

## COVER LETTER

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

17 November 2021

### **Pioneer Square Preservation Board**

600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear PSPB Members,

The purpose of this cover letter is to obtain PSPB Use Approval of a new Office Use for English Cap, within the ground floor commercial condo unit within the recently redeveloped Gridiron Building, located at 590 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Developer Kevin Daniels, who will remain an Owner of Residential portions of the building.

I have calculated the ground floor area of this unit as 7,731sf, with an additional 3,036sf occupying a 2<sup>nd</sup> 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”:



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### B. Preferred Street-level Uses.

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.

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.**

### CALCULATIONS:

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 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S., King Street, Occidental Ave. S., and Railroad Way S (*refer to Attachment D - Block Plan*).

#### The "Block Front" is defined as follows:

Entirety of Railroad Way S. =	295'-11 1/2"
Entirety of 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave S. =	706'-3 1/2"
Entirety of King St. =	150'-0"
Entirety of Occidental Ave. S. =	961'-2"
BLOCK FRONT PERIMETER =	2,113'-5"

Area of this Block Front: **125,123sf**

#### Area of Office Uses on this Block Front:

For purposes of this calculation, we assumed that all Uses along 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S. and Occidental Ave. S. share a common back wall.

Railroad Way S. =	3,135sf (proposed new Office)
1 <sup>st</sup> Ave S. =	7,728sf (existing)
King St. =	11,931sf (existing)
Occidental Ave. S. =	2,732sf (existing)
AREA OF OFFICE USES =	<b>25,526sf = 20.4% of 125,123sf Block Front Area</b>



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The Area(sf) Office Uses (including our proposed office) total 20.4% of the Area(sf) of the Block Front, which *falls just above the 20% threshold for being considered a Discouraged Street-Level Office Use in 23.66.130.C.*

Lineal Feet of Proposed Office Use facing Railroad Ave. S.:

Our proposed 118'-1/2" Office Use also occupies only 39.9% of the 295'-11 1/2" Railroad Way S. street-level frontage, *well below the 50% threshold in 23.66.130.D.*

### PROPOSED REMEDIES:

We propose two remedies to help make the street fronts of the space feel more pedestrian-oriented:

#### Office Space:

A rotating window display of Art created by Pioneer Square Artists. We have reached out to Laura Zeck (Owner of Zinc Gallery) and Anna Macrae (member of Shift Gallery) and both are very interested in displaying their Art in the windows of this particular space. Both artists are long-time Pioneer Square Residents. *Please refer to Attachment F for a perspective sketch of how Art could be displayed in the Lobby Windows of English Cap's Office. (Please note that this Window Display is merely a suggestion for a future Design Feature that we will develop further and obtain PSPB Design Approval later, if necessary. We are not requesting Design Approval at this time).*

#### Restaurant Space:

The Developer Kevin Daniels, remains an owner of the residential portion of building and will continue to utilize his real estate resources, including an experienced team of Real Estate and Design Professionals to help market the space, attract a future Restaurant tenant and design the interior and exterior of the space into a thoughtful, compelling addition to the neighborhood. Additionally, English Cap's strong financial position allows them to invest as necessary in a successful restaurant tenant. *Please refer to Attachments H1 & H2 for background information on this highly-experienced team.*

*As shown in Attachment A*, the future Restaurant tenant will be encouraged by this team to take full advantage of sidewalk seating, which will take up the entire east (Occidental) side of the space, and wrap around the south corner to occupy approx one third of the side of the space facing Railroad Way S. *As the exterior rendering in Attachment G shows*, this approx. 170-seat sidewalk seating area should feature



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multiple entry points and an assortment of seating options (bar tops facing the stadium, clusters of 2- and 4-top tables, as well as larger benches and tables for larger groups). “Festoon”-style lighting strung above the seating area (from the building to the guardrail structure) lights and enlivens the space, helping to set the tone as a festive place to enjoy a meal in the company of fellow enthusiastic sports fans. *(Please note that this Sidewalk Seating is merely a suggestion for a future Design Feature that we will strongly-encourage a future tenant to pursue. We are not requesting Design Approval at this time).*

### CONCLUSION:

We believe that we’ve shown that the inherent low-visibility characteristics of the existing building exterior demonstrate that the proposed Office is a suitable Use for this location.

We’ve also demonstrated mathematically that the addition of this Office is a Discouraged Use on the Block Front, but still well below 50% of the lineal feet along Railroad Way S.

