

COVER LETTER

Application for PSPB Use Approval: New Ground Floor Office in the Gridiron Building

26 October 2021

Pioneer Square Preservation Board

600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear PSPB Members,

The proposal of this cover letter is to obtain *A Briefing with PSPB* (prior to official submission for Use Approval) of a new Office Use for English Cap, within the ground floor commercial condo unit in the recently-redeveloped Gridiron Building, located at 590 1st Ave. S.

THE VISION:

English Cap is a small, local, family-owned investment firm. They seek to personally invest in the future of the Pioneer Square neighborhood by purchasing a large, long-empty & vacant ground-floor commercial condo unit and occupying the western portion of it for their family office. English Cap will then demise the eastern portion of the condo unit and market & lease it to a future restaurant tenant.

THE SITE & SPACE:

The Commercial Condominium Space in question occupies most of the ground floor of the Gridiron Condominiums Building, re-developed in 2016-2018 by Kevin Daniels Real Estate.

I have calculated the ground floor area of this unit as 7,731sf, with an additional 3,036sf occupying a 2nd floor of the condo unit. Of the 7,731sf ground floor area, approx. 3,135sf (facing west) is proposed as Office space for English Cap, with the balance of the ground floor area (approx. 4,596sf facing east) being separately-demised and reserved for a future restaurant tenant. The upper floor of the condo unit (not shown) would also be utilized by the future restaurant tenant. (*refer to Attachment A - Site Plan*).

The entirety of the proposed ground floor Office Use faces southwest, towards Railroad Way S., which currently features a concrete parking lot adjacent to the building, with a park planned in the near future. (*refer to Attachment B – Aerial Site Photo*).

COMPATABILITY WITH PREFERRED STREET-LEVEL USES:

The Code states, under “Preferred Street-level Uses”:

B. Preferred Street-level Uses.



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1. **Preferred uses at street level must be highly visible** and pedestrian oriented. *Preferred street-level uses either display merchandise in a manner that contributes to the character and activity of the area, and/or promote residential uses. For example, an architecture firm that displays models in the windows, offices for a company that displays a product that they make though the product is manufactured somewhere else.*

However, we wish to demonstrate a mitigating factor inherent to the building that makes compliance with this code section impossible, and that makes this particular proposed Office Use more appropriate.

MITIGATING FACTOR:

The building itself features a heavy, opaque 2-story brick base that is historic in nature. Inherent to this historic construction type are heavy, opaque brick walls with small punched window openings (*refer to Attachment C - Existing Building Photos*), greatly-reducing visibility into the ground floor condo space. **We argue that this existing condition (unlike a modern all-glass storefront) makes Uses requiring less visibility to the public (like Offices) a better fit for this space.**

PERCENTAGE OF OFFICE USES OF BLOCK:

For neighborhood context, and to help calculate % office of the Railroad Way S. block front, we took a thorough photographic survey of all current ground floor businesses on the block contained within 1st Ave S., King Street, Occidental Ave. S., and Railroad Way S (*refer to attachment D - Block Plan*).

The perimeter of the block is 2,114ft. Of that, Office uses (including our proposed office) equals 566sf (26.8% of the block perimeter), making our Office use discouraged.

However, our proposed Office use is only 39.9% of the Railroad Way S. block front, which places it within the realm of possibility of being approved.

CONCLUSION:

We believe that we've shown that the inherent low-visibility characteristics of the existing building exterior at the proposed Office Use, demonstrate that the proposed Office Use is suitable for this location that is not inherently "high-visibility" to begin with.

Further, we've demonstrated that the addition of this Office use, while discouraged due to the amount of offices already on the block, is 39.9% (under 50%) of the Railroad Way S. block front upon which the Office use is located.



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Also, we'd like to frame this project within the larger context of the decimation inflicted on retail & restaurants by the pandemic. When the building was redeveloped 5 years ago, the market for 10,000sf restaurant spaces was much more robust. If restaurateurs are looking for space at all now, it is much smaller in size, necessitating the market needing to adapt to meet this new reality.

Our hope is that PSPB would rather see a 2 successful local businesses thriving in the ground floor of the Gridiron Building And contributing to the neighborhood economy and vitality, rather than the space remaining vacant for 5 more years, or longer.

