



Lincoln-Lancaster County
**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT**

LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT
FROM THE LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
555 S. 10TH STREET, SUITE 213, LINCOLN, NE 68508

APPLICATION NUMBER

Special Permit #864A

FINAL ACTION?

Yes

DEVELOPER/OWNER

Leah Arington

PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING DATE

January 7, 2026

RELATED APPLICATIONS

None

PROPERTY ADDRESS/LOCATION

4547 Calvert Street

RECOMMENDATION: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

BRIEF SUMMARY OF REQUEST

This is a request to amend Special Permit #864 to allow an academy for up to 30 students associated with Theatre Arts for Kids. The property is located at 4547 Calvert Street and zoned R-5 Residential. The existing special permit, approved in 1979, allowed a dance studio for up to 15 students with associated office space.



JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDATION

The amendment to allow an academy use for up to 30 students is justified as the use will occupy a building which has had various nonresidential uses since 1922. The property was approved for a similar use as a dance academy since 1979. It is not expected the new use and increased number of students for up to 30 will have a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood as the existing structure will continue to be used while meeting the minimum parking requirement. The applicant is not requesting any waivers within the amendment.

APPLICATION CONTACT

Leah Arington, (402) 202-1087

STAFF CONTACT

Ben Callahan, (402) 441-6360 or
bcallahan@lincoln.ne.gov

COMPATIBILITY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The request is compatible with the 2050 Comprehensive Plan. The site is shown to continue as future urban residential on the 2050 Land Use map. This designation although widely used for residential uses, is compatible with neighborhood scale commercial or other compatible uses such as educational uses. The project meets goals related to the reuse of existing structures within established neighborhoods and providing neighborhood services within close proximity to the residents of the neighborhood.

KEY QUOTES FROM THE 2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Introduction Section: Growth Framework

Figure GF.b: 2050 - This site is shown as future urban residential on the 2050 Future Land Use Plan.

Elements Section

E1: Complete Neighborhoods and Housing

A complete neighborhood is more than housing – great neighborhoods combine all the elements of parks, education, commercial areas, environmental resources, and housing together in one place.

Policies Section

P2: Existing Neighborhoods - Continue our commitment to strong, diverse, and complete neighborhoods.

Action Steps

2. Maintain and enhance infrastructure and services, commensurate with needs, in existing neighborhoods.
6. Promote the continued use of residential dwellings and all types of buildings, to maintain the character of neighborhoods and to preserve portions of our past. Building code requirements for the rehabilitation of existing buildings should protect the safety of building occupants, while recognizing the need for flexibility that comes with rehabilitating existing buildings.
11. Encourage public and private investment in neighborhood infrastructure and services to support economic diversity that improves the quality of life for all residents.

Goals Section

G2: Complete Neighborhoods

A complete neighborhood is one where residents are able to get the goods and services to meet daily needs within 15 minutes of their residence including a variety of housing options, grocery stores and other commercial services, quality public schools, public open spaces and recreational facilities, affordable active transportation options, and civic amenities.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN SPECIFICATIONS:

p. 11 Key Initiative – Transition to Low-Carbon Energy.

- Continue incentive-based (residential, commercial, or industrial) programs promoting the installation of renewable energy systems. Incentives may include offering rebates on purchasing equipment, attractive net metering pricing, tax incentives, height allowances, setback, and area-based incentives, expedited permitting, and others.

p. 14 Key Initiative - Build a Decarbonized and Efficient Transportation System.

- Continue to encourage mixed-use development in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Consider Transit Oriented Development policies in the update of the Comp Plan 2050.

