

Willowbrook eyed for college campus

By MARY ENGELS

WILLOWBROOK, a name once linked to scandalous treatment of the retarded, is the favored site for a new consolidated campus of the College of Staten Island.

A major portion of the grounds of the former Willowbrook State School (now the Staten Island Developmental Center) has been rated "highly acceptable and recommended for consolidation" by the college's site planners.

Given that stamp of approval, movement is now under way to get all the other necessary clearances to relocate the college from its present downtown St. George location to a wooded "Ivy League" setting at the Willowbrook site.

Recently, Edmund Volpe, president of the college, announced that Willowbrook "was far, far ahead of the other sites," and that it had been unanimously approved by the Facilities and Finance Committee of the City University of New York. He noted that final approval by the full board of the City University was

'Ivy League' setting impresses planners as move is started to get clearances

expected on Jan. 28. After that, formal application for the land must be presented to the owners, the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmentally Disabled.

"We will be requesting 180 acres of the 380 acres of the property where the Staten Island Developmental Center is now located," said Volpe.

Most prized by the site selection committee are the same, still sturdy, huge brick structures that once housed thousands of retarded youth for many years.

"That was one of the factors that turned the tide in favor of Willowbrook," Volpe said. "The good condition of the buildings, a majority of which can be rehabilitated and

reused." Present plans include using about "eight to 12 of the buildings," with the rest being razed.

The study, some 178 pages, was undertaken by Edward Durell Stone Associates, architects and planners, at a cost of \$500,000.

The other sites considered for consolidation included the present St. George and Sunnyside campuses and the Ocean Breeze site at South Beach, which is owned by the college.

VOLPE SAID THAT when he first took over as president of the then Richmond College in St. George back in 1974 "we were instrumental in getting the South Beach property to be used for an expanded Richmond College.

"However, when the fiscal pressures caused Richmond to merge with Staten Island College in 1975-76, and the two became the College of Staten Island, the need for consolidation was even greater."

After almost a decade of fighting for consolidation, Volpe said he was delighted "to finally see the light at the end of the tunnel." Community

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