We therefore respectfully request PSPB's Approval for this Office use.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this proposed project for your review and approval. Please let me know if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,



Henry Walters, AIA, NCARB
Co-Owner & Principal Architect
Atelier Drome Architecture

ATTACHMENTS:

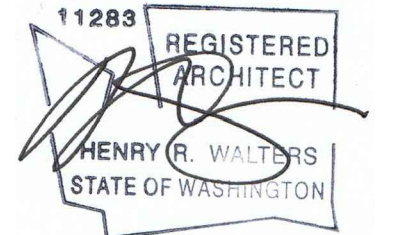
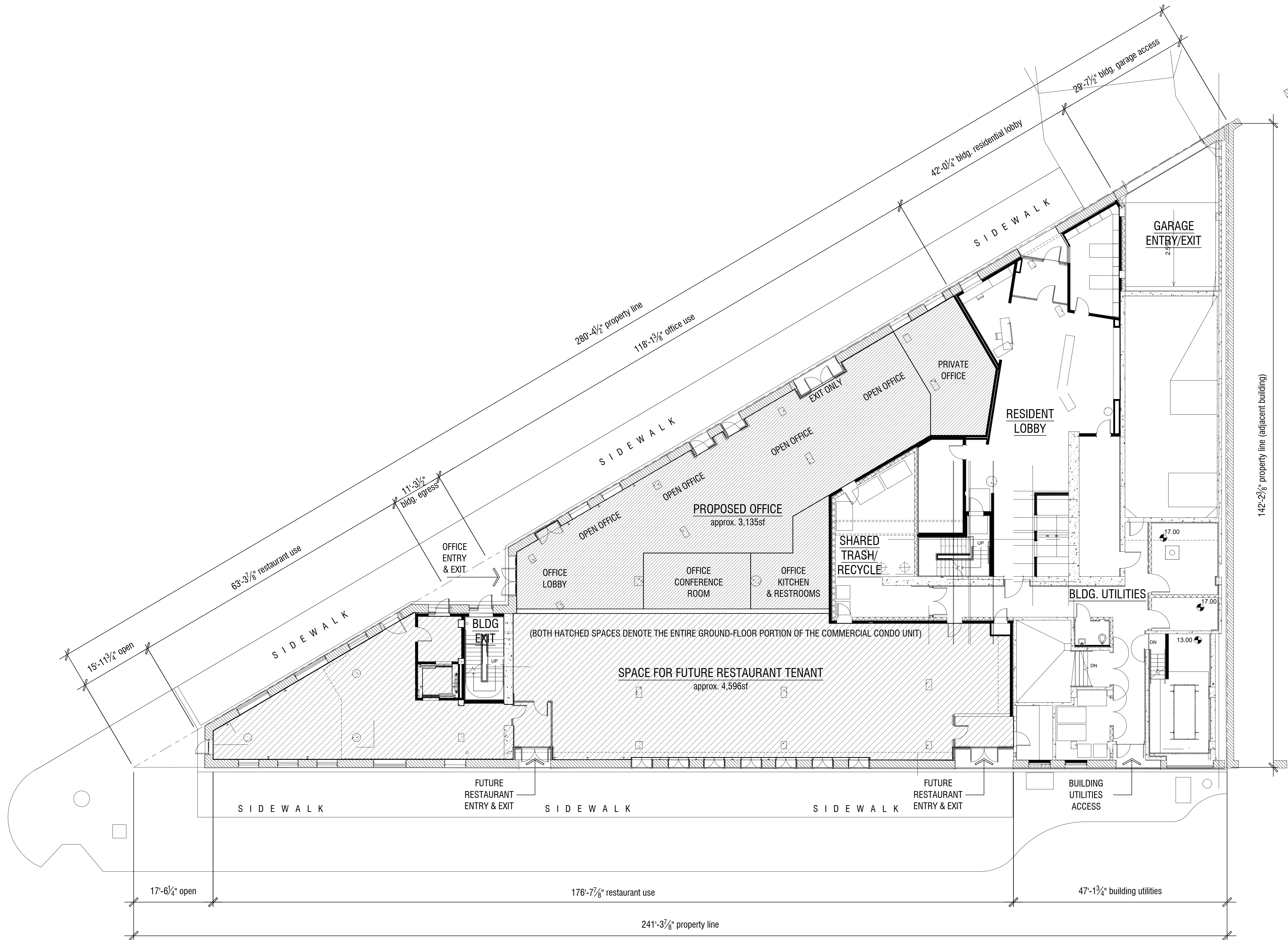
- **A:** Site Plan
- **B:** Aerial Site Photo
- **C:** Existing Building Photos
- **D:** Block Plan
- **E:** Property Owner Authorization (Statement of Owner Consent)



