

Although the college is currently evaluating a site in Ocean Breeze, the state Budget Division reportedly is supporting Marchi's proposal because of the apparent savings in construction costs at the SIDC site. The center already has more than 40 brick buildings, according to Egan. And the buildings and surrounding property already resemble a college setting.

Moreover, members of the task force say turning the property into a college campus would be compatible with the other suggestions. "If CSI goes in there, that would be bulk, but within a university setting you could easily accommodate sports and cultural facilities," said Assemblyman Robert A. Straniere.

The big question is whether CSI officials will agree to such a proposal. Both Straniere and Marchi plan to consult with college officials within the next few weeks.

"If the college is not interested, I want to know right now so we can give attention to other uses," Straniere said, adding that he would not push the idea without the support of CSI.

When the task force meets again June 7 at the SIDC, it is expected that discussion will begin in earnest on the various proposals. And local representatives say they expect state officials to take their ideas seriously.

"The bottom line is that if they seek the community's advice, I think they would be very, very reluctant to ignore it," Vitaliano said.

Moreover, Vitaliano said, the state's intentions to seek community approval seems sincere. Like several others, he noted that Egan, OMRDD Commissioner Arthur Webb and Henrik N. Dullea, director of state operations, plus several of their aides, made the trip from Albany to the SIDC for the first task force meeting.

"I was very impressed," Straniere said. "Frankly, I thought all the department heads would have representatives there."

"Their presence was not lost on us," Vitaliano said. "The only thing that points to pessimism at this point is if your cynicism is at such a level that you disbelieve everything that has been heard and seen so far."