years of landmarks limbo. On March 18, 2008, the LPC held another public hearing. At this writing, the LPC has yet to act decisively to save this and may other landmark-worthy religious structures, some imperiled by dwindling congregations and the lure of redevelopment (see LW's Fall/Winter 2007 newsletter, pp. 5-6).

# LANDMARK WEST!

**Support LW! – we need your help to keep preserving the Best of the West. Please return this form with your tax-deductible contribution.**

**\*A special offer:** Contribute **\$250** or more, and receive a gift of either *Unexpected New York: 87 Discoveries in Familiar Places* by Chester Burger / *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks* by Anthony C. Wood / *Green Architecture* by James Wines / or another book from our collection

- \$50  \$100  \$150  **\$250\***  \$500  \$1000
- Whatever you give will help \$\_\_\_\_\_ (we really need your support)
- Unexpected New York*  *Preserving New York*  *Green Architecture*
- Thanks, you can keep the book... but here's my gift of \$250
- I would like to make a gift in honor of \_\_\_\_\_
- I will do volunteer work for LANDMARK WEST! – send me a form
- My employer offers a Matching Grants Program – the form is enclosed
- Send me a LW! map of Upper West Side landmarks (map and back issues of LW's newsletter are also available on our website)
- Notify me of walking tours, lectures, workshops, etc. (email if possible)
- Nominate a preservation person, place or project to be a 2009 Unsung Hero! (Enclose a brief explanation)

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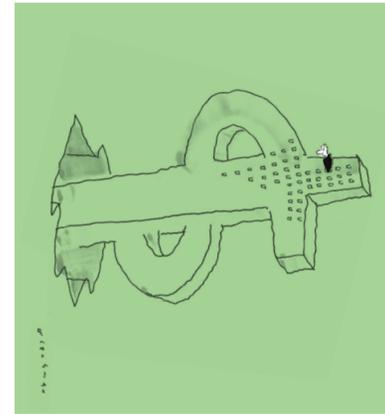
Design Oliver Munday ● Logo design Milton Glaser  
Cover and label page art drawn by R.O. Blechman Cover drawing first printed in *The Nation*  
Accountant Lutz & Carr ● Printer Mar+xMyles

## About Landmark West!

LANDMARK WEST! is a non-profit award-winning community group working to preserve the best of the Upper West Side's architectural heritage from 59 to 110 Street between Central Park West and Riverside Drive. Since 1985 it has worked to achieve landmark status for individual buildings and historic districts. Today, **LANDMARK WEST! is the proud curator of the area's nearly 2,700 designated landmarks (up from only 337 in 1985)**, and continues to promote awareness of these architectural treasures and the urgent need to protect them against insensitive change and demolition.

*This newsletter is made possible by readers like YOU! Please contact us about sponsorship opportunities.*

Board members: Terry Andrews, Kent Barwick, Sophia deBerer, Antonia Bryson, Andrew Scott Dolkart, Victor Korner, Sarah Bradford Landau, Christopher London, Amy Newman, Rena Schiel Rosen, Bruce Simon, Frances Spangler, Elizabeth Starkey, Robert Swartz, Bridget Thekston, Lori Zabar  
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“THE DOCTOROFF DOCTRINE—THE POLICY ESPOUSED BY EX-DEPUTY MAYOR AND STILL TOP BLOOMBERG ECONOMIC ADVISER DANIEL DOCTOROFF: THE MORE BUILDING THE BETTER, AND DON’T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF” ~ TOM ROBBINS, VILLAGE VOICE 4/1/08

→ 2008 Unsung Heroes ... *Unsung No more!* ←



- P.S. 87, 160 West 78th Street** - Future Generations Award presented by Alexis Penzell, NYC Department of Education superintendent and former P.S. 87 parent
- Whitney North Seymour, Jr.** - Preservation Citizen Award presented by Judge Jed S. Rakoff of the United States District Court (SDNY) pictured above (center)
- Pomander Walk, 260-266 West 95th Street** - Building Rehabilitation Award presented by Wint Aldrich, New York State Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
- Michael Laub, G&L Realty, 175 West 72nd Street & 170 West 73rd Street** - “Domino Effect” Award presented by Fernando Ferrer, former Bronx Borough President
- The Evanston, 610 West End Avenue at 90th Street** - Architectural Detail Restoration Award presented by Andrew S. Dolkart, the James Marston Fitch Associate Professor of Historic Preservation at Columbia University
- Cliff Dwelling Apartments, 243 Riverside Drive at 96th Street** - Building Stewardship Award presented by Susan Tunick, President of the Friends of Terra Cotta