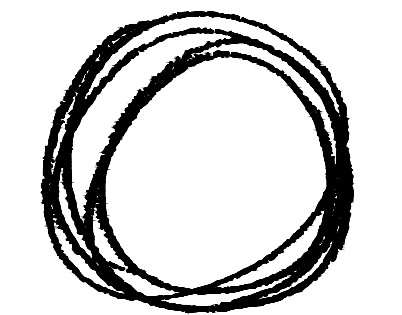
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english cap offices

Gridiron Condo Bldg
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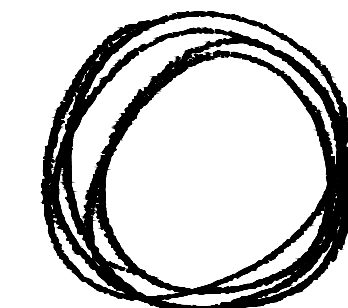
A
site plan

1 site plan
3/32" = 1'-0"





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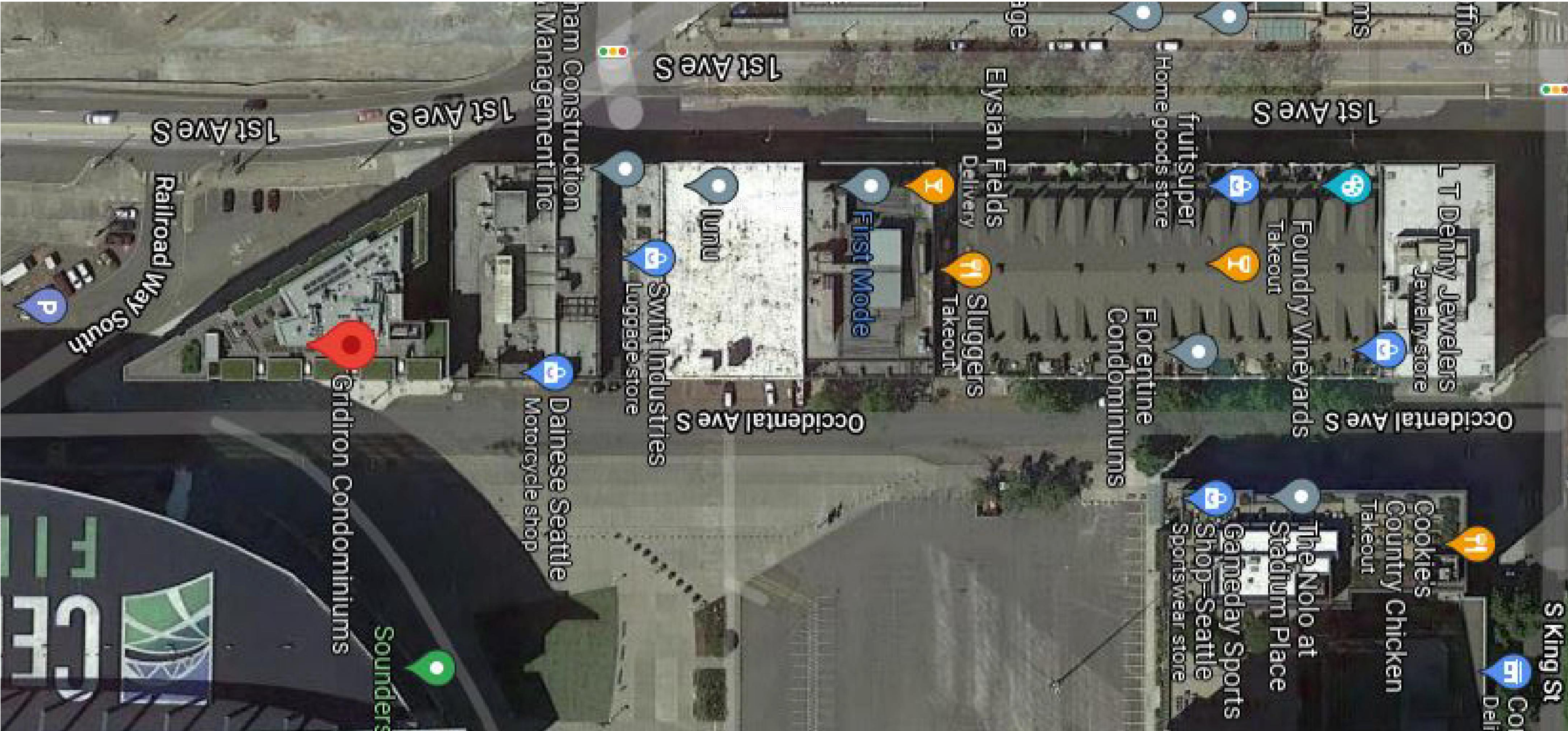
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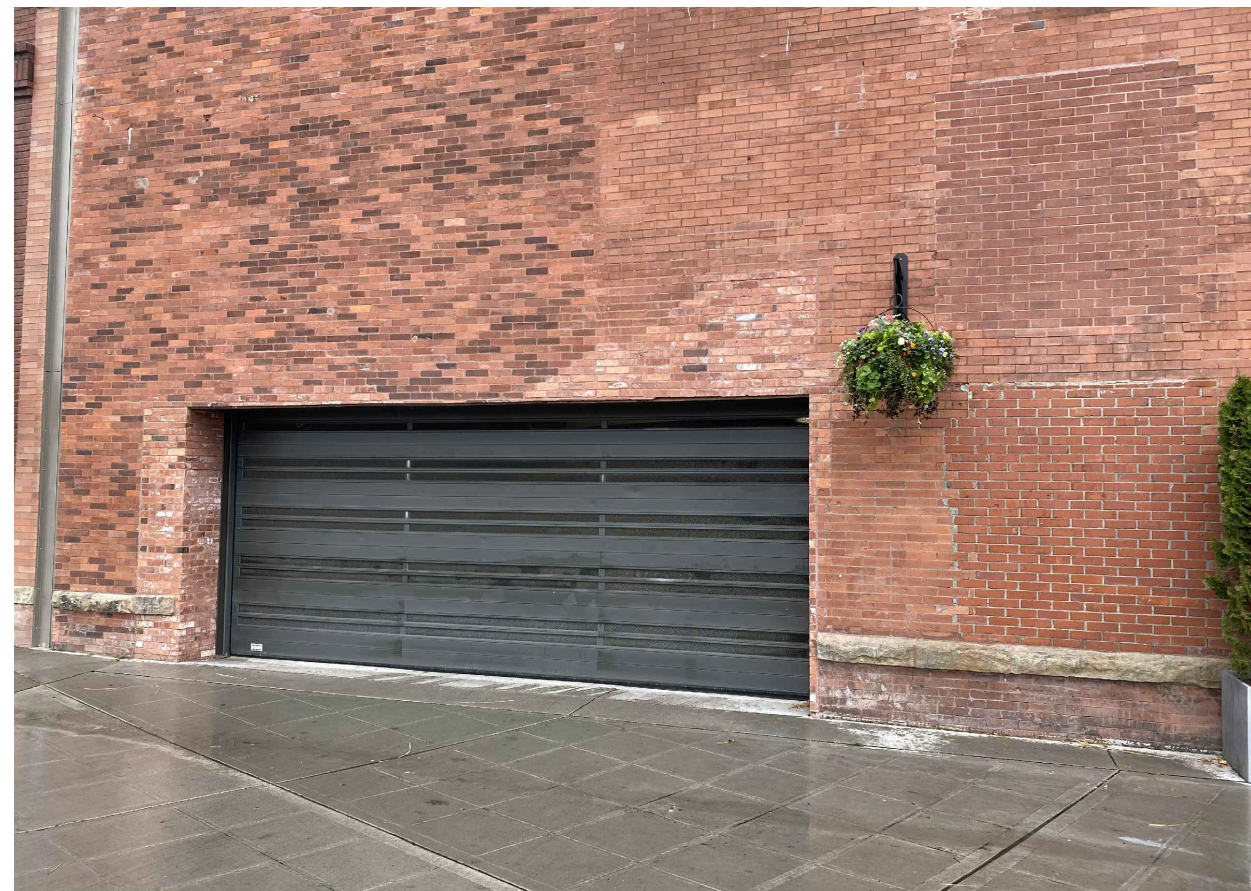
Gridiron Condo Bldg
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B

