

SIDC shift puts CSI plan in doubt

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The state agency that operates Staten Island Developmental Center has decided to almost double the amount of SIDC property it will retain when the institution shuts down in two years. SIDC Director James Walsh announced yesterday.

The state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) will now

keep about 160 acres of the 380-acre campus to house community services for the mentally retarded, according to Walsh. OMRDD originally said it would retain only 90 acres, allowing the remainder of the property to be developed for other uses.

The latest decision means the College of Staten Island, which wants the bulk of the surplus property for a new campus, will have to trim its request, said Assemblywoman Elizabeth Con-

nolly, who had lobbied OMRDD to retain more of the property to allow expansion of community services for the handicapped.

The college requested 230 acres at SIDC for a new, consolidated campus. CSI now has facilities in St. George and Sunnyside. Mrs. Connelly said some of the property to be retained by OMRDD is land wanted by the college, although Mrs. Connelly was unsure of how many acres were involved.

"I think it mostly involved property covered by trees and shrubs," she said, adding that while OMRDD's decision will tighten the boundaries of the CSI campus, "I don't think it's at any great cost to the college."

CSI officials were unavailable for comment yesterday.

The additional property to be retained by OMRDD includes the so-called Warner complex, which consists of the five most modern buildings at SIDC, and the vacant

land north of the Institute for Basic Research in Mental Retardation along Forest Hill Road.

The Warner complex, which contains 200,000 square feet of building space, will provide office and program space for private agencies serving the mentally retarded, Walsh said. He said OMRDD will start soliciting requests from agencies who may want some of the building space. OMRDD has already received a \$250,000 allocation from the

state Legislature to hire a consulting firm which will work with the agencies in devising a master plan for the Warner complex. Walsh said he wants a report by Aug. 15 on which agencies will be using the facilities.

The vacant land may be converted into a camp for the handicapped, Walsh added, noting that one agency has already submit-