

Island real estate appraisers were uniform in their opinion that property owners given an opportunity through the community boards to have a say in group home sitings, would do well to examine the operation of these homes, rather than dwell exclusively on the notion of lowered property values.

"It depends on how the home is being run," said Egon Salmon, a Castleton Corners broker. "The group home does not materially change the price of houses surrounding it, but its presence may reduce the pool of buyers interested in that (neighboring) house. It's more a psychological barrier than a real one. It's the same as your neighbor running a property into the ground — his house needs a painting, the lawn isn't cut. These factors will influence the desirability of your house."

Brent Lally, an appraiser who is also a member of Board 3, agreed that the physical characteristics of a group home are an important factor in determining the value of adjacent properties, and noted that "the supervision aspect of some of these homes leaves something to be desired."

In general, he said an appraisal of a house for sale may take a group home into account if it is known as a problem spot in the neighborhood. Otherwise, it would have no bearing.

In 1978 a study conducted by Dr. Julian Wolpert of Princeton University for the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 42 communities throughout the state were compared with an equal number where group homes for the retarded had been established. The study found:

☐ Group homes did not generate a higher degree of neighboring property turnover than in areas with no group homes.

☐ Homes adjacent to group facilities showed no value decline.

☐ Selling prices in communities with group homes rose and declined the same as those in the areas without group homes.

☐ The group homes were generally maintained better than surrounding properties, were not conspicuous and group home residents were not visible or noticeable from the streets.

Henry Tancredi, a real estate broker and former Community Board 2 member, is perhaps the most outspoken about the need for community placement of the retarded and disabled.

"There is a need for these homes on Staten Island, and for the most part, the people living in them are from the Island and have every right to live where they want. There are far worse things to be worried about. If they build the Travis power plant or fill the LNG tanks, these people opposing group homes aren't going to be able to sell anything."

First of a two-part series:

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