Further, we’ve proposed two remedies that will help activate the building’s ground plane and drastically-improve the pedestrian experience.

Finally, we wish to frame this project within the larger context of the decimation inflicted upon local retail & restaurant business owners (in particular) by the pandemic. When the building was redeveloped 5 years ago, the market for 10,000+sf 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 2 successful local businesses thriving in the ground floor of the Gridiron Building and contributing to the neighborhood vitality and economy, 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, and please let me know if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,



**Henry Walters, AIA, NCARB**



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Co-Owner & Principal Architect  
Atelier Drome Architecture

### ATTACHMENTS:

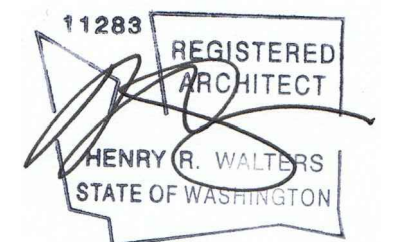
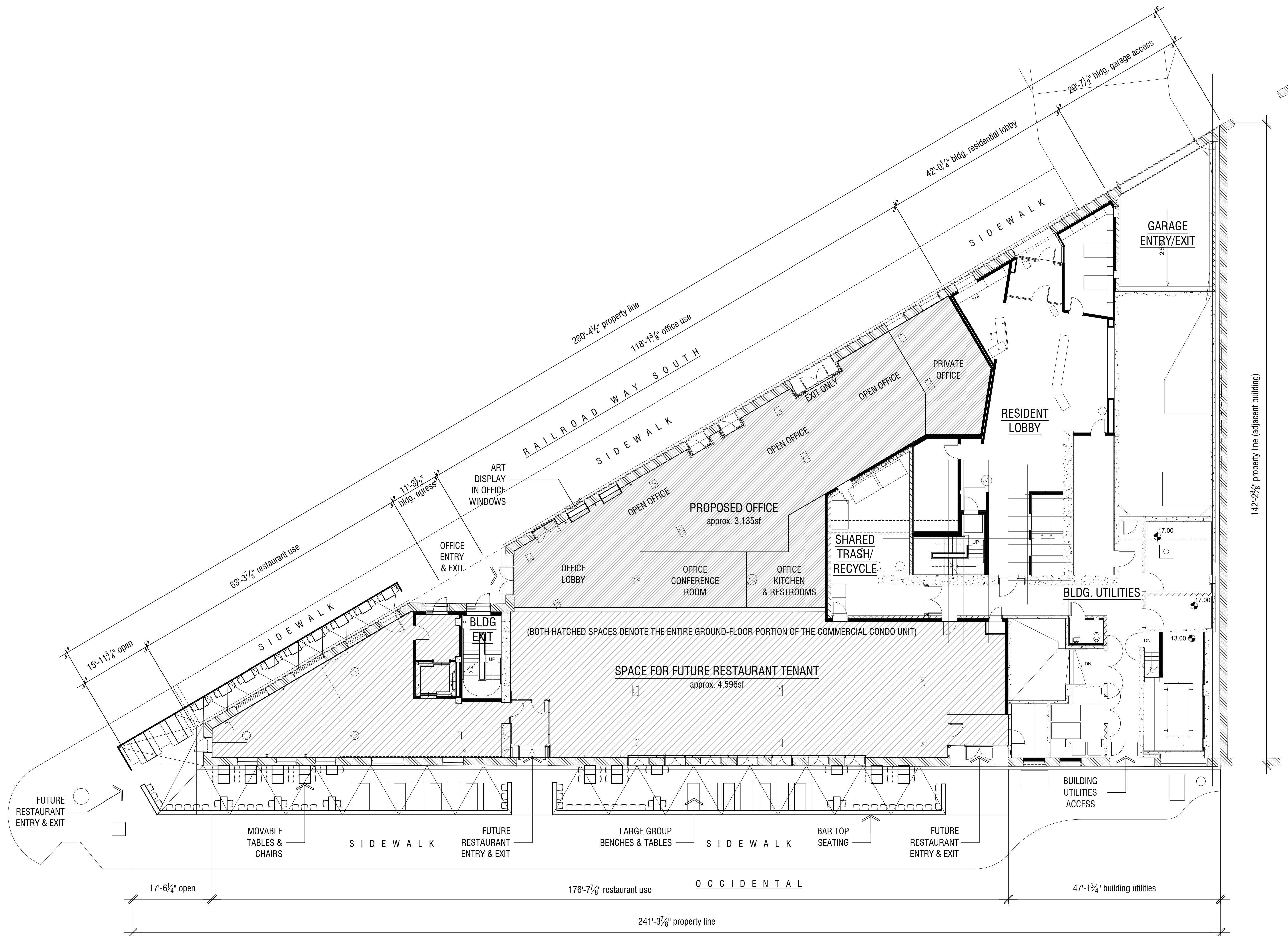
- **A:** Site Plan
- **B:** Aerial Site Photo
- **C:** Existing Building Photos
- **D:** Block Plan
- **E:** Property Owner Authorization (Statement of Owner Consent)
- **F:** Perspective Sketch Showing Display of Art in Office Lobby Windows
- **G:** Renderings Showing Proposed Restaurant Exterior & Interior
- **H1:** Proposed Leasing Team & Marketing Strategy
- **H2:** Proposed Restaurant Architecture & Design Team



