

but that a set plan with these goals would never survive the vagaries of yearly budget negotiations. Advocates suspect the center will draw existing programs hit with rising commercial rents, like the vocational workshop that moved there in October.

The Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development (ACRMD) said it moved because its yearly rent on Hylan Boulevard in Great Kills was doubled to \$140,000 and they could not find affordable space elsewhere.

Advocates for the retarded charge the state is actively encouraging programs they fund to relocate to the Connelly center. A

1985 consultant's study for the site suggests programs look to the Connelly center "as a space resource, rather than to more expensive rental space scattered throughout the community."

"Many of the parents are saying, 'they closed one Willowbrook and they're starting another one,'" said Polly Panzella,

mother of a retarded son and member of the court-ordered Board of Visitors that oversaw the 12-year phase-out of the institution completed this September. "That's a real fear we have."

The new director of the state-owned site, Robert Witkowsky, and Mrs. Connelly refute these claims as being against state policy. Since isolating the retarded led to the herding of 6,000 people inside Willowbrook, the state has subsequently adopted community-based care as its mandate.

However while denying any change in this policy, both Mrs. Connelly and Witkowsky said the old grounds are in effect part of the community. The assemblywoman said she is lobbying for city bus service through the site.

The state retained about 175 acres of land for the mentally retarded, according to Witkowsky, director of the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office. It holds the Connelly center, a research institute,

small group homes for about 130 retarded people and administrative buildings.

The remaining 205 acres of the 380-acre wooded site will become the new campus of the College of Staten Island.

"When we have the transportation in, that will mitigate the argument that we're regressing," said Mrs. Connelly. "This isn't Willowbrook anymore. We have to let go."

Art Roza, ACRMD associate executive director, said, "If I thought of it as an institution, I wouldn't be back there." He said 80 retarded people assemble and package envelopes, cards, posters and other products in the workshop. Every day we can, Roza said, the program buses them to a nearby shopping district on their lunch hour so they can have more contact with the outside community.

Besides ACRMD, which has a five-year lease, and the 38-by-82-foot pool, the center will also host

a day program for about 80 retarded people now on property slated for the College of Staten Island, Witkowsky said.

He also confirmed that a plot of land near Forest Hill Road will go to Young Israel of Staten Island for parking and recreation. Witkowsky, who only started his job last month, said he did not know the size of this plot or terms of the transfer.

Mrs. Connelly said this agreement was in the works since at least 1978 because there were no plans for the land and the synagogue has been a good neighbor. Rabbi Jay Marcus of Young Israel could not be reached for comment.

As for the center's future uses, Witkowsky said "there is no firm plan in place." Mrs. Connelly said she prefers this flexibility.

However Diane Buglioli, head of the Staten Island Retardation and Disabilities Council, and other advocates want a commitment that the center "fill the gap" in mental health services and not relocate existing community programs.

However it remains unclear just what shape the center will finally take.

"I don't know what I see down the road," said Mrs. Connelly.