ANALYSIS

1. This is a request to amend Special Permit #864 to allow an academy use for up to 30 children at 4547 Calvert Street. The property is located at the southwest corner of S 46th Street and Calvert Street. The site is zoned R-4 Residential with an existing special permit dating back to 1979 allowing a dance studio for up to 15 children.
2. The property is surrounded by a mix of residential types, including single and two family residential dwellings to the north, east and west, zoned R-5 Residential. To the south is also single and two family residential and multifamily zoned R-6 Residential. Calvert Elementary is located one block to the south with S 46th Street serving as a main route for school traffic.
3. The applicant is proposing the amendment to increase the number of allowed students on site from 15 to 30. Since the special permit permitted a dance studio in 1979, the allowed use of the building will not be changing, only the increased number of children permitted. The entire structure will be occupied by Theatre Arts for Kids. Stated in the applicant letter, the organization provides performing arts education for children of all ages related to singing, acting, dancing and theatre. The building will be used to offer private lessons, group sessions and larger workshops for up to 24 students. Since the building was originally constructed for offices, it is a legal nonconforming use in R-5 zoning. With the approval of this special permit and the academy occupying the entire structure, the building would lose its nonconforming status allowing office space after two years. This would then limit the property to the academy use or uses that are permitted in the R-5 district such as residential dwelling units.
4. The existing structure was constructed in 1922 for offices related to the Central Union Conference of Seventh Day Adventist. From the initial construction it was designed to resemble the surrounding residential homes in the neighborhood but was intended to be used for office space. In 1979 Special Permit #864 was approved permitting the dance studio in a portion of the building with the remaining area continued to be used for office space. The applicant is not proposing any expansion to the existing building and will continue to use the existing parking on site along with two access points, one on Calvert Street and on off the existing alleyway on the south side of the property connecting the parking lot.
5. The request is compatible with the existing site and nonresidential use of this building since 1922. Following the parking requirement for an academy use, the property is required to provide one space for every three students and one space for every employee. Within the applicant letter, the intended maximum class size would have 24 students in a workshop with two teachers, requiring 10 parking spaces. The site currently has 11 available spaces. With the approval, the maximum number of children allowed will be up to 30, with a note that the parking area will need to be amended to provide additional parking before more than 24 children can be allowed at one time.
6. The proposed amendment is compatible with the 2050 Comprehensive Plan as this location is shown to continue as future urban residential on the 2050 Land Use map. This designation includes residential uses but also extends to include small scale neighborhood commercial and compatible uses, such as educational or academy uses. The continued use of the existing structure is consistent with goals within the Comprehensive Plan for Complete Neighborhoods, providing educational services within walking distance of existing dwellings and the reuse of existing structures.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL: See attached.

EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING: Office Space R-4 Residential

SURROUNDING LAND USE & ZONING

North: Single Family Residential	R-5 Residential
South: Single Family & Multifamily Residential	R-6 Residential

East: Single Family Residential
West: Single Family Residential

R-5 Residential
R-5 Residential

APPLICATION HISTORY

Sep 1979 Special Permit #864 was approved by the Planning Commission to allow a dance studio for up to 15 individuals.

APPROXIMATE LAND AREA: 0.33 acres, more or less

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lots 1 & 2, Block 6, College View

Prepared by Ben Callahan, Planner
(402) 441-6360 or bcallahan@lincoln.ne.gov

Date: December 24, 2025

Applicant/
Contact: Leah Arington
Theatre Arts for Kids

Owner: Donald J Pepperl Estate

<https://linclanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-DevReview/Shared%20Documents/DevReview/SP/800/SP864A%204547%20Calvert%20Academy.bmc.docx>

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL – SPECIAL PERMIT #864A

Per Section 27.63.075 this approval permits an academy for up to 30 students.

Site Specific Conditions:

1. Before receiving building the permittee shall cause to be prepared and submitted to the Planning Department a revised and reproducible final plot plan including **2** copies with all required revisions and documents as listed below:
 - 1.1 Add a note to the plan stating "If the site will have more than 24 children at one time, additional parking spaces will need to be added by an administrative amendment to allow up to 30 children."
 - 1.2 Add to the General Notes, "Signs need not be shown on this site plan, but need to be in compliance with chapter 27.69 of the Lincoln Zoning Ordinance, and must be approved by Building & Safety Department prior to installation".

Standard Conditions:

2. The following conditions are applicable to all requests:
 - 2.1 Before occupying the building or starting the operation all development and construction shall substantially comply with the approved plans.
 - 2.2 The physical location of all setbacks and yards, buildings, parking and circulation elements, and similar matters be in substantial compliance with the location of said items as shown on the approved site plan.
 - 2.3 The terms, conditions, and requirements of this resolution shall run with the land and be binding upon the Permittee, its successors and assigns.
 - 2.4 The site plan as approved with this resolution voids and supersedes all previously approved site plans, however all prior resolutions approving this permit remain in full force and effect as specifically amended by this resolution. This approval supersedes Special Permit #864.



