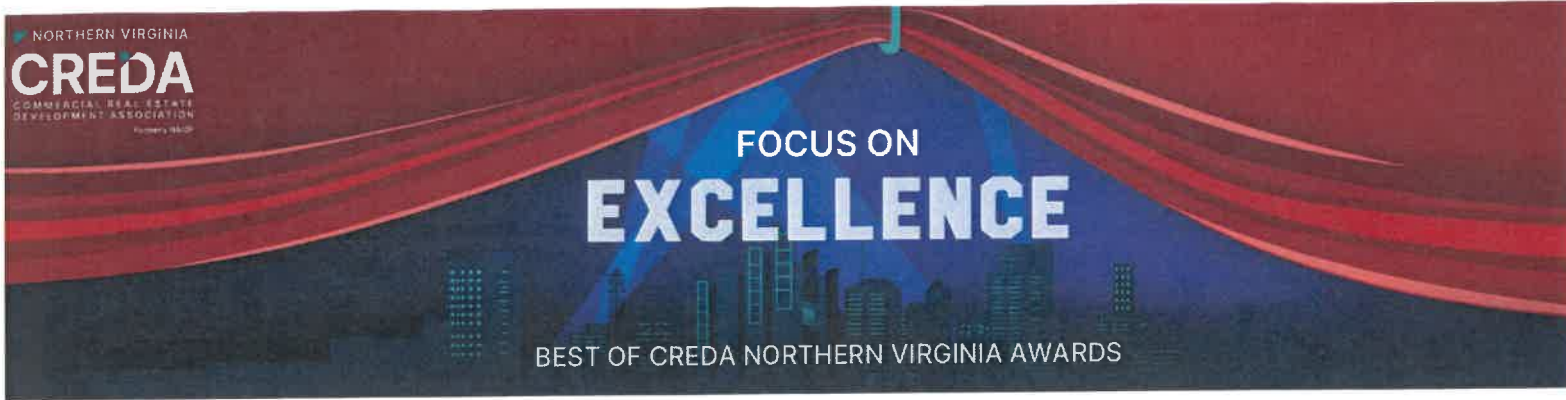




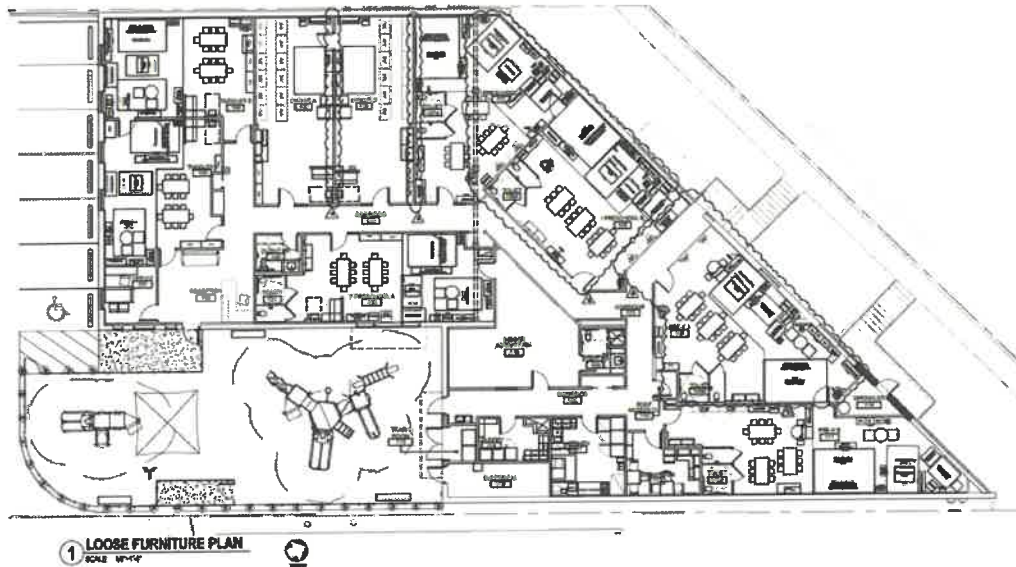
2026 Sample Entry— Tierra Encantada

Submitted by: Pizzano Contractors

The submission does a great job of showing before and after photos—essential to an Adaptive Re-use entry. Judges could see how the space went from being a retail store with a challenging layout to a daycare facility in the heart of the community.