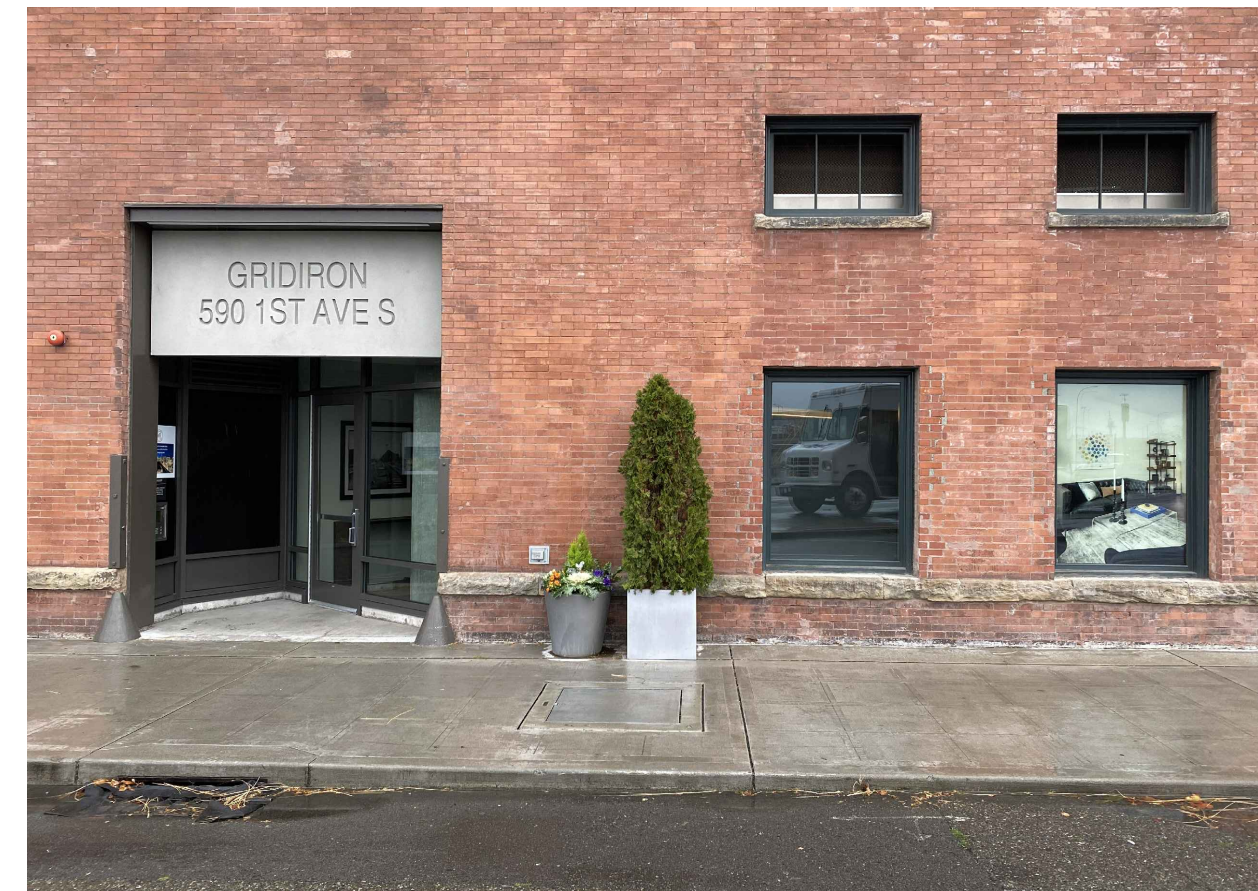
aerial site photo



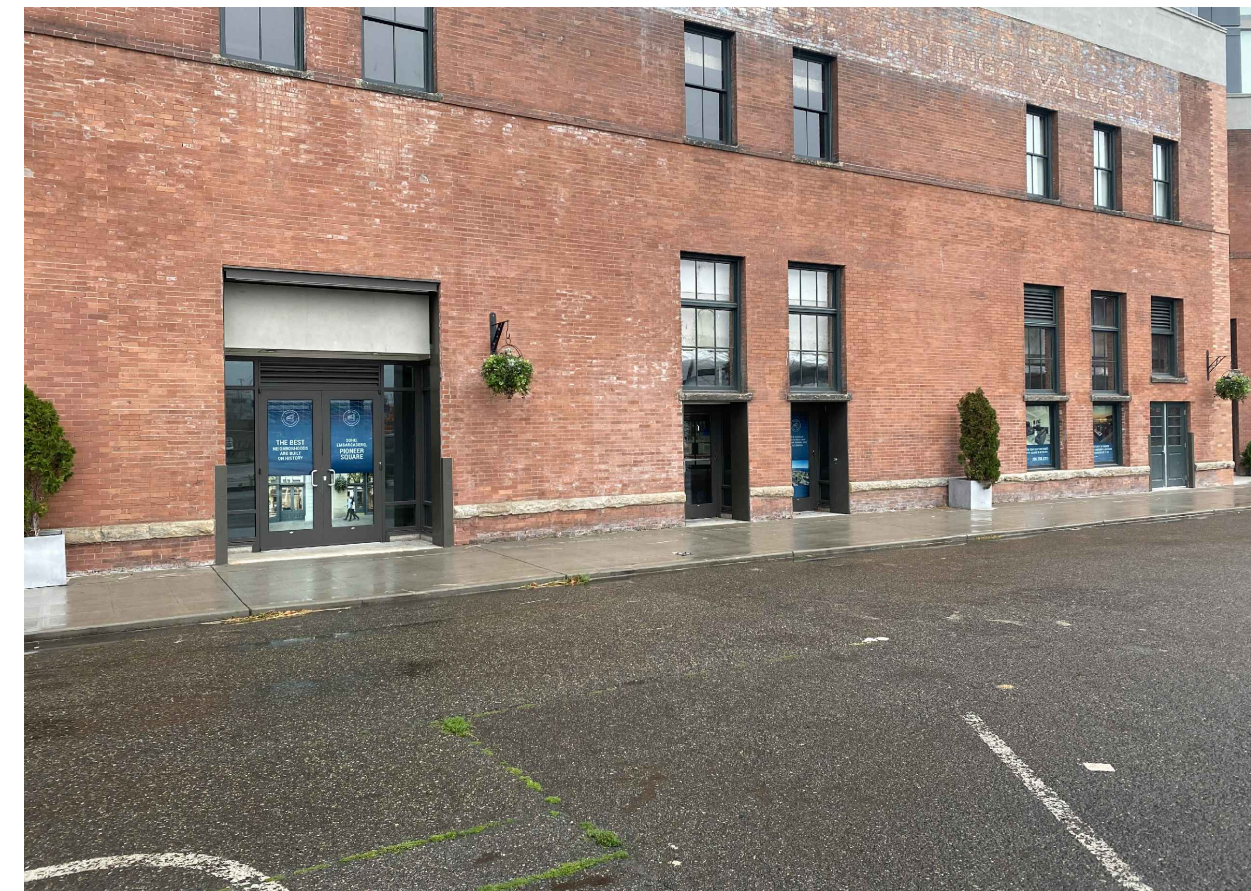
1 aerial site photo
not to scale



