

# Group home work could begin soon

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In the wake of a court decision tossing out the objections of environmentalists, construction should begin soon on two 12-bed group homes in Corson's Brook Woods on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) in Willowbrook.

A timetable for the project will probably be set later this week or early next week, said Louis Ganim, spokesman for the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, the agency which is building the homes.

"I assume we'll go ahead with our plans as soon as it is practical and feasible," he said. "At this point, I can't tell you more than that. We haven't even seen the court decision yet."

That decision, delivered Monday by the Appellate Division of the state Supreme Court, swept aside an attempt by the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, an Island environmental group, to block construction on the 40-acre woodlands, located along Forest Hill Road in the southeast corner of the SIDC campus.

A 1983 City Planning Department report called Corson's Brook Woods one of the most environmentally significant woodlands on Staten Island and recommended the tract for inclusion in the Greenbelt.

However, the Office of Mental Retardation — which operates SIDC and controls the property — wants to build two 12-bed and two 24-bed homes on a nine-acre portion of Corson's Brook Woods to house multi-handicapped Islanders who are now residents at SIDC. The institution is scheduled to close in 1987, and its clients are being resettled into community residences.

The Office of Mental Retardation said of the SIDC's 380 acres, Corson's Brook Woods was the only site which meets the requirements for the group homes. Other sites are either unsuitable for construction or are not located next to a residential community, according to state officials.

Under the original timetable, construction on the two 12-bed homes was to begin last fall so the homes could be ready for clients by summer. However, when site clearance began in November, the Protectors filed suit and obtained a temporary injunction to stop construction from Supreme Court Judge Rose McBrien.

Monday's decision by the appellate court only reversed Mrs. McBrien's ruling on the temporary injunction; an action is still pending in Supreme Court on the environmentalists' request for a permanent injunction. However, it could be months before a trial is held on the permanent injunction and, meanwhile, the state is free to build on the site.

In Albany yesterday, Gov. Mario M. Cuomo said he plans to visit the disputed area.