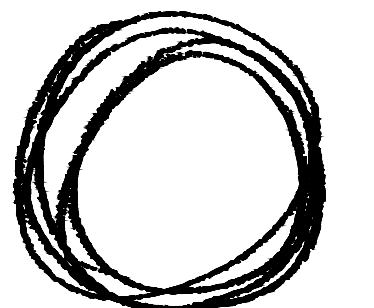
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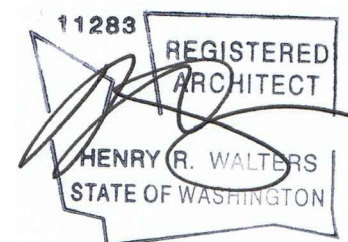
Gridiron Condo Bldg  
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**A**  
site plan

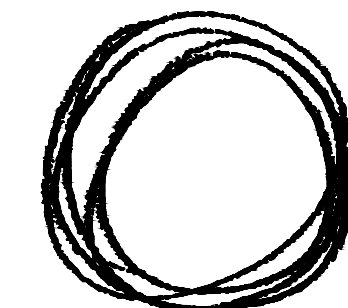
1 site plan  
3/32" = 1'-0"







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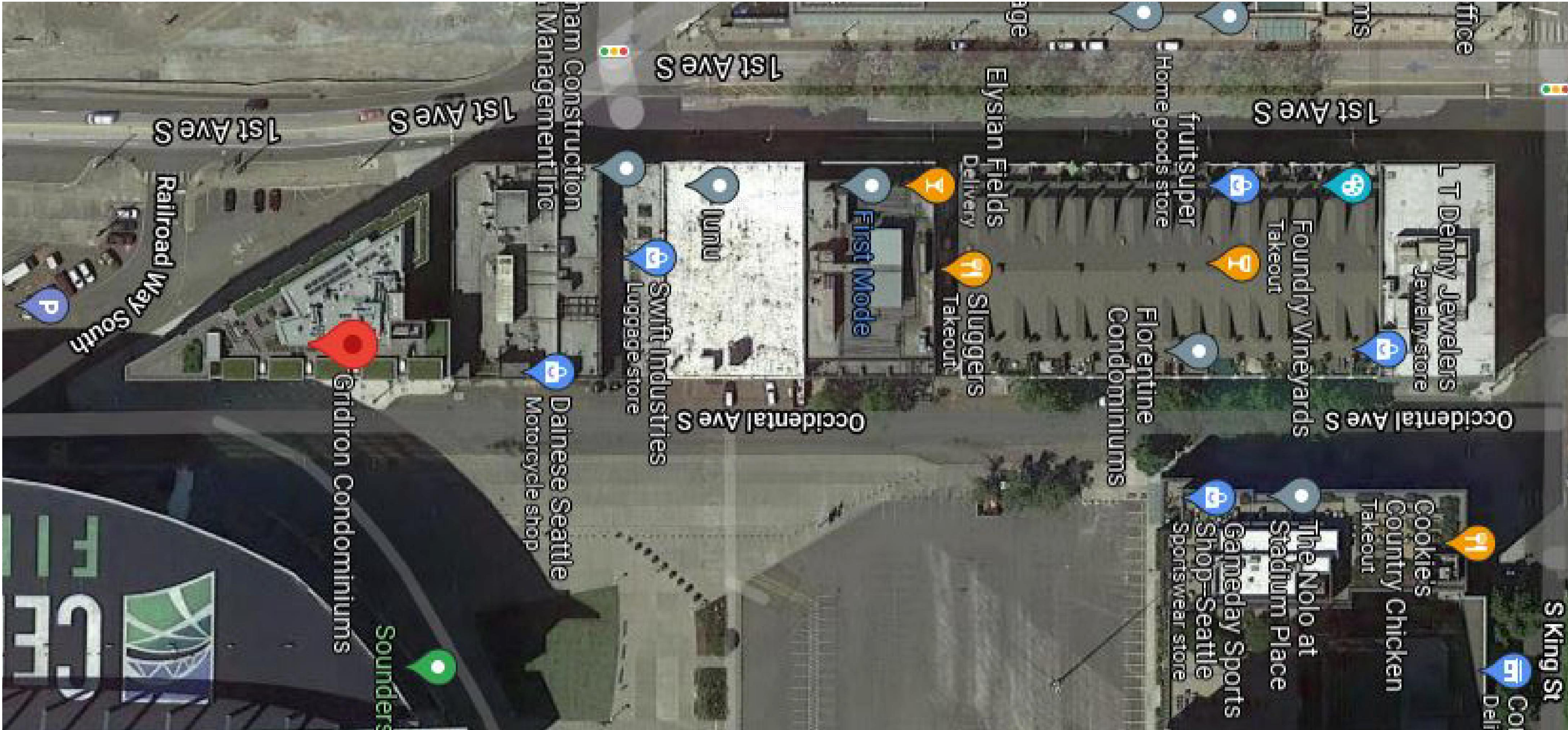
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**B**

