

# Public opinion to be sought on SIDC proposals

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Proposals submitted by the College of Staten Island, advocates for the retarded and environmentalists probably will highlight discussion at a public meeting tomorrow on disposition of soon-to-be vacated property at Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

But the state Office of General Services (OGS), which is sponsoring the meeting, has received almost a dozen requests for the state-owned 300 acres — including such varied ideas as building senior citizen housing, a civic theater and a vehicle storage and maintenance shop.

Many of the proposals overlap: Five groups submitted plans for preserving SIDC's woodlands; four include programs for the mentally retarded; three groups want recreational facilities, with two asking for an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Fitting these requests into a comprehensive plan is the job of a task force, headed by OGS Commissioner John Egan, whose members include nine Islanders. The meeting was recommended by the task force, which wants input from the public before drafting its report for Gov. Mario M. Cuomo.

OGS, the agency responsible for surplus state land, must submit a recommendation on how to use the property before the governor's office and the state Legislature can take final action. Agency officials have repeatedly promised to come up with a plan that meets with community approval — hence, the task force and this week's meeting.

The meeting, scheduled for 7 p.m. tomorrow in the auditorium of Sea View Hospital and Home, will allow for discussion of all of the concepts proposed for the SIDC, which for 30 years has housed an institution for the retarded.

The institution is scheduled to close by the end of 1987, although the state plans to keep about 90 acres of the 382-acre campus for group homes and the Institute for Basic Research in Mental Retardation. The remaining property scheduled for redevelopment includes more than 50 brick buildings and some of the best woodlands left on Staten Island.

Proposals for redeveloping Willowbrook are:

- A new campus for College of Staten Island, which has dominated discussion so far. The college is requesting 187 acres to consolidate its Sunnyside and St. George campuses.

- CSI has been lobbying for a consolidated campus for more than 15 years, but the state has demurred at the cost until the Willowbrook site became available. There, CSI could renovate existing buildings — saving millions of dollars, according to a consultant's report. The state budget office and OGS are reportedly enthused about the plan, and many involved with the task force assume the college request has the best chance for acceptance.

- Recreational facilities, program and office space and a residential complex for the mentally retarded.

This plan, submitted by the Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council and supported by Assemblyman Elizabeth Connelly and state Sen. Martin Connor, proposes a 60-acre camp and a 200-bed residential complex operated by non-profit agencies for the handicapped.

In addition, the council wants 125 acres for a recreational-community center complex to include an Olympic-size swimming pool, tennis courts and running track especially for the handicapped; a theater-auditorium; Island headquarters for the Early Children Direction Center; a training center for families of the developmentally disabled, and an Information and Referral Unit on handicapped services.

The council has a powerful ally in Arthur Webb, commissioner of state services for the mentally retarded and co-chair of the task force. It is Webb's agency that controls the Willowbrook property now, and he has said that any redevelopment plan for the site should give first priority to the handicapped — a sentiment echoed by Egan.

However, Webb does not want a residential complex at Willowbrook; he supports community residences for the retarded. Thus, the council has its best chances in getting recreational facilities, along with space for programs for the disabled and their families.

- Protection of woodland areas.

No less than five groups, including the city Parks and Recreation Department and the Staten Island Greenbelt Stewardship, have submitted proposals on preserving the site's environment. The task force recommendation will probably include a provision for the woodlands, since both Egan and Webb support the concept.

However, a major battle has already erupted over Corson's Brook Woods, a 40-acre woodland tract the city wants included in the Greenbelt. The woods are part of the 90 acres being retained by Webb's agency, and he wants to build four group homes there.

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Webb argues that because he has not relinquished control of Corson's Woods, the task force has no say over the future of that property. However, the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, a local environmental group, have taken the state to court to stop construction of the group homes that case is still pending.

The city Parks Department has also requested 107 acres adjacent to Willowbrook Park. The parcel contains baseball diamonds and soccer fields already used as a public recreation area. However, part of the requested acreage overlaps with property requested by the college.

- Two buildings to headquarter the regional offices of Little League Baseball.

The organization, which has used the ball fields at the Willowbrook site for years, is requesting the conversion of two buildings for its Eastern regional offices and to house players for tournaments and conduct umpire seminars. The Little League also would like a swimming pool on the site.

- A community theater.

The Staten Island Civic Theater, which is now housed at Christ Episcopal Church in New Brighton, wants a site for a permanent theater.

- Facilities for Imagine a Better Way, a non-profit organization for the mentally retarded.

The group, one of three organizations besides the regional retardation council to submit proposals to serve the retarded, wants four acres to establish a day program for retarded adults.

- A group home for the mentally retarded, senior citizen housing and recreational center for youths.

Young Israel of Staten Island wants land to build a group home for the mentally retarded and 102 units of senior citizen housing. In a similar proposal, the Jewish Community Center wants 20 acres to build 150 units of senior citizen housing and recreational facilities for youths.

- Group homes for the retarded, a medical technology center and a vehicle storage and maintenance shop.

In an admitted effort to save jobs after the developmental center shuts down, the Civil Service Employee Association supports the construction of state-operated group homes, the establishment of the medical tech center and construction of storage and maintenance shops to service state-owned vehicles.

- A temporary home for the Jewish Foundation School. The Jewish Foundation School wants the use of a building on a temporary basis while its own facility is under construction.

- A building for the Staten Island Council for Animal Welfare. The group wants a building for stray animals.

- Storage for a food distribution program. Submitted by St. Paul's Baptist Church, this request may be outdated. The church wanted storage space from last September until June for its food distribution program, but since no action has been taken yet, an OGS-spokesman says the church may withdraw its request.