

CSI plans for 216-acre campus

Shift to Willowbrook to take 5 years

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The College of Staten Island will inherit 216 acres of the Staten Island Development Center campus next year when that state institution in Willowbrook finally closes its doors and moves its remaining clients to nearby group houses.

Within five years of this land transfer, CSI plans to abandon both its St. George and Sunnyside campuses and move into its long-sought-after unified campus.

In doing so, CSI will become the main occupant of that 346-acre site; the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), which now has jurisdiction of that land, will keep 130 acres for its group homes, some of which are still under construction, the Karl D. Warner Complex, to be renovated and used as a multi-purpose community-treatment center, and the Institute of Basic Research, said Lou Ganim, an OMRDD spokesman.

Technically, the state's Office of General Services owns state land and gives agencies permission to use the land. OMRDD now has the right to the Willowbrook land. The rights to 216 acres will be transferred to the state Dormitory Authority, which is responsible for campus construction for the City University of New York.

The next immediate step, however, in the school's move is for the state to accept a final environmental impact statement (EIS), a draft of which was recently sub-

mitted to the state Dormitory Authority.

(The EIS draft says the Willowbrook site has 330 acres. This figure does not include the land the Institute of Basic Research (IBR) now occupies, said Kenneth Klindworth, CSI's director of facilities.)

CSI president Edmond L. Volpe, City University of New York officials and state officials say the draft EIS raised no serious questions about the proposed move. A public hearing on the statement will be held at 3 p.m. on Tuesday in the Sunnyside campus' Williamson Theater.

Donald Farley, CUNY's vice chancellor for facilities planning and management, said when the final EIS is accepted, which he thought was highly probable, the plan will be "on its way ... We're ready to move."

Theodore A. Holmes, the state Dormitory Authority's general counsel, said his agency was "satisfied" with the draft EIS. "As far as we're concerned we have an acceptable EIS," he said.

The EIS was prepared by consultants hired by the College of Staten Island.

Once the public hearing is held, the consultants have 45 days to respond to comments raised at the hearing and submit a final statement to the Dormitory Authority, which in turn has 10 days to look at the "bottom line" of the environmental impact of the move before accepting or rejecting it, Holmes said.

In this case, Holmes anticipates acceptance on the state Dormitory Authority

will release \$20 million it recently raised through bond sales for the design of the new campus, Farley said.

In all, construction will cost \$220 million. When completed in the early 1990s, the campus will be a showpiece within CUNY and offer numerous educational opportunities to Islanders, CUNY officials say.

"I'm not sure the community has yet recognized the importance of the project, its size, its economic value to Staten Island, and the overall impact this is going to have on the educational and cultural opportunities on the island," Volpe said.

With the most "up-to-date laboratories and modern theater, the new campus will be the kind of institution that people will be bringing visitors to see," Volpe said.

The campus will have an "Ivy League look" — like a New England college campus — with its primarily two-story red-brick buildings spread over 216 acres of wooded land and lawns. "It's so rare in the City University that you don't have megalithic structures," he said.

CSI will get about 20 buildings plus a dozen or more temporary structures, CSI's Klindworth said. The temporary structures and several of the buildings will be demolished as will the enormous and outdated heating plant. (The heating plant is

