

Monthly Newsletter

John W. Baumgarten Architect, P.C.

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Do You Know That...?

- The Commission on Health Facilities in the 21st Century generally supports the further development of neighborhood based clinics & senior care/housing alternatives such as assisted living, adult day care & PACE programs. Success in achieving a true continuum of care requires the creation of more community based options.

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The Solution Next Door

In today's complex and competitive health care arena the only constant is change. As nursing facilities struggle to keep up with the demands of regulatory and market forces, space continues to be "the final frontier."

Across our client base, we see similar needs: office space, storage, parking and space for new programs and initiatives. In an urban setting where land is at a premium, the problem of enlarging a facility is made more difficult by restrictive zoning.

Through our recent project work, we have found that the solution is often right next door. Most nursing facilities are located in low to medium density residential zones where land costs are still relatively affordable. In many cases, facilities already own residential buildings or abutting parcels that are being used somewhat inefficiently for storage and office space.

Local zoning limits the amount of nursing home space that can be built on a given lot by setting a low floor area ratio (FAR). FAR is essentially the total permitted above ground floor area expressed as a multiple of the land area.

A strategy we have successfully employed to increase the yield of a parcel is to classify a nursing home addition as a free standing ancillary services building or community center. The FAR allowed for these uses is twice that allowed for a nursing home.

An ancillary services building could house:

- a new kitchen
- a dialysis suite
- a physical therapy suite
- storage
- adult day care
- parking
- staff office space

Conversely, available space within the nursing home is now created as functions move next door. We have often reassigned this space to residents and families by creating new amenity zones.

Although this type of addition would have a physical connection to the nursing home, it would be classified as a separate, free-standing building and lot with its own certificate of occupancy. This is critical to maximizing yield since most nursing homes are overbuilt and a merger with an abutting parcel would only reduce the degree to which it is overbuilt, leaving little or no room for new construction.

New construction, although more costly than interior renovations has several offsetting advantages.

- New construction eliminates the phasing, logistic and life safety concerns associated with constructing in occupied space.
- There are fewer compatibility issues with the integration of new systems/equipment with an older infrastructure.
- Assuming that outpatient programs and offices are located within the addition, it is severable from a real estate perspective.

John W Baumgarten Architect, P.C.: Recent Lobby Renovations

