

Although her daughter can't speak, Mrs. Aponte is thrilled that Erin is a step closer to independence.

"It is a natural progression. My other children have grown and moved away," she said.

She is also confident that the community will embrace her daughter and the home will enhance the neighborhood.

Community Board 3, which has become a center for debates over the siting of residential facilities for the disabled this year, has received no complaints about the new proposed homes.

Earlier this year, Huguenot and Greenridge residents stormed the board's Rossville headquarters to oppose similar homes proposed for their towns. The heated meetings gained the attention of politicians and community activists, who argued that the developmentally disabled make good neighbors and that it is a community's responsibility to house them.

Members of Board 3 are pleased at the lack of opposition to the latest South Shore homes, particularly since they have little choice but to approve the plans.

The Community Residence Site Selection Law -- also known as the Padavan Law -- gives community boards three options when faced with a proposed site for a community residence for the developmentally disabled: Accept the site, suggest an alternative, or object to the site on the grounds the neighborhood is already saturated with similar residences. In this case, similar residences mean other community residences for the developmentally disabled.

The board's vote is merely advisory. If the board rejected the site, the state would hold a hearing on the board's objections but would ultimately have the power to approve the site.

The board is set to review the applications at a public hearing tonight at 7:30 in its offices at 655-218 Rossville Ave.

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