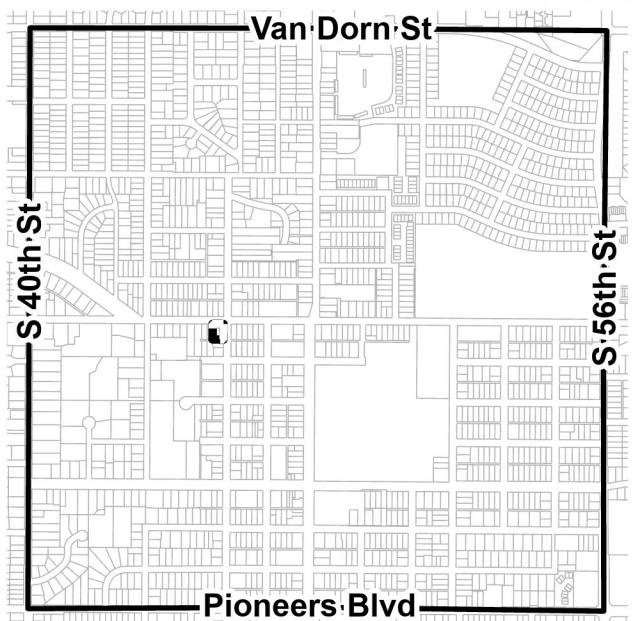
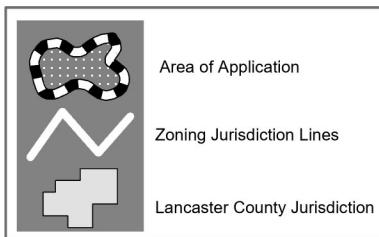
Special Permit #: SP864A
S 46th St & Calvert St

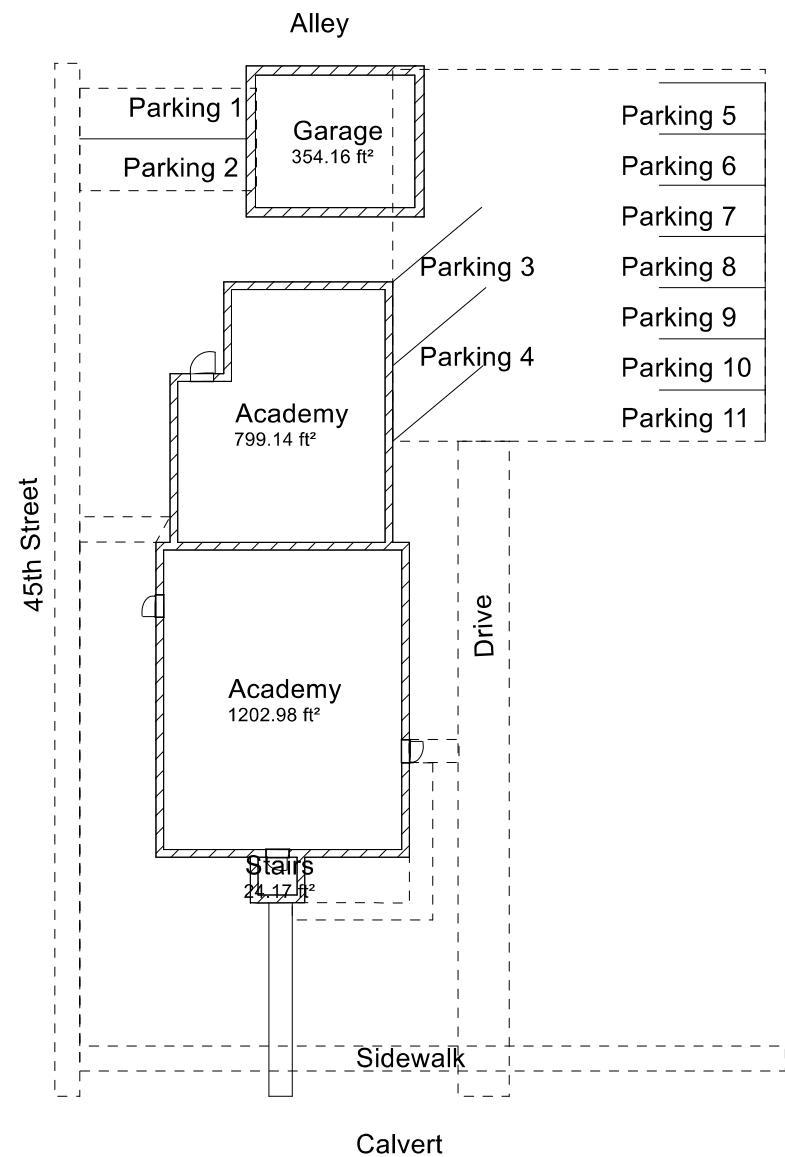
