

Palsy group eyeing new 27-acre site

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ALBANY — United Cerebral Palsy of New York City apparently stymied in its efforts to open a rehabilitation center for the handicapped at Sea View Hospital and Home, is now eyeing a 27-acre site at the Staten Island Developmental Center.

Legislation to sell the parcel, located off Forest Hill Rd. on the southern tip of the 384-acre Willowbrook developmental center, has been introduced by Assemblyman Guy V. Molinari, R-C-Todt Hill.

And an official of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, which operates the center for the retarded, said she could not think of a "better use for the property."

Leslie D. Park, executive director of UCP, said the private agency believes it has a better chance of obtaining the state-owned parcel than the Sea View Land, currently under control of the city's Health and Hospitals Corp. "It comes down to whichever parcel we can get first," he said.

Park said the private agency has been planning a "rehabilitation campus" to serve the borough's handicapped for six years, but has "gotten nowhere" in efforts to purchase a 98-acre Sea View parcel from the city.

The land is part of a 235-acre parcel the city is attempting to obtain from the Health and Hospitals Corp. Some Island officials allege that the city wants control of the parcel so it can sell the land to private developers.

"Right now there is supposed to be a study done to determine what to do with the land," Park said. "But that will take time, and we want to get our program started as soon as possible."

Park noted that the agency, which offers a program for handicapped youngsters at South Beach Psychiatric Center, is under pressure to find a new home because the state says it needs additional space to care for its psychiatric patients. UCP, he added, wants to open a new facility to expand its program, which currently serves about 100 youngsters. When completed — about seven years after property is acquired — the new complex would be able to provide rehabilitation programs for up to 400 Island residents.

"When we first proposed this six years ago, we were talking about helping youngsters who were 8 years old," Park said. "Now, they're 14 and we still haven't gotten started. At this rate they'll all be grown up before we get this off the ground."

But Molinari, noting the reduction in the Staten Island Developmental Center's population as a result of the state's deinstitutionalization program, said the land is "obviously" available for this purpose.

Cora Hoffman, an aide to state Mental Retardation Commissioner James E. Introne, agrees. "We've discussed this for some time, and we think it would be a

great way to use the land."

The parcel proposed for UCP's use is currently mostly vacant. "It would not interfere with our operations," Ms. Hoffman said.

Park said an architect's report prepared in 1978 placed a price tag of \$3.5-million on the complex, which he boasts would be among the most modern anywhere. Inflation, he said, undoubtedly has increased its value.

"But because we are talking about a smaller parcel of land than Sea View, we probably would scale down our plans somewhat," he said.