view from southwest, showing garage door



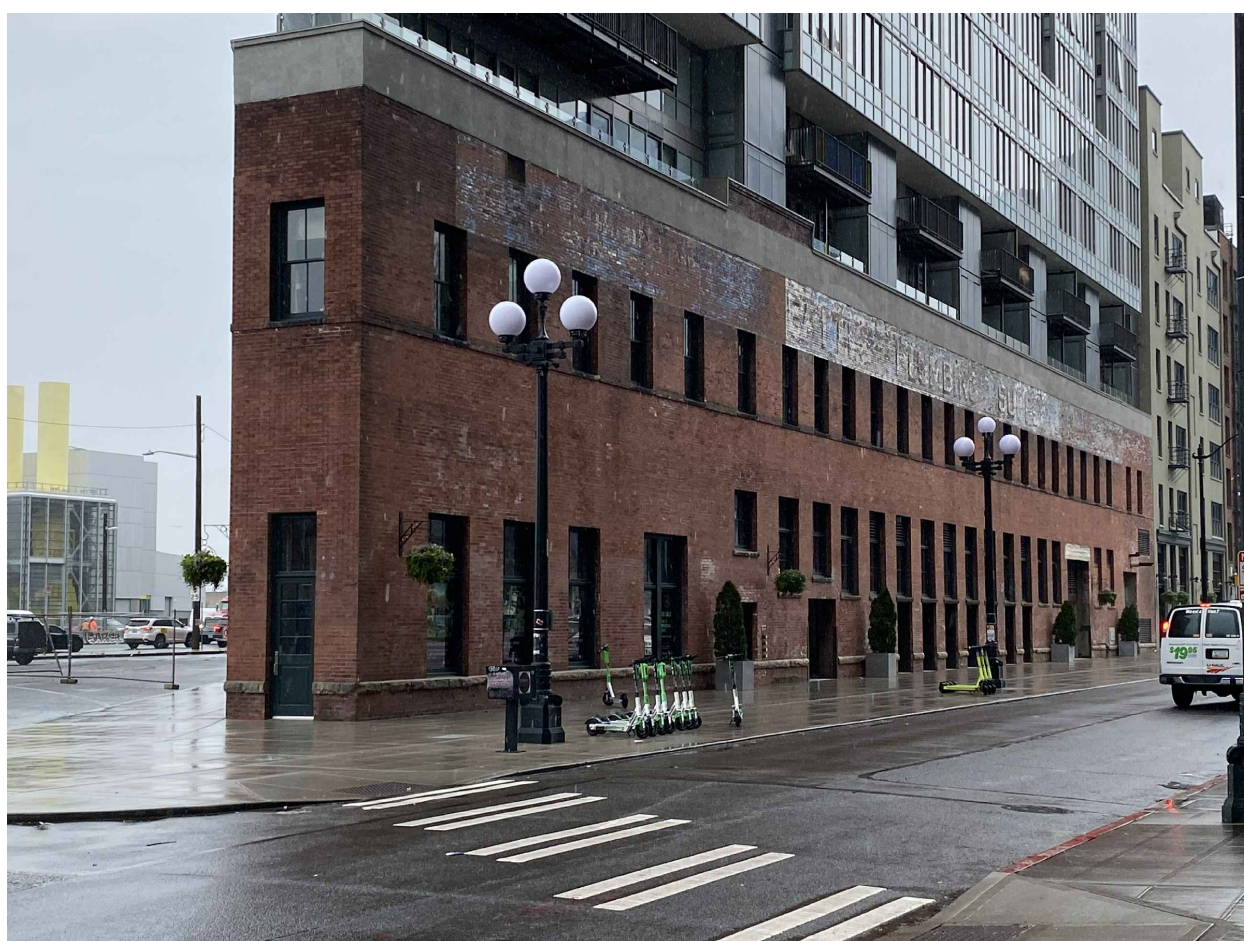
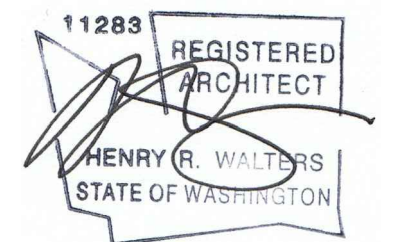
view from southwest, showing residential lobby on left and office windows on right.



view from southwest, showing office fire exit on left and other existing office windows and doors.