Sample entry has hard costs redacted. Cost is a key factor for the judges; please make sure this information is included in your submission.

Size: 8866 SF interior, 2320 SF outdoor playground | **Reno Costs:** \$0, \$0 per SF



Furniture plan

Overall Concept

The goal of this project was to transform a vacant Staples retail store into Tierra Encantada's newest Arlington location: a state-of-the-art early education and childcare facility. The adaptive reuse concept was driven by the need to convert a generic, big-box commercial space into a highly specialized environment designed for children's safety, development, and enrichment.

Tierra Encantada's mission is to provide a high-quality, culturally rich early education experience through a Spanish-immersion curriculum, healthy meals prepared from scratch, and spaces designed to foster growth, creativity, and inclusivity. This guiding philosophy shaped every design and construction decision. Through close collaboration with the client and design team, Pizzano Contractors delivered a facility that reflects Tierra Encantada's commitment to nurturing children while engaging families and strengthening the surrounding community.

Design

The design strategy emphasized safety, accessibility, and durability, while creating a warm, engaging environment for children and their families. Key features include:

- Commercial kitchen to support Tierra Encantada's scratch-made, organic meal program.

- Child-scaled bathrooms and showers designed to meet both comfort and code compliance.
- Bright classrooms and play areas that maximize natural light and create a welcoming atmosphere.
- Secure outdoor playground with age-appropriate equipment and protective surfacing.
- Parking lot upgrades to safely accommodate families during drop-off and pick-up.

The project overcame challenges of zoning and permitting by carefully coordinating with Arlington County, ensuring the adaptive reuse of a commercial retail shell met all daycare, safety, and accessibility code requirements.



Installation of kitchen electrical



Finished commercial kitchen

Innovation

Transforming a former retail store into a code-compliant daycare required innovative problem-solving. The project team leveraged creative approaches to maximize efficiency and adaptability:

- Urban site logistics: Daily coordination with city inspectors secured timely approvals for sidewalk and lane closures, ensuring inspections and exterior work progressed without delay.
- Water management: Facing 13 consecutive days of rain during sitework, the team minimized schedule impacts by pumping the site each morning, an adaptive solution that kept critical exterior milestones on track.
- Adaptive systems integration: Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems originally designed for a retail use were reconfigured to support a high-demand childcare program, including kitchen exhaust, enhanced HVAC zoning, and child-appropriate fixtures.



Interior Staples space

These strategies allowed the project to be delivered efficiently while maintaining the highest standards of safety and quality.

Achievement of Goals

Despite the inherent challenges of repurposing a big-box retail space in a busy Arlington corridor, the project was successfully completed on schedule and within budget. The team overcame:

- Urban permitting and inspections by proactively coordinating with Arlington County officials to avoid costly delays.
- Weather-related schedule risks by deploying creative daily water management strategies during exterior construction.

The final result reflects Tierra Encantada's mission of expanding access to bilingual early education in a safe, enriching environment. From the client's perspective, the project achieved its goals of creating a vibrant, functional daycare that meets all operational needs, provides peace of mind for families, and enhances the surrounding community by bringing new life to a vacant commercial property.



Before (same angle): Staples exterior



After (same angle): Tierra Encantada's exterior

Adaptive Reuse

Tierra Encantada



In-progress reception wall



Completed reception area



In-progress corridor



Completed corridor



Entryway frame



Completed daycare area

Adaptive Reuse



Removal of concrete



Installation of playground equipment



Finished playground

Tierra Encantada



Digging trenches for plumbing



Metal stud framing



Drywall finishing