

Our opinion

A \$134,000 home — at our expense

On the heels of the disclosure that state officials are not sure how much they've spent to improve care for the mentally retarded under a 1975 court order, we now learn that the state has expended an astounding \$134,000 to purchase and renovate a group home for eight retarded men and women in New Brighton.

The home is one of dozens that have been or will be opened throughout the city to serve the retarded, including some who have spent part of their lives in institutions such as the former Willowbrook Developmental Center.

That community living is preferable to institutional living for retarded persons who largely are able to

care for themselves is a generally accepted principle. What no one should accept, however, is the bureaucratic bungling and wasting of public money witnessed in the development of the New Brighton house.

State officials purchased the home, on Tysen St., for \$64,000 in 1974 and has spent an additional \$20,000 on renovations. Now, with the home's opening just a few months away, officials have discovered that there were several oversights when the original improvements were made.

One bedroom, for example, has no electrical outlet. And it was just recently that someone realized one bathroom would be insufficient for

the four men and four women who are to occupy the home. Several bedrooms, already refurbished, will have to be torn apart because they're too small.

Before all of the bungling is corrected, officials concede, an additional \$50,000-worth of work may be required.

We suggested yesterday that Gov. Carey had better take a look at the failure of mental hygiene officials to carefully track the cost of programs stemming from the so-called Willowbrook Consent Decree, programs that by one estimate may have cost \$100 million or more. Perhaps the governor could start by looking at the Tysen St. nightmare.