aerial site photo

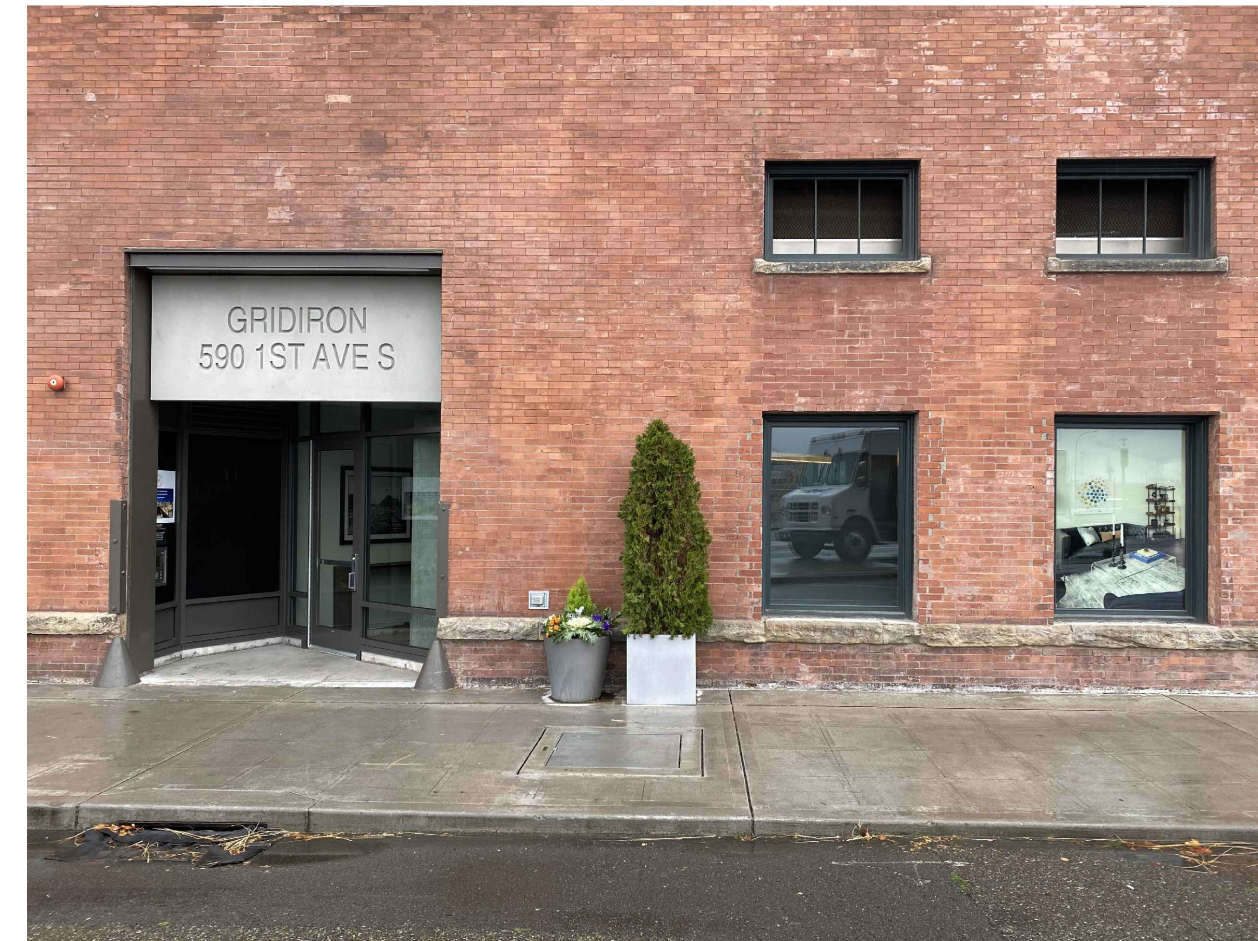


1 aerial site photo  
not to scale

