

# Willowbrook eyes Nelson Terrace for handicapped

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, Saturday, February 25, 1978

## By SYDNEY FREEDBERG

State mental hygiene officials are considering leasing a portion of the Nelson Terrace in Great Kills, while the catering hall is weighing a move to another location.

Elin M. Howe, director of the Willowbrook Developmental Center, while stressing that a definite proposal has not yet been drawn, said yesterday that the institution is exploring the possibility of using part of the catering hall as a service center for the handicapped.

The Nelson Terrace manager, Ronald Holck, said yesterday, the establishment is thinking about a move to larger quarters, although he refused to disclose what sites were being considered by the owner, Richard Holck.

Ms. Howe explained that if such an office is opened by Willowbrook, it would primarily house workers whose offices were formerly at the institution and now must move, like Willowbrook's residents, into the community.

"The site has not yet been reviewed by the Facilities Development Corp. (a state agency) for its appropriateness, and it is the intention of this facility to speak to the members of the community before any lease is negotiated," Ms. Howe said.

She said that Willowbrook has been working closely with Community Board 3 "on the process," and that a formal proposal would be made public April 10, when a hearing is held.

Holck too, called any plans for the Nelson Terrace "completely up in the air."

"Nothing has been finalized at all," he said. "We have spoken to Willowbrook people, but nothing is firm at this point."

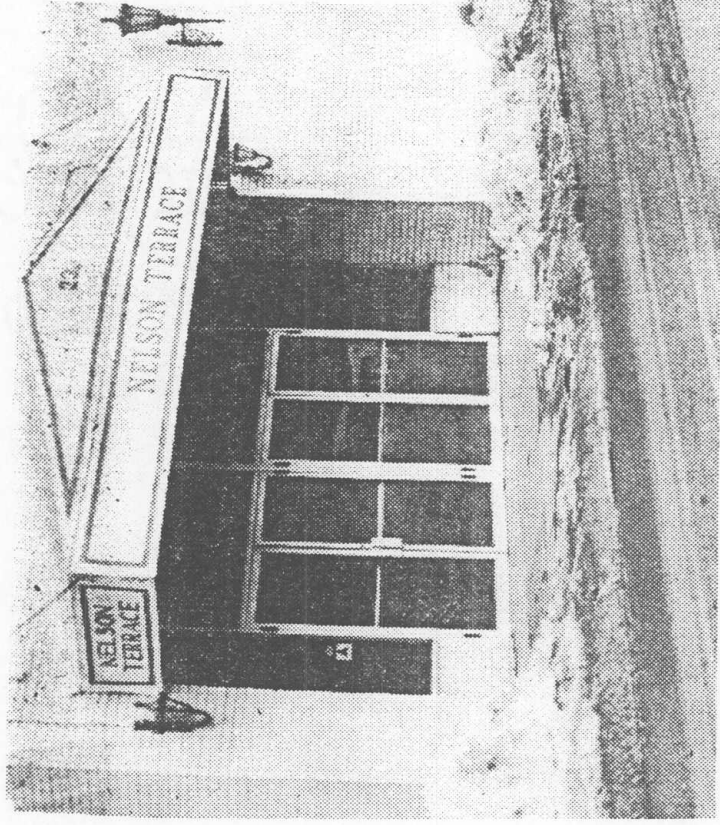
Hilck also said that if Willowbrook were interested in leasing a portion of the site, state officials would rent no more than 6,000 of the 20,000 square feet in the catering hall. Other unspecified parties also are "interested" in leasing all or part of the facility, located at 23 Nelson Ave., Holck said.

Willowbrook is under a court order to depopulate the center, whose patient load is approximately 1,600, to 250 Staten Island residents by 1981.

Ms. Howe and the institution's other administrators are attempting to identify sites in each of the Island's three community board areas to provide community-based services for the former Willowbrook residents as well as handicapped Staten Islanders who were never the beneficiaries of any programs.

In their quest to dismantle the institution by decentralizing services, state mental hygiene officials already have lost one battle in the Community Board 1 area. There, the state wanted to lease the former Garber Brothers department store at 281 Richmond Ave., Port Richmond, as a large rehabilitative center for the mentally retarded. But the idea was killed when it met with a hostile reception by area residents.

"We don't want it to happen again," Ms. Howe said, adding that the possibility of leasing a portion of the Nelson Terrace will be discussed and reviewed at the public hearing before center staff reaches a decision.



Part of the Nelson Terrace in Great Kills may be used by the Willowbrook Developmental Center as a service center for the handicapped on the South Shore.