

Proposals for Reform of Community Facility Regulations

Currently, City zoning often allows “community facilities” (developments such as universities, hospitals, medical facilities, schools, etc.) to be built to a much greater size than any other allowable building in an area. In some zoning districts, such as R6 and R7 zones (which cover much of Greenwich Village and the East Village), the additional bulk is as much as 98%. Worse, there are no caps on how many of these supersized structures can be built in an area, no incentives for institutions to expand in less saturated parts of the City, no special regulations requiring they try to fit their context, and no requirement that institutions work with communities on long-term planning for their ongoing development. And increasingly, institutions are including commercial development as part of their facilities and still getting community facility bonuses for their structures. GVSHP proposes the following reforms to address these issues and protect our neighborhoods from inappropriate community facility over-development:

- ▶ **Reduce or eliminate the additional community facility allowance in R6 and R7 zones** (the current additional community facility allowance in R6 zones is 97.53%, in R7 zones 39.53%, and in R7-2 zones 88.93%, much greater than other comparable districts), or
- ▶ **Require public review and approval, such as a special permit, for increased FAR (bulk) allowance for community facilities, or**
- ▶ **Develop a system to cap the number of increased FAR allowances for community facilities (i.e. the number of community facilities of size greater than standard zoning allows) for each community board**
- ▶ **Eliminate the ability of developers to get the full increased community facility allowances when only a part of their development is a community facility** (for ex., in an R7-2 district, where residential buildings have a maximum FAR of 3.44, a development may have a community facility FAR of just 3.06 and still be granted an allowance to build up to a total FAR of 6.5, the maximum community facility allowance for that zoning district)
- ▶ **In order to facilitate more effective and accurate long-term planning by communities, require publicly reviewed and approved master plans of institutions in order for them to get more than a single increased community facility allowance in any community board** (i.e. the first granting of an increased FAR allowance for a community facility for any institution in a community board would trigger the requirement of a master plan in order to receive any further increased FAR allowances; the approved plan would have to be adhered to by the institution. If they seek to get an increased community facility allowance which deviates from the approved plan, they would have to do so as part of a new master plan, which would also have to go through a public review and approval process)
- ▶ **Require the City to assist institutions in establishing locations for auxiliary or secondary campuses to avoid saturation in certain communities and encourage appropriate development in others** (institutions will naturally resist building new facilities which are not in close proximity to their other facilities; as a ‘carrot’ to match the ‘stick’ of making concentration of large community facilities more difficult in saturated communities, the City should work with institutions to begin satellite campuses [which may be connected by mass transit to their main campuses] where several facilities can be built in close proximity to one another, eliminating the isolation issue. The City’s EDC or other agencies could assist with land acquisition, and could be tied to efforts to spur development in areas of the City where new development is being encouraged)
- ▶ **Attach bulk, height, and massing requirements to community facility development, to ensure compatibility with the existing built environment** (community facilities often have larger floor heights and significantly different layout needs than the residential and other buildings which surround them, thus resulting in markedly different-looking, out-of-scale structures. Bulk, height and massing requirements would help to ensure community facilities “fit in” better with their surroundings)