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## City College cleared to build Chinatown campus

Jim Doyle, Chronicle Staff Writer

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City College of San Francisco has settled two lawsuits filed by businesses and residents in Chinatown, clearing the way for construction to begin on the college's new, \$146 million high-rise campus there.

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The college's governing Board of Trustees agreed unanimously Wednesday to the settlement offers after attorney Alan Sparer, who represented the college, declared the agreements "an overwhelming victory."

### College gets what it wants

"They were settled on terms that didn't compromise in any way the size or scope of the campus, the academic programs that were going to be offered or the timetable for construction," Sparer said. "If there had been a delay, the college was at risk of losing its state funding for a \$49 million bond issue for that campus."

Lawyers for the plaintiffs could not be reached for comment.

College officials plan to break ground in summer and open the new campus in 2011. It will have 42 classrooms, laboratories and administrative offices to serve 6,500 students.

Board President Lawrence Wong credited Chinatown residents for supporting the project.

"I have not seen anything like that in my life," Wong said. "There was recognition by the Chinese American community that if they did not raise their voices about the need for the campus, that this would impact generations of members of the community for the next 100 years."

Chinatown community groups submitted 20,000 signatures to college trustees last year in support of the project.

The college has attempted for the past 13 years to move forward its plans for an inner-city campus, which is located on the boundary lines of Chinatown, North Beach and the Financial District. Courses are currently offered at a dozen locations scattered around Chinatown.

Opponents had argued that the campus would be out of scale for the neighborhood and detract from some of its historic buildings.

In settling one of the two most recent lawsuits, the college agreed to pay \$75,000 as a partial reimbursement for attorneys' fees and costs incurred by a group called Neighbors for Preservation, Land Use and Community Education. It had challenged an environmental impact report for a 14-story, 215-foot tower on the northeast corner of Kearny and Washington streets, and a four-story building with a large auditorium at



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In 2007, the City College trustees exempted their project from the city's 65-foot height limit for other buildings in the area.

### Exempt from zoning

"A college community district has the power under state law to exempt itself from zoning ordinances," said Sparer, adding that the design of the 14-story high-rise was a natural progression from the height of the Financial District to the smaller scale of the Chinatown community.

No financial payout was needed to settle the other lawsuit brought by Montgomery Washington Limited Partnership, the owners of a business tower at Washington and Columbus, which claimed that the college's design for the Chinatown campus was not compatible with buildings in the nearby Jackson Square Historic District, as required by a previous agreement with neighborhood preservationists.

"They were ostensibly seeking modifications to the design of the building, and they gave up those claims," Sparer said. "So the building design is not being altered."

Sparer said that Montgomery Washington also wanted to limit traffic congestion at the site. As part of the settlement, the college agreed to limit deliveries during work hours, to provide security for late-night events and to ensure that the campus was closed an hour after the last classes.

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