



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of July 10, 2010**

DATE: June 24, 2010

SUBJECT: SP #249 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT to allow conversion of retail space for use as professional or medical office; located at 4350 Fairfax Drive (RPC: 14-051-016)

Applicant:

Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America

By:

Tad Lunger, Esq.
2300 Wilson Boulevard, 7th floor
Arlington, Virginia 22201

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the subject site plan amendment to convert approximately 1,539 square feet of retail space to professional or medical office space, subject to all previously approved conditions.

ISSUE: This is a request for a site plan amendment to convert existing unsuccessful retail space to a professional and medical office space and there are no issues.

SUMMARY: The applicant requests to convert approximately 1,539 square feet of retail space to a medical office space in the Ellipse office building in Ballston. Retail space in the Ellipse office building has struggled for over twenty years. The existing space has no street frontage, is not visible from the street, and is only accessible by a central corridor inside the building. The space has been vacant for approximately three (3) years due to its undesirable location for retail. Such inaccessible space is poor for retail uses, but ideal for professional and medical office uses, which do not rely on visibility to draw customers but do generate foot traffic, such as the applicant proposes. Therefore, staff recommends the County Board approve the subject site plan amendment to permanently convert approximately 1,539 square feet of retail space to professional and medical office use, subject to all previously approved site plan conditions.

County Manager: MB/GA

Staff: Peter Schulz, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-5634

9.

BACKGROUND: The area covered by Site Plan #249 is a mixed-use development approved in 1987 consisting of the Ellipse office building, the Jefferson residential building and the NRECA office buildings. The subject property is the Ellipse office building, constructed in 1989.

The following provides more information about the site:

Site: The subject property is a 200,000 square foot office building located in Ballston on a 71,000 square foot site (1.6 acres).

To the north: Fairfax Drive.

To the west: The Continental Condominium (SP#331) and the Fairmont Office Building (SP #6), both zoned “C-O-A”.

To the east: North Taylor Street, and a two-story by-right bank building, zoned “C-O-A”.

To the south: The Jefferson Senior Living Condominiums, zoned “C-O-A”, and also part of SP #249.

Zoning: “C-O-A” Commercial, Office and Apartment Districts.

Land Use: The subject site is designated a “Coordinated Mixed-Use Development District” *(This is a high density mixed-use district with actual density determined by site size. Allowable up to 6.0 F.A.R. with office not more than 3.0 F.A.R.).*

Neighborhood: Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association. The Civic Association has been contacted but has not sent comments to staff as of this writing.

Public-Private Partnership: The Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership supports the proposed conversion.

DISCUSSION: This multi-building site plan was approved by the County Board in 1987. This particular building, The Ellipse, was approved as an office building with ground floor retail and construction was completed in 1989. It was the first building constructed in the site plan. The building is set back from Fairfax Drive by a driveway and the ground floor space is entered from the main lobby on Fairfax Drive and is in an arcade-like setting. All of the building’s retail spaces open onto an interior lobby with no indication from the street that there are businesses operating inside. Only one (1) year after construction, the County Board approved a site plan amendment to convert 2,500 square feet of interior retail space in The Ellipse to a dental office.

The dental office was (and still is) located adjacent to the space the applicant now proposes to convert to a medical office. (Before becoming vacant, the proposed space had been a copier sales and service firm.) Both areas are on the southern side of the building, adjacent to an internal private drive, away from any public street, and are only accessed from a central corridor inside the building's lobby. At the time of the 1990 site plan amendment, the Board even instructed the developer to make the retail space more accessible when they built out the remainder of the buildings in the site plan.

The ground floor of the Ellipse Building is currently occupied by a lobby shop, a dental office, an H & R Block office, a fitness center, and multiple vacant spaces, including the space under consideration with this site plan amendment.

The other buildings in this site plan (the Jefferson Senior condominiums, and the two [2] NRECA buildings) have more accessible and successful retail space, partially due to the better designed retail space that is visible from the public right-of-way.

CONCLUSION: The subject space is not accessible from a public street, and is poorly located for retail uses. It has been vacant for three (3) years due to the inaccessibility of the space for patrons of retail uses. An immediately adjacent space was approved by the County Board to convert from retail to medical office, due to similar difficulties. Therefore, staff recommends that the subject site plan amendment be approved, subject to all previously approved site plan conditions.

the February 9, 1991 County Board meeting.

February 9, 1991

Approved a site plan amendment for a comprehensive sign plan [Z-2181-80-6 (SP-5)] for the Ellipse at Ballston, subject to all previous conditions and six (6) new conditions.

May 20, 1993

Ratified a contract for the sale of the portion of the out-parcel not needed for public right-of-way.

July 10, 1993

Approved a site plan amendment for the balance of the office development at the Ellipse at Ballston, including incorporation of a portion of the out-parcel and development of two (2) 11-story office buildings.

March 5, 1994

Approved a site plan amendment to exclude 4,500 square feet of storage from the floor area ratio (Condition #64), to amend Condition #34 to allow separate parking management element, and to amend Condition #32 to extend vanpool parking to the P-2 level of the parking garage, subject to all previous conditions, amended Conditions #32 and 34, and new condition #64.

