

# Environmentalists still oppose home site

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Environmental activists quietly continue pressing to keep the state from placing a new home for the retarded in a wooded section of Willowbrook, and build on a nearby site instead.

A staffer for Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, meanwhile, expects to see a report possibly crucial to the construction plans released within two weeks.

Cynthia Abbele of the governor's program office said yesterday a final environmental impact statement on the plans should come soon from Arthur Webb, director of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Develop-

mental Disabilities (OMRDD).

An earlier draft report supported Webb's insistence that the long-sought residence facility go in a woodland called Corson's Brook Woods near the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) grounds.

Led by a Staten Island conservation group called Protectors of the Pine Oak Woods, opponents suggested two other parcels bordering SIDC they'd prefer to become the site of the group home.

Opponents of the current plan pin their hopes on Cuomo overruling Webb. Cuomo visited the site and vowed to take direct responsibility. Critics issued a detailed response to the draft impact

statement.

"If the governor in some way has managed to reach the OMRDD and they have truly examined what we have given them, then certainly we'd be pleased with the governor's performance," said Protectors' president Richard Buegler.

"We'd certainly be displeased if he had no input to the final environmental impact statement," he said. Moving the original site closer to adjoining Forest Hill Road would still disrupt what his group calls "the second finest botanical site on Staten Island," Buegler said.

The group's response to the first impact statement includes a

proposed layout for the grounds of SIDC, once the notorious Willowbrook State School, which the state seeks to phase out by 1987.

In an effort to "compromise," the conservationists say they want the state to build a sunroom, solarium and greenhouse that wheelchair-bound residents of the planned group home could enjoy. The botanical facility would be staffed by community volunteers, and funded through savings they say the state would incur from changing plans.

The embattled area's state assemblywoman, Elizabeth Connelly, last spring effectively

blocked proposed funding for study of the Island's Greenbelt, an undeveloped stretch of land running through the middle of the borough. She accused the plan's opponents of obstructing progress in care for the retarded.

Mrs. Connelly, a Democrat, reportedly secured an agreement from Senate Finance Chairman John Marchi, R-Staten Island, to delay the Greenbelt funding until the Corson's Brook issue was resolved.

The Protectors and its sympathizers want the disputed area officially designated a part of the Greenbelt and thus protected from development.