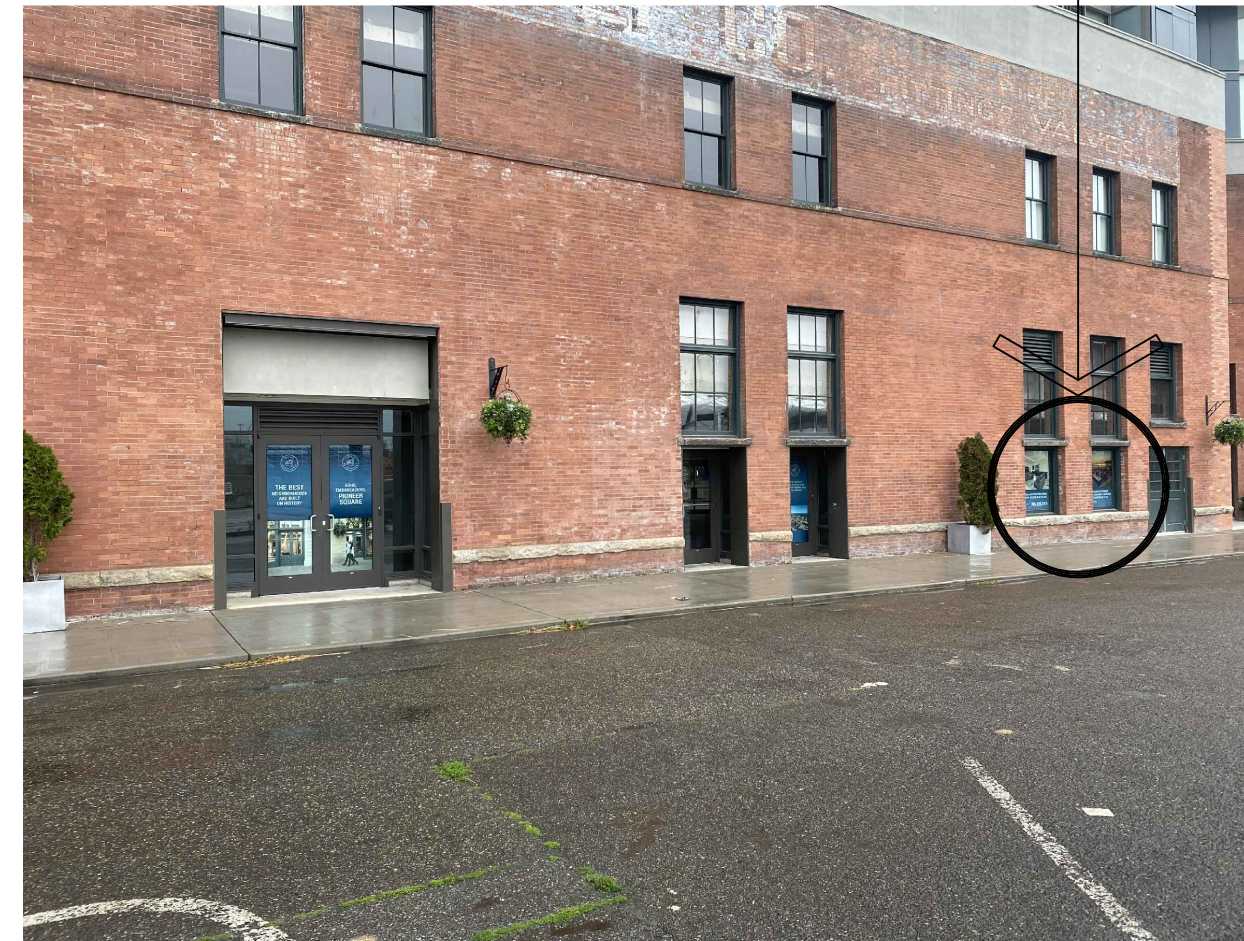




view from southwest, showing garage door



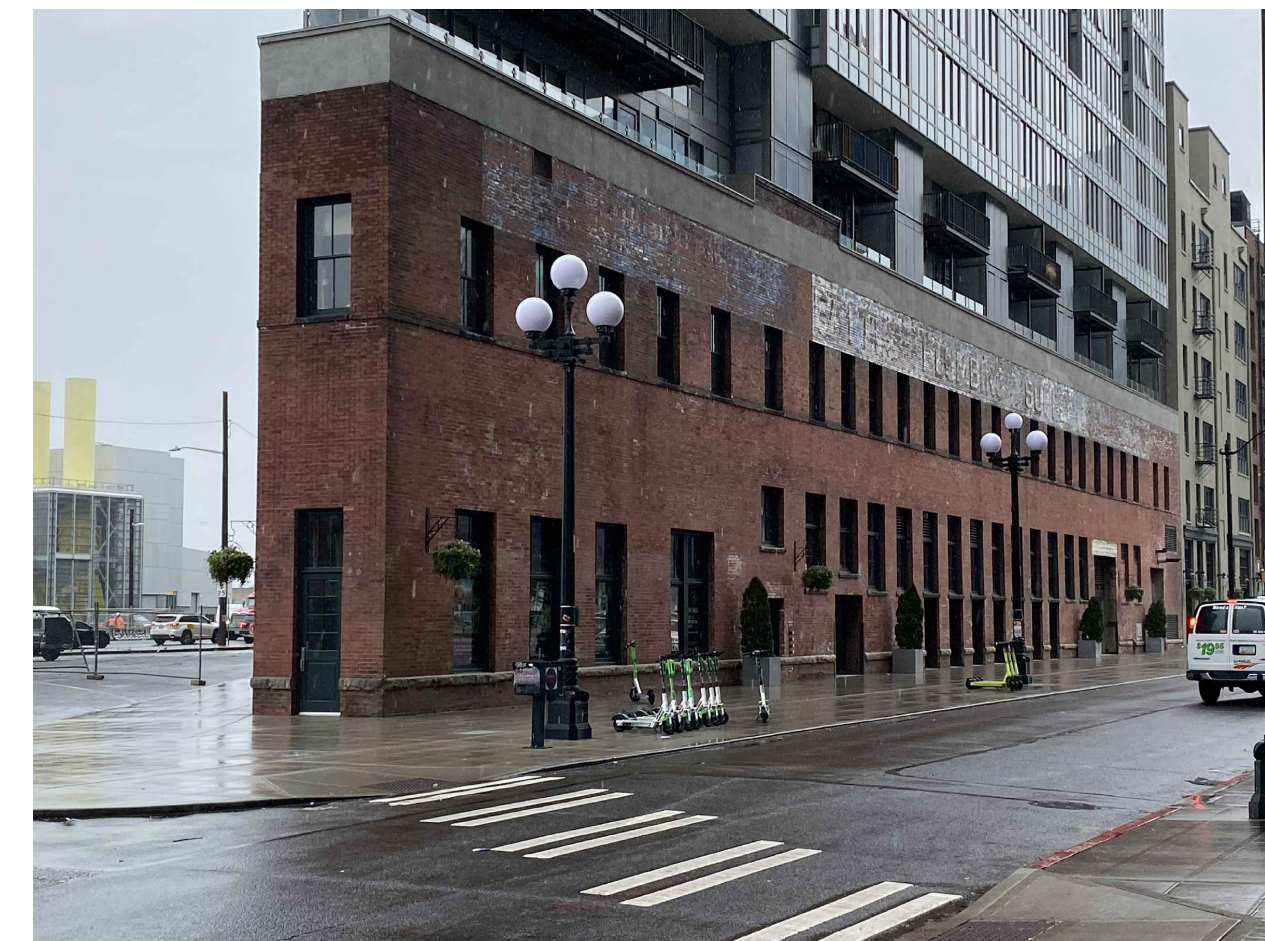
view from southwest, showing residential lobby on left and office windows on right.