July 20, 1996

Approved a site plan amendment for a free-standing retail tenant identification sign within the site (4301 Wilson Boulevard), behind the public sidewalk and right-of-way on Wilson Boulevard.

August 17, 1999

Approved a site plan amendment to increase office gross floor area by 25,419 (revised to 20,919) square feet to the West Building (typical floor increase by approximately 2,400 square feet, from approximately 20,100 square feet to approximately 22,422 square feet) and reduce the building setback from the western property line from the approved setback of 30.1 feet to proposed setback of 15 feet, subject to all previous conditions, and the following amended conditions number 54 and 59 and new conditions number 65 through 72.

July 28, 2001

Approved a site plan amendment to add 4,055 square feet of space to the garage of the NRECA Phase Two building, and to construct an arched sheltered walkway between the two NRECA buildings.

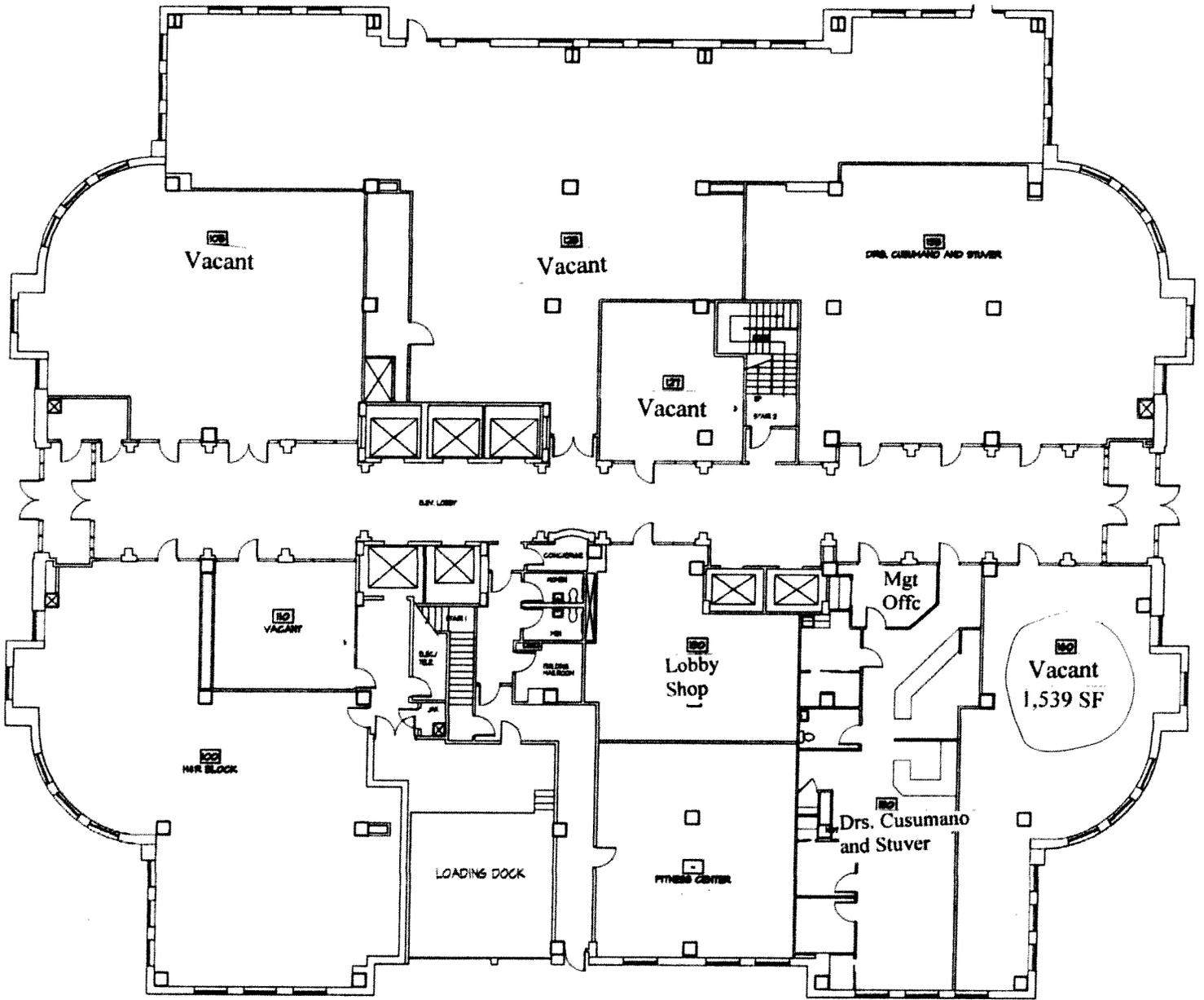
December 6, 2003

Approved a major site plan amendment to increase the west office building (Phase Two) GFA by approximately 19,311 square feet.

March 22, 2006

Approved a site plan amendment to revise condition #54 for the NRCEA buildings.

Tair-tax Drive

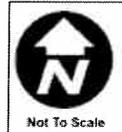


1 FIRST FLOOR AS BUILT
SCALE: N.T.S.

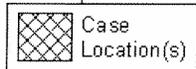


SP#249
4350 Fairfax Drive
RPC: 14051016

Note: These maps are for property location assistance only.
 They may not represent the latest survey and other information.



Not To Scale



Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development

Planning Division