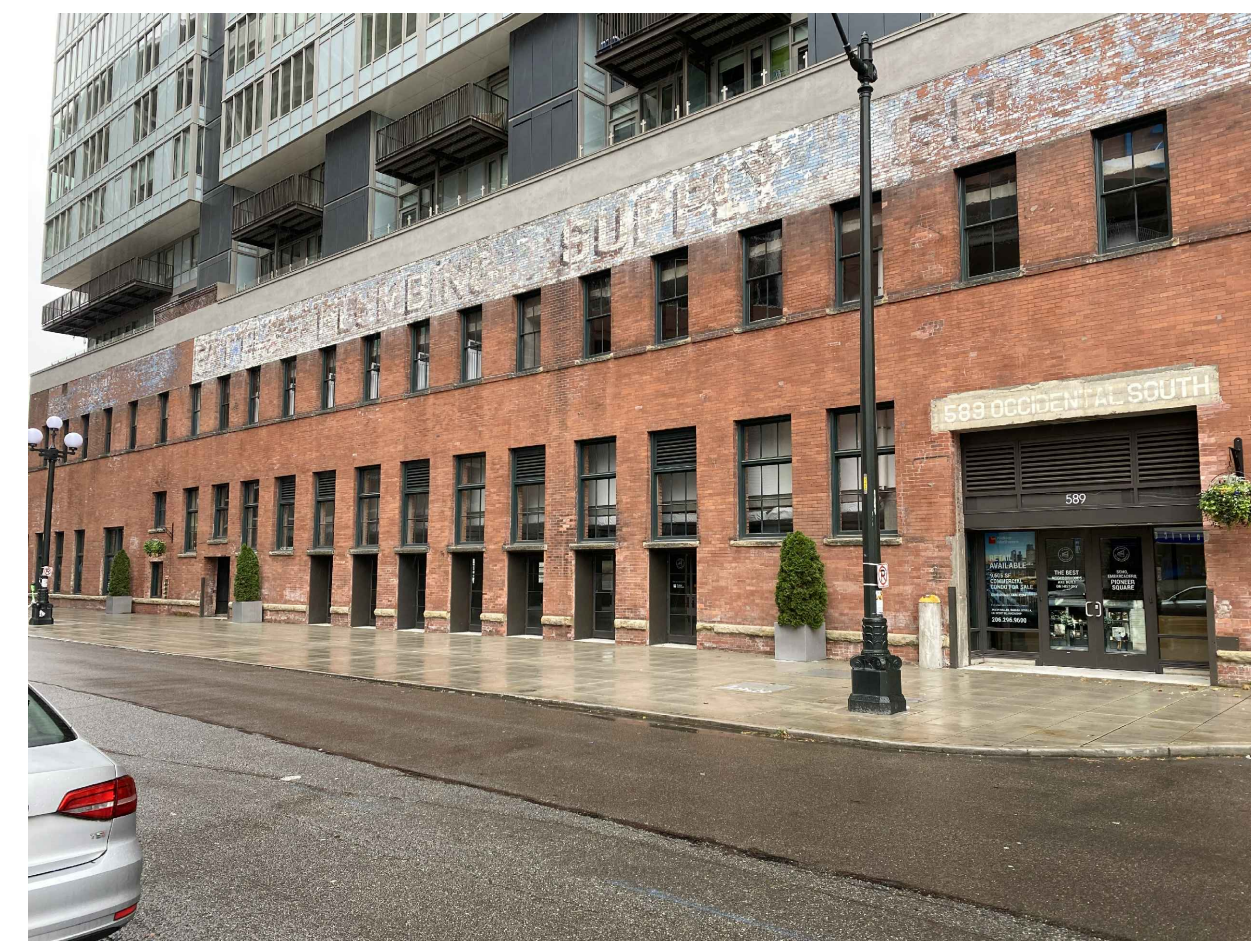
view from southwest, showing building fire stair egress on left and restaurant windows on right.



view from southeast, showing potential south corner door into future restaurant's bar.

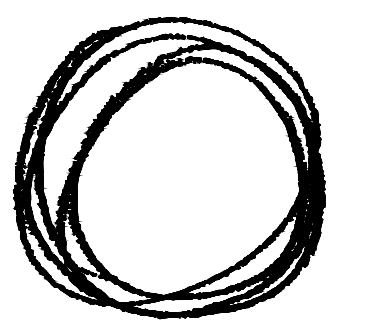


view from east, showing restaurant windows.



view from northeast, showing restaurant space. note that ground-floor windows & doors are less than 50% of the facade.

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C

existing building
photos