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



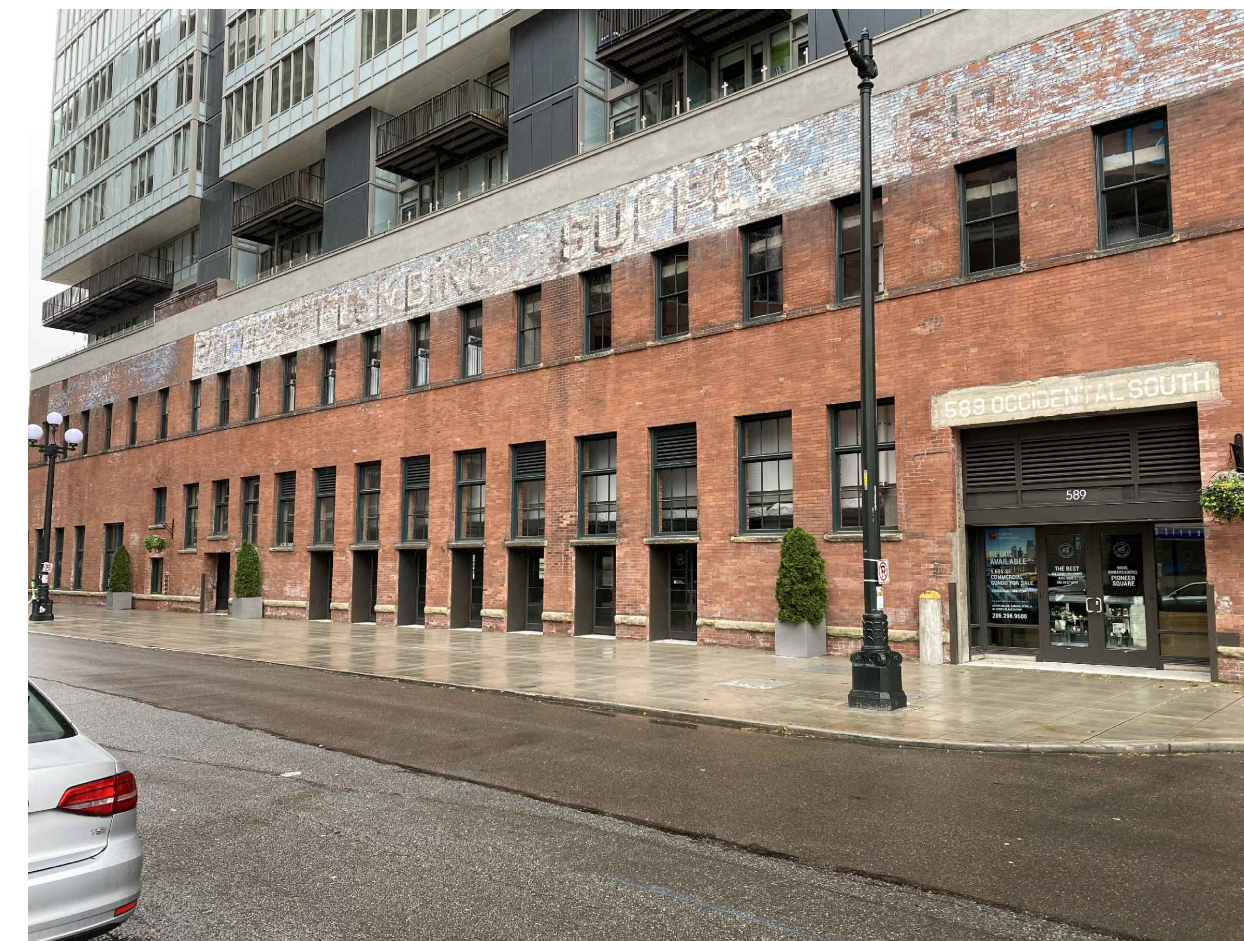
view from southwest, showing building fire stair egress on left and restaurant windows on right.



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

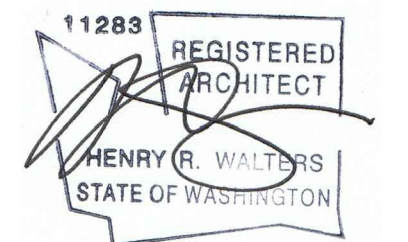


view from east, showing restaurant windows.