On April 29, 2008, LW! and friends celebrated the **2008 Unsung Heroes of the Upper West Side**. Little did we know when we started planning this heartfelt, homegrown tribute to people who have made an honest-to-goodness difference for our city and our neighborhood that it would turn into such a hot ticket. (If you RSVP'd after we'd already sold out, your support and enthusiasm registered nonetheless!) The extraordinary turn-out speaks volumes about the accomplishments and contributions of our awardees (listed above, together with those who gamely presented the awards)...not to mention the lure of Rosa Mexicano's heavenly pomegranate margaritas, guacamole and other delicious fare (all donated) and the ideal historic setting in the former ballroom of the Hotel des Artistes, now LA PALESTRA, Center for Preventative Medicine (also donated). A video tribute to our awardees, designed by (Upper West Sider) Anthony Bellov Video Productions, is available at [www.landmarkwest.org/events/awardsceremony08.htm](http://www.landmarkwest.org/events/awardsceremony08.htm) along with invitation artwork donated by artist and Upper West Sider Ron Barrett.

April 29 was truly an all-too-rare chance to revel in the good that comes of people working together; fighting the battles that need to be fought; recognizing, preserving and taking pleasure in the beauty right here in our midst. Go to page 6 or our website for a 2009 Awards nomination form!

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**A Secret Garden:  
Pomander Walk**

By Matthew Jenkins



Pomander Walk is a one-of-a-kind, low-rise apartment complex laid out along an almost-hidden midblock garden path connecting West 94<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> Streets, just west of Broadway. “Theatrical Tudor Revival” perhaps best describes the style of this quirky survivor, built in 1921-23 by the developer and theater impresario Thomas Healy based on the designs of King and Campbell Architects. The garden walk flanked by picturesque brick, stone and half-timbered houses was designed to mimic the stage sets for *Pomander Walk*, a wildly popular Broadway musical of the day. The apartments attracted a number of theatre and film industry residents, including Rosalind Russell and Paulette Goddard. Pomander Walk was designated an individual New York City Landmark in 1982 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

By 2003, the buildings were suffering the effects of age. Paint was peeling off the galvanized iron half-timbering and applied ornament. Doors and windows were rotting. Historic wood shutters and window boxes were deteriorated or simply missing. Key architectural features had been inappropriately removed or replaced.

Pomander Walk residents took action, recruiting Cutsogeorge, Tooman and Allen Architects to perform a detailed condition survey of the historic complex. The decision was made to retain and restore as much original fabric as possible. Historic photos and surviving physical evidence were used to determine early conditions and areas where historic fabric had been altered or was missing.



Cutsogeorge, Tooman and Allen

The preparations resulted in a nearly 3-year preservation effort that touched every element of the complex's exterior. The work revealed a number of surprises as the team encountered architectural elements unique to Pomander Walk. While the buildings' generally solid construction, stone foundations, and substantial brick walls belie the temporary intent of the project, some areas were truly made in the fashion of a stage set. For example, some gables were nothing more than loosely supported wire mesh and stucco, remarkably lasting more than 80 years in relatively good condition! Similarly, much of the original 1920's galvanized metal was in excellent condition under the peeling paint layers.

The architects worked closely with the Pomander Walk Board of Directors' Preservation Committee to ensure a beautiful—and authentic—restoration, ensuring that this early 20<sup>th</sup>-century rarity will survive in excellent condition well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, allowing the theatrical vision of Thomas Healy to live on.

Matthew Jenkins is a preservation architect with Cutsogeorge, Tooman and Allen Architects and a former member of LW's Certificate of Appropriateness Committee.

**PRESERVATION PROFILE:  
Synagogue Savior, Urban Saint**

By Anthony C. Wood



Roberta Brandes Gratz

The well-deserved attention being given the restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue could leave one with the misimpression that this stunning accomplishment represents **Roberta Brandes Gratz's** signature contribution to preservation, urban life, and New York City. Called the largest independent restoration of a seriously deteriorated landmark in New York City achieved without benefit of the leadership of an established organization or governmental agency, it was executed without compromising the Landmarks Law or the landmark. Gratz refused to sell the Synagogue's soul to make the arduous restoration any easier or quicker.

Because of her stellar service on the Landmarks Preservation Commission, some do know there is more to Roberta than Eldridge Street. Even they, however, may not know the richness and range of the unabridged Gratz—journalist, author, urbanist and activist.

As a journalist who started out as a copy girl in 1963, a decade later she would author a series of probing articles about the Landmarks Preservation Commission for the *New York Post*. With such headlines as “**Landmarks Law—A City Tragedy,**” these hard-hitting articles helped bring about passage of the 1973 amendments to New York's Landmarks Law. The 35th anniversary of these transforming amendments, and individuals like Roberta who helped make them a reality, was celebrated June 10 with an evening program “**Making the Best Better**” (go to the New York Preservation Archive Project website, [www.nypap.org](http://www.nypap.org), for details). How appropriate that someone so involved in the reshaping of the Law is now one of those implementing it!

In 2005, building on a lifetime of observing, studying, and writing about American cities, and inspired by the work of the late author and activist Jane Jacobs, Gratz launched the Center for the Living City. Created to advance the precepts of Jacobs (and Gratz), the Center is training a new generation of urbanists. Already it has been at work helping rebuild New Orleans.

Gratz's unceasing commitment to the cause of the living city will be further demonstrated in her next book. Under the working title *Clash: In the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs*, Gratz weaves together the threads of her life: born in Greenwich Village, displaced by urban renewal to Connecticut at age 11 with her family, a reporter at the pre-Murdoch *New York Post*, and her many conversations with Jane Jacobs.

Yes, we are indebted to Roberta Gratz for restoring Eldridge Street but that isn't even the half of the Gratz story.

Anthony C. Wood is the author of *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks* (Routledge Press 2007). Wood is also the founder of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

See Book Offer, p. 6

**How to Green Your Historic Home**

By Charles Lockwood



Green homes are healthier, use fewer natural resources, generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and have lower energy and water consumption—and costs—compared to conventional homes. And older homes, like the traditional brownstones and apartment buildings found right here on the Upper West Side, have enormous potential to become more sustainable.

Actually, older big city buildings have a head start on becoming greener for several reasons. First, they were constructed in an era with less resources, less artificial lighting, less heating, and no air conditioning. Brownstones, for example, have natural ventilation pathways. Masonry buildings are more energy efficient than glass-walled structures, too.

Second, older big city buildings were constructed in densely built neighborhoods that relied on mass transit—and walking—for most errands. Most suburban residents must get into a car for the simplest errand. Not a good thing in a time of \$4/gallon gas.

Finally, preserving and renovating older buildings is always greener than demolishing a structure and starting anew. Existing buildings represent already used resources and embedded energy.

→ **TO GO EVEN GREENER, HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE TIPS:**

**Outside:** Use canopy trees, “green screens” (vine-covered metal lattice), and other shading strategies for the roof, walls, and back garden paving. One or two trees can shield the south-facing front or back of a brownstone from summer sun. ▲ A light-colored or a landscaped roof eliminates heat islands, provides insulation, reduces heating and air conditioning use, and mitigates stormwater runoff. Over 100 buildings in Chicago's historic Loop District, including City Hall, have green roofs.

**Inside:** Repair, don't replace, your existing windows. Simple steps like fixing or tightening the frames and sash can greatly reduce heat loss in winter (or air conditioning loss in summer) and reduce noise transmission. Weather stripping works wonders, too. ▲ Use non-toxic green building materials for repairs or renovations. ▲ Purchase Energy Star-rated appliances and lighting, heating, cooling, and water heating systems.

Use government/utility company rebates and tax breaks to help cover the cost of installing energy-generating technologies. ▲ Conserve water by installing water-efficient faucets, showers, and toilets. ▲ Clean green with non-toxic cleaning products. Most standard cleaning products have harmful chemicals. That means they're harmful for you at home, and harmful for the environment when the containers go into the landfill or residue goes down the sewers and into our rivers and oceans.

For more information about how to green your home, go to a new U.S. Green Building Council website: [www.greenhomeguide.org](http://www.greenhomeguide.org). And see our book offer on page 6 – *Green Architecture by James Wines (Taschen, 2008)*.

Charles Lockwood, the author of *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Row House* (Rizzoli 2003), is a green real estate authority and consultant. [www.charleslockwood.com](http://www.charleslockwood.com)

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NEWSLETTER | FALL 2008



Who says money doesn't grow on trees?



... Clorox will give a royalty to the Sierra Club.



In return for endorsing their new green line of products,...

CORPORATE GREEN