

BP wants part of CSI's land added to Greenbelt

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A strip of land that was added to the College of Staten Island's (CSI) Sunnyside campus 15 years ago, but never developed, should be returned to the city for inclusion in the Greenbelt, Borough President Ralph Lamberti has proposed.

The fate of the tract, which takes in about six acres of woods at the college's southern boundary line, was widely debated in 1970 by area homeowners who feared the college would encroach further into their residential neighborhood.

Lamberti said he has instructed his own staff and has asked the Staten Island City Planning Department to research the legal mechanism whereby the undeveloped site could be removed from the control of the Board of Higher Education and returned to the Greenbelt.

Lamberti made the proposal in view of the current plan by CSI to abandon both its St. George and Sunnyside campuses in favor of a single setting at the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

"The proposal (to expand the Sunnyside campus) is dead, so this will not in anyway impact the college today," Lamberti said of the land transfer.

Lamberti said he was prompted to take action on the acreage now so that when the 43-acre Sunnyside campus is freed for sale, the exclusive residential neighborhood south of it will have an

additional wooded buffer area.

One consultant determined that the campus could support 645 attached condominium units under its present R-3-2 zoning. However, no decision on the release of the Sunnyside site nor the nine-story office building currently occupied by the St. George campus has been made.

The borough president speculated that the city Division of Real Property, which usually takes over and sells excess city-owned land, might resist any attempt to have the six acres put back into the Island parkland inventory.

The tract takes in a strip of woods that parallels the edge of the college's main parking field which is entered from Ocean Terrace and abuts the edge of Deere Park, a 35-acre woodland that is one of the six city parks that form part of the Greenbelt.

In 1970, when the CSI Sunnyside campus was Staten Island Community College, then-President William Birenbaum sought to ac-

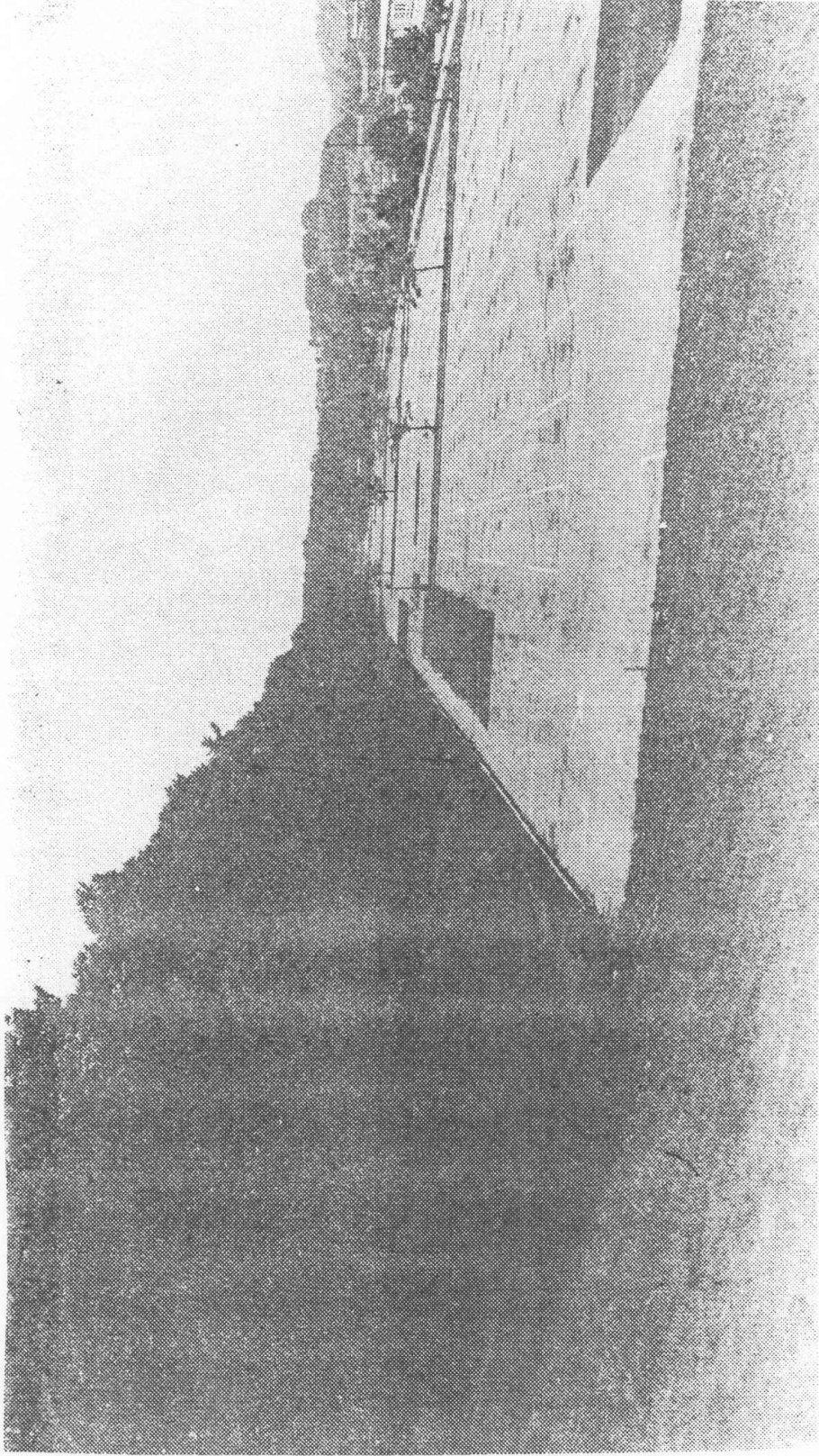
quire 10 acres of woods behind the college that were part of a large designated park site.

The extra land would have allowed additional buildings to be constructed where the college's parking field is now. The ambitious proposal included studio space, a theater, underground parking and rooftop tennis courts which Birenbaum said were needed to meet record student enrollments projected for 1975.

Surrounding homeowners and members of the Todt Hill Civic Association immediately opposed the plan because it would have meant further encroachment of the college into their already taxed neighborhood and the loss of parkland.

By the fall of 1970, the civic group agreed to a compromise measure in which only six acres would be taken and the scope of the expansion modified.

The following spring the Board of Estimate formally adopted the map change, but the tract was never developed.



ADVANCE PHOTO/JIM SULLEY

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