

# Impact study OKs group homes

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The construction of four group homes in Corson's Brook Woods will not adversely affect the 40-acre woodland tract, according to a environmental impact study released yesterday by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Environmental Disabilities.

OMRDD also announced yesterday that a public hearing has been scheduled for 7 p.m. June 27 to allow discussion on the controversial group home proposal. The hearing will take place at the Institute for Basic Research in Mental Retardation, Willowbrook. The institute adjoins Corson's Brook Woods; both are part of the Staten Island Developmental Center campus.

The hearing is an attempt to "give people an opportunity to comment on the project," said Louis Ganim, spokesman for OMRDD. "Based on what is brought up at the hearing, there may be some modifications of the plans."

However, he said the agency will not entertain suggestions to relocate the project to another site, as some local environmentalists have advocated. Ganim said that the environmental impact study, by the environmental consulting firm of McGowan & Franz, "does not indicate any barrier to building at Corson's Woods."

The group home project has

been under fire ever since the proposal was made public in March 1984. The state wants to build two 12-bed and two 24-bed facilities to house severely retarded and multi-handicapped Islanders who will be leaving Staten Island Developmental Center when the institution shuts down in 1987.

The Corson's Brook site was selected because the land is already state-owned and because it adjoins a residential community.

However, the woodland tract had been previously recommended for inclusion in the Greenbelt, and environmentalists argued that the site should be left alone, claiming it is one of the two most significant woodlands on Staten Island. When the state began site clearance in November, an Island environmental group — the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods — went to court and obtained a temporary injunction to stop construction.

However, an appeals court panel overturned the injunction last month, leaving the state free to begin construction.

While OMRDD is not required to obtain an environmental impact statement or schedule a public hearing, it is being done because "we want to reassure people that the project will not have an impact on the environment," Ganim said.