74-901
Bulk modifications for laboratories

In #Residence Districts# and #Commercial Districts#, the City Planning Commission may permit, in conjunction with a laboratory listed under Use Group VII, modifications to #bulk# regulations, other than #floor area ratio#, provided that the following findings are met.

In order to grant the special permit, the Commission shall find that the proposed #bulk# modifications:

(1) will not unduly affect the essential character or impair the future use and development of the surrounding area; and

The proposed bulk modifications will not unduly affect the essential character or impair the future use and development of the surrounding area. The proposed bulk modifications will allow for a building that rises at the street line to a height of 255 feet. Above that height, a setback of at least 20 feet would be required and there would be a total maximum building height of 270 feet. Without the proposed modifications, the building form would be required to incorporate multiple building setbacks beginning at a height of 85 feet in accordance with sky exposure plane regulations and would, as a result, rise substantially taller than the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development is located in the First Avenue Health and Sciences Corridor. The Proposed Development would not unduly affect the essential character of this area, but rather reinforce and strengthen that character by adding new, modern laboratory space for growing life sciences companies and fostering potential synergies with existing institutions and academic medical centers in the Corridor. The proposed bulk modifications are necessary to accommodate the programmatic needs of a laboratory building and thereby allow for commercial life sciences use at this location. In particular, the proposed bulk modifications allow for large, consistent floorplates, which ensures every floor can be organized efficiently on a 11-foot planning module, support a critical mass of researchers and lab users, and be flexibly used on either a multi-tenant or single-tenant basis.

Both the overall height and the building form created by the modification of setback requirements is in keeping with the character of the surrounding area, which includes a mix of architectural styles and built conditions. In particular, the massing is consistent with the institutional buildings along the First Avenue Health and Sciences Corridor, many of which lack a traditional building setback along the street line. For example, the Bellevue Hospital complex immediately east of the Proposed Development contains six buildings arranged within its campus including a 370-foot facility on its eastern end. To the north of Bellevue, the buildings within the Alexandria Center are in keeping with the laboratory design principles of maintaining consistent floorplates without building setbacks. The height of the Proposed Development is also comparable to several residential towers in close vicinity including the 289-foot New York City Housing Authority tower immediately north of the Proposed Development at 344 East 28th Street and the 285-foot dorm building south of the Proposed Development at 334 East 26th Street, both of which incorporate an open area at the street line and do not incorporate a building setback.

The massing will also not impair, but rather complement, future uses and development. Future development includes the planned development at SPARC Kips Bay on the east side of First Avenue, which is anticipated to have approximately 2.19 million square feet and building heights consistent with the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would serve as a counterpart on the west side of the avenue and provide a transition to the residential buildings further west.

(2) will not unduly obstruct the access of light and air to adjoining properties or public #streets#.

The Proposed Development will not unduly obstruct the access of light and air to adjoining properties or public streets. The Proposed Development occupies a full-block site at

the intersection of two wide streets, 100-foot-wide First Avenue and 80-foot-wide East 26th Street, allowing for substantial light and air in all directions. Many of the buildings in the surrounding area are arranged within larger campuses, incorporating additional distances between buildings, or set back from the street line. The buildings to the west of the Proposed Development are separated a substantial distance from the Proposed Development by Bellevue South Park.

As set forth in the Environmental Assessment Statement, VHB conducted an analysis to assess potential effects of shadows cast by the Proposed Development, including on Bellevue South Park, and determined that the Project would not result in a significant adverse shadow impact.