

S. J. Adrame  
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# Home for disabled awaits OK

## Group facility in CB 3 hands

By TRACEY PORPORA  
ADVANCE SOUTH SHORE BUREAU

Construction could start next month on a proposed United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) group home for developmentally disabled children, if Community Board 3 approves the plan tomorrow.

While UCP would run the facility, the state office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) would finance the construction of the single-family home on Sharrotts Road, off Bloomingdale Road in Charleston.

Ron Byrne, OMRDD spokesman, said the plan is still in the early stages. If Board 3 approves the proposal, the next step would be to hire architects for the design of the structure. Special considerations, such as wider hallways and ramps around the house, would have to be addressed, he said.

According to Esther Nitzburg, assistant to the executive director, the house could take shape as early as next month because of the great need to house 14 developmentally disabled children who currently reside at Terence Cardinal Cooke Hospital in Manhattan. The not-for-profit hospital has tended to the children's care on a long-term basis, but their unit will be closed in March.

"That will leave 14 children homeless," she said.

Other hospital residents have been placed in various group homes around the city. Of the 14 remaining, she said several of their families have expressed an interest in living on Staten Island.

Ms. Nitzburg could not say whether any of the children are Island natives, but confirmed they are all from the city.

She added that when a vacancy arises, UCP would "make every effort" to house Island residents at the facility.

The children are either developmentally disabled from birth or have suffered head injuries, Ms. Nitzburg said. She added that all have special needs and some are physically disabled as well.

"They have a lot of medical needs, but don't need to be in the hospital," she said.

The children range in age from 7 to 14. Ms. Nitzburg said she hopes to accommodate residents from infancy to 18 years old in the future.

The proposed facility would have a 24-hour nursing staff, as well as several therapists and medical practitioners.

The community will have a chance to voice its opinion at a public hearing tomorrow at 7 p.m. at Board 3 headquarters, 655-218 Rossville Ave. in the Woodrow Shopping Plaza.

Community Board 3 is required to vote on the issue according to the Padavan Law, which provides for the placement of group homes for the developmentally disabled in residential areas. Over-saturation of similar homes in the area is the only criterion for voting down a home.