

What will become of CSI campuses?

College's planned relocation spurs interest in school's current sites

By ANNE SILVERSTEIN
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

When the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook closes next year, the College of Staten Island will get 216 acres of its rolling fields, large stands of trees and numerous buildings.

But what happens to the Sunny-side and St. George campuses that are abandoned? This question is beginning to stir the interest of residents, community organizations, developers, businesses and

officials Island-wide.

The state Dormitory Authority now owns the Sunnyside land and 130 Stuyvesant Pl. in St. George. (CSI also occupies 120 Stuyvesant Pl. and 50 Bay St., but they are privately owned.)

Once CSI moves, Sunnyside becomes city property and 130 Stuyvesant Pl. becomes state property, "unless CUNY has a future use for them," which is unlikely, said Donald Farley, the City University of New York's vice chan-

cellor for facilities planning and management.

Island public officials and businessmen seem confident the St. George area will not suffer when CSI vacates its campus there. There's a demand for office space in the area, especially among the courts and city agencies, said Robert Huber, a spokesman for Borough President Ralph J. Lamberti.

Lamberti is conducting a survey to find out what their needs

are. He is also sending letters to state and city agencies suggesting they seek office space on Staten Island, Huber said.

"The key here is this is still four years down the road," Huber said — planning is a little premature because it is still unknown when CSI will actually vacate the buildings.

Employees of the new tenants in those buildings will probably bring more money to the local businesses than students, sug-

gested Richard D. Irwin, president of the Chamber of Commerce. Students tend to be on campus only a few days of the week and eat lunch either in the cafeteria or bring lunch from home. Employees would provide businesses with a steady five-day-a-week clientele.

"It should be no problem" to fill the buildings "once we get down to the date of when CSI will move out," Irwin said.

What happens to CSI's 43-acre

Sunnyside campus, however, will probably be more controversial. That campus sits in the middle of several exclusive residential areas and includes athletic fields and six acres of unspoiled woodland.

The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) recently submitted to the state Dormitory Authority concerning CSI's move to Willowbrook says developing the

Sunnyside campus as a residential community would "be compatible with the existing residential land use pattern."

Assemblyman Robert Straniere, R-Dongan Hills, and Borough President Lamberti, both vehemently oppose private development and want the land preserved for the public's use.

"I am concerned that efforts will be made to balance the city budget on the backs of Staten Island. That's how Staten Island's vacant land all got sold off in the early 1960s," Straniere said. "I think it's important that we begin to plan for that site and get community-based organizations" interested in moving there, he said.

So far, Straniere is supporting the Staten Island Council on the Arts' bid for the Williamson Theater and wants the gymnasium and sports fields to become the city parks department's property. Straniere also has suggested the

formation of a community task force, with representatives from the community, city and the state, to look into possible uses for the campus.

Like Straniere, Lamberti wants the six-acre strip of woodland preserved and the remaining facilities and buildings reserved for the public, Robert Huber said.

Next week, Lamberti will announce specific suggestions for the Sunnyside land, Huber said. Although he would not say what

the proposal was, Huber said Lamberti was "moving in the direction of adapted reuse of the site."

A third suggestion came from Irwin. "It would be a super office park," he said. "I know a lot of people have talked about it for recreational purposes or a court complex," he said, but "that would be a lovely business park ... it's excellent office space, beautifully located."