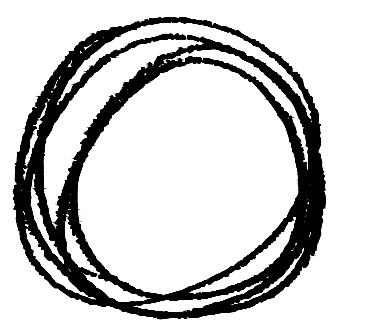


view from northeast, showing restaurant space. note that ground-floor windows & doors are less than 50% of the facade.

location of proposed art window display



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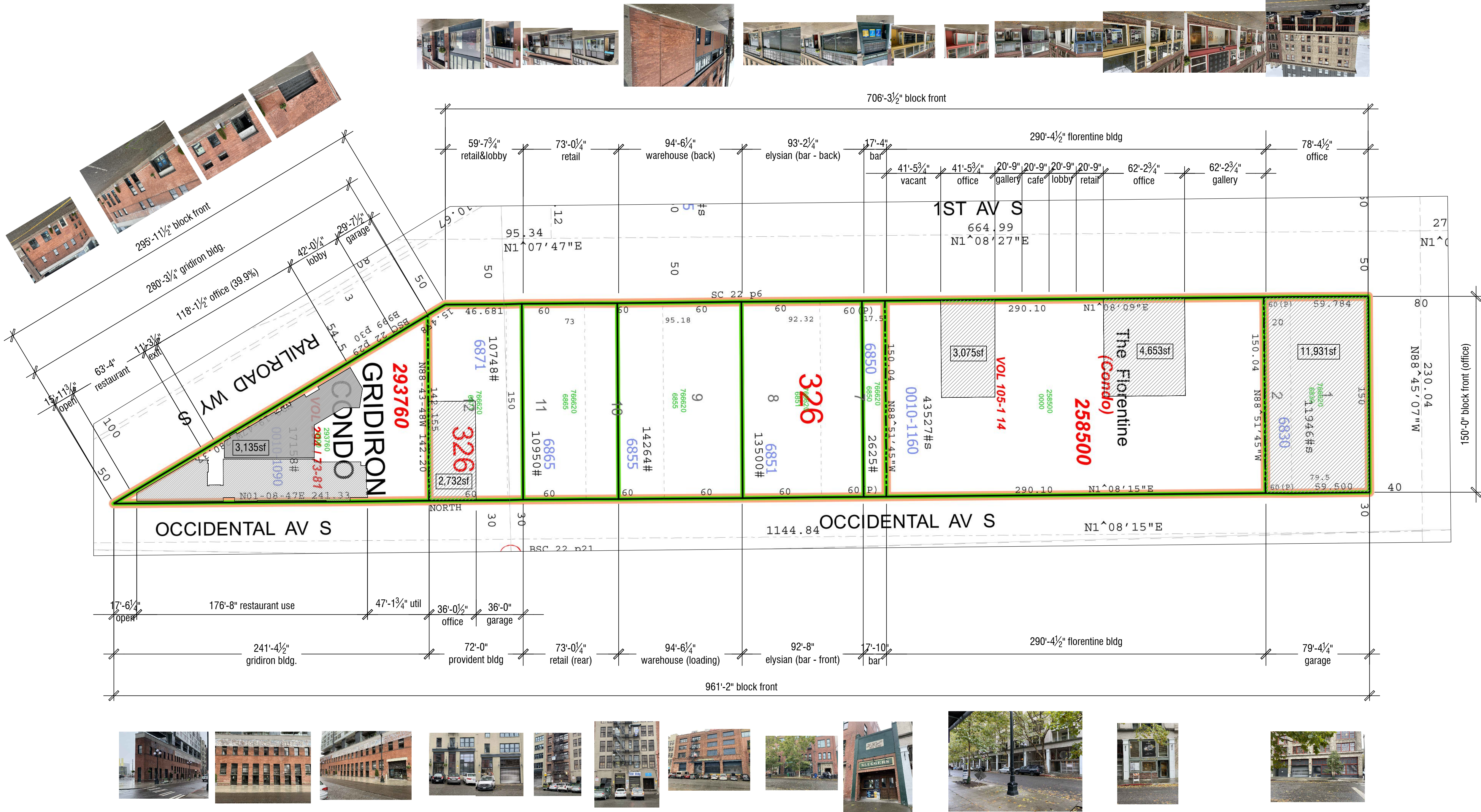
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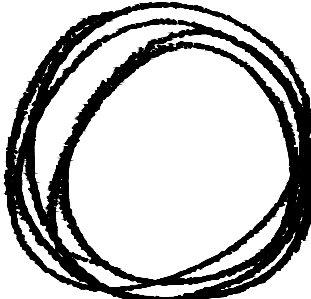
**C**

existing building  
photos





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**D**  
block plan

1 block plan (including photos of current ground floor tenants, as of 26 Oct 2021)  
not to scale















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