

Albanian flag will wave as nabe changes

Displays will showcase emerging culture

BY MATT ROBINSON

IN BRONX neighborhoods that have long enjoyed cannolis, veal parmigiana, tiramisu and other things Italian, it's the local Albanian community's turn to show some ethnic pride.

In celebration of the Nov. 28 Albanian Independence Day, some 200 red-and-black Albanian flags will give stretches of prime streets in four neighborhoods a strong Albanian flavor for the next two weeks.

The flags will fly along Morris Park Ave. from White Plains Road to Williamsbridge Road, Williamsbridge Road to Pelham Parkway, all of Arthur Ave. and all of Lydig Ave. through Dec. 5.

The Albanian-American Community Association is sponsoring the first-of-its-kind display. Group co-founder Mark Gjonaj hopes there will be a parade to go along with the flags on Nov. 28, 2012 — in time for the 100th anniversary of Albanian independence.

"The flag shows the pride of the Albanians. It allows us to preserve our culture here," he said.

For many Albanian immigrants, the flag display also

marks a coming of age for a community that's changing the fabric of the traditionally Italian-American Pelham Parkway and Belmont neighborhoods.

Many proudly note that a portion of Lydig Ave. was renamed Mother Teresa Way for the Albanian-born missionary last summer.

"All Albanians will be proud for the Albanian flag to be up in the Bronx for the first time," said Dritan Haxhia, 38, who moved to the area three years ago and recently opened a photography studio on Lydig Ave. "It shows how democracy works, how people live in this country."

Former upstate Rep. Joseph DioGuardi, who is of Albanian and Italian heritage, said the flags will help foster communication in the community.

"Americans don't know about Albania, and the flag gives people a chance to talk about who they are," he said. "They hope their neighbor asks them, 'Hey, where's that flag from?'"

Local Albanians said they hope the flag display is the beginning of a new tradition.

"It brings home a little closer," said Zymer Selimaj, 55, a hair stylist.



Albanian flag on Arthur Ave. not only marks proud nation's independence, but also signals change in neighborhood. Photo by Enid Alvarez

Armory project at risk after wage talks collapse

BY BILL EGBERT

THE KINGSBRIDGE Armory cliff-hanger will keep dangling well into next month, after a failed attempt yesterday to reach a compromise on the living wage issue there.

Bronx Council delegation members, who met with Deputy Mayor Robert Lieber, said they are determined to hold out until the last possible minute.

"We're likely going to vote on Dec. 9 to modify the proposal," Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera (D-Bronx) said after the meeting.

The meeting followed the adjournment of a brief hearing of the zoning and franchises subcommittee on the proposal by The Related Companies to turn the long-vacant armory into a glitzy shopping center.

Rivera remains confident the Bronx delegation — which opposes approving the deal without a commitment on living wage retail jobs — can marshal the votes to kill the project if Related won't agree.

Related's lawyer, Jesse Masyr, has long



Councilman Tony Avella after zoning subcommittee hearing. Photo by James Monroe Adams 4th

maintained that agreeing to a living wage mandate would doom the project.

"It wouldn't be too surprising," Masyr said before yesterday's hearing.

But Rivera said, "It's not like that neighborhood is starved for retail," pointing to nearby Fordham Road as the third busiest shopping corridor in the city.

With both sides holding to their hard lines, Rivera said he expected the fight to come down to the wire — sometime around Dec. 21 under the city's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure.

Normally, under the city's tightly scripted ULURP, the full Council would have to vote on the proposal by Dec. 14, or else the project would be approved by default.

Project opponents on the zoning subcommittee plan to extend that time with a vote to modify the proposal, which will send it back — according to the ULURP script — to the City Planning Commission for a two-week review before the full Council must act.

By putting off the vote to modify until Dec. 9 — the last possible day for the subcommittee to act — opponents would effectively stretch the deadline to Dec. 21.

If no resolution is reached by then, Rivera predicted that Related and Mayor Bloomberg could get an unwelcome Christmas present from the Bronx.

Whether the project is killed or saved by some last-minute wage compromise, either option would be a tasty stocking stuffer for Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., who took on the armory wage fight as a signature issue after his election earlier this year.

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More Local News

Busy, busy market

The Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market hit its busiest day of the year Friday, in preparation for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Some 30 million pounds of produce — sweet potatoes, cranberries, apples and other Thanksgiving essentials — were bought, sold and shipped from wholesalers to supermarkets, grocers, retailers and restaurants across the metro region, officials said.

The market also donated Thanksgiving produce to 50 needy families from local Middle School 181.

Low-price computers

The nonprofit Per Scholas opened its second store yesterday, offering refurbished computers for as low as \$200.

The new store, at 804 E. 138th St., follows the first ACCESS store at 1575 Bronx River Ave. in West Farms. Both stores feature desktop and laptop computers in the \$200 to \$300 price range.

Since its 1995 inception, Per Scholas has distributed more than 75,000 free and inexpensive computers to low-income families.

For more information, visit www.perscholas.org.

Asthma seminar

Dr. Gaetano Perilli, a family practitioner, and Dr. Mehmet Albulak, a pulmonologist, will host a free seminar on the preventive care and treatment of asthma at the Rain Middletown Senior Center, 3035 Middletown Road, at 11 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 3.

Touchstone Health, a Medicare Advantage health plan in the city, is sponsoring the free event.

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