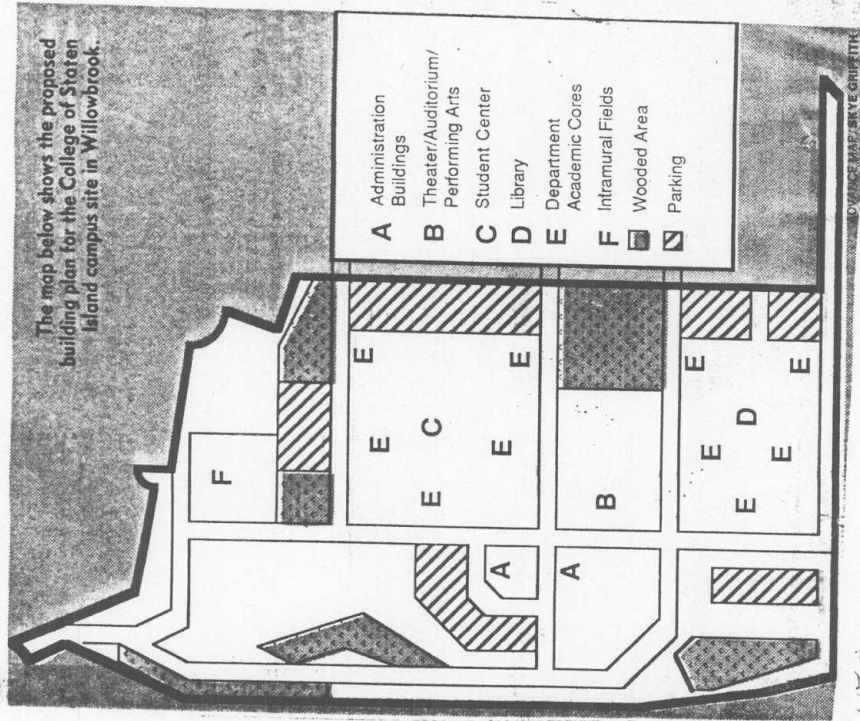


Fig. 1 of 2

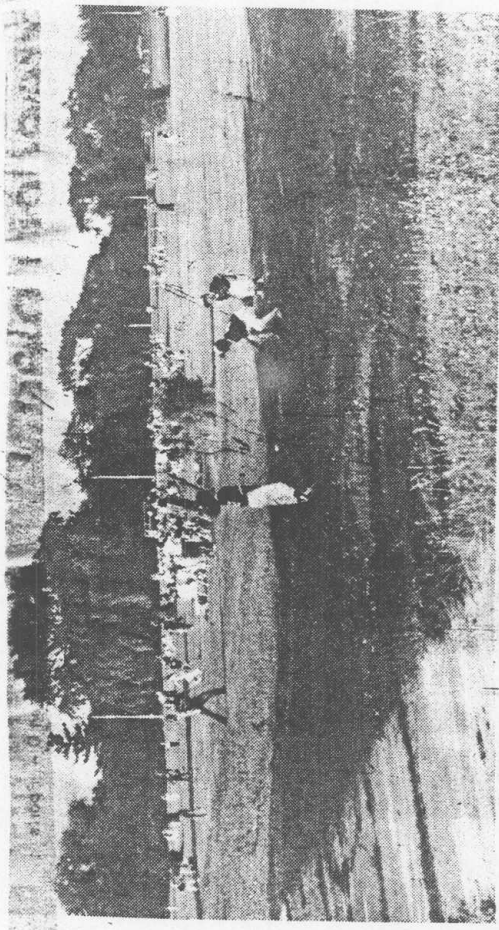
the highest energy consumption facility in the state, Kindtworth said. Demolition and gutting of buildings should begin next fall. The majority of the remaining buildings are two-story red-brick buildings with dark, shingled roofs. They will be renovated; new structures will connect some of the buildings to form large U-shaped buildings. A new gym and theater/performing arts center will be constructed and parking lots and a road encircling the campus will be built.

"We are keeping a lot of the buildings because we think they're good buildings," Kindtworth said. They can be easily adapted to CSI's needs, which will be cheaper than building everything from scratch.

The environmental impact of the move, these officials say, should be minimal. The land's use is not changing that much — it is an institution and will still be an institution.

Actually, Kindtworth said, the move will improve the grounds at Willowbrook because CSI will keep large areas of woods, tear up many of the roads and make a meadow where the enormous existing plant now stands. This meadow, in the future, could be used by the community as athletic fields, he said.

The development of this meadow brings up one of the problems raised by CSI's relocation. Several thousand children, who now use the SIDC's athletic fields through various Island sports leagues, will be displaced while construction is underway, Kindtworth said.



ADVANCE PHOTO/FRANK J. JOHNS

Bullfields on the Staten Island Developmental Center grounds, now used by the community, will have to be closed off when construction begins for the new College of Staten Island campus.

(The "fields" are comprised of diamond shapes branded into the grass by a thousand running feet and small fences that serve as backstops.)

Once established at Willowbrook, CSI will continue its policy of permitting the community to use established ballfields when they are not being used for intercollegiate or intramural activity, Volpe said. And the meadow-to-be will also contain several playing fields for the community's use.

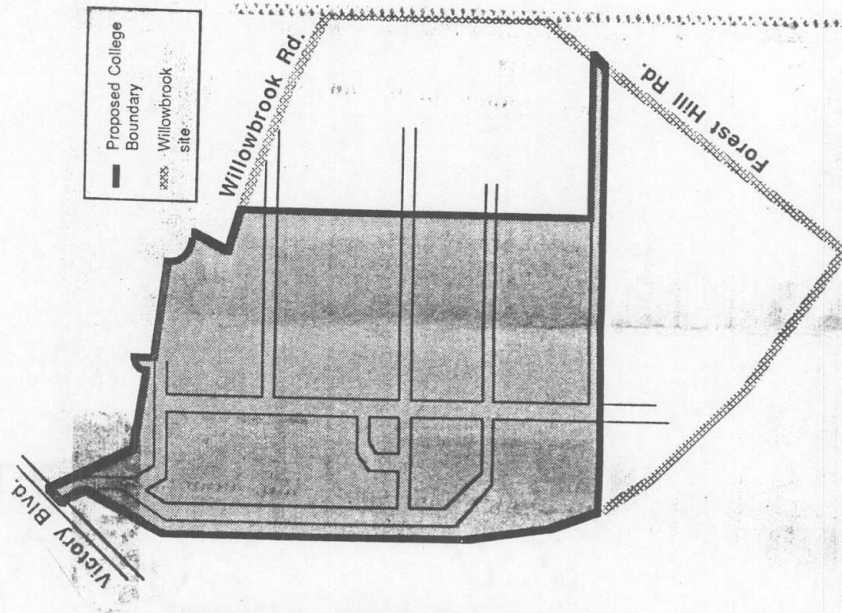
But, "We're going to close off the fields when we build. There's no way we can help out with that," Volpe said, because it would be hazardous to have children on the grounds during construction.

Another question is whether sharing the new campus will work. If the primary use for the community and CSI is on weekends, will there be enough playing fields to go around?

Both questions will have to be addressed, said Robert Huber, a spokesman for Borough President Ralph J. Lambert. "This move has not been done precipitously. People have shown, to date anyway, respect for the complexity of the problem," he said.

During this past summer CSI and CUNY officials decided the new campus master plan from June 1985 needed revising because the size of the campus had been decreased.

CSI and CUNY originally had asked the state Board of Regents to approve the construction of 720,000 square feet but the board approved only 626,000 square feet. The purpose of the master plan-



The shaded area shows where the College of Staten Island campus would be located in relation to the Staten Island Developmental Center grounds.

1991 and Sunnyside in 1992. That schedule reflects a delay of a year; in 1985 the state discovered it could not sell bonds to finance the construction and the Assembly and Senate could not agree on legislation to create a new bonding mechanism.

More than a year later, that problem was resolved when a bill was passed this summer, allowing the Dormitory Authority to sell \$1.3 billion in bonds.

The state Dormitory Authority and CUNY are anxious to get this project underway, said Volpe. "There is a good deal of interest in pushing the work as quickly as possible," he said. "Once they start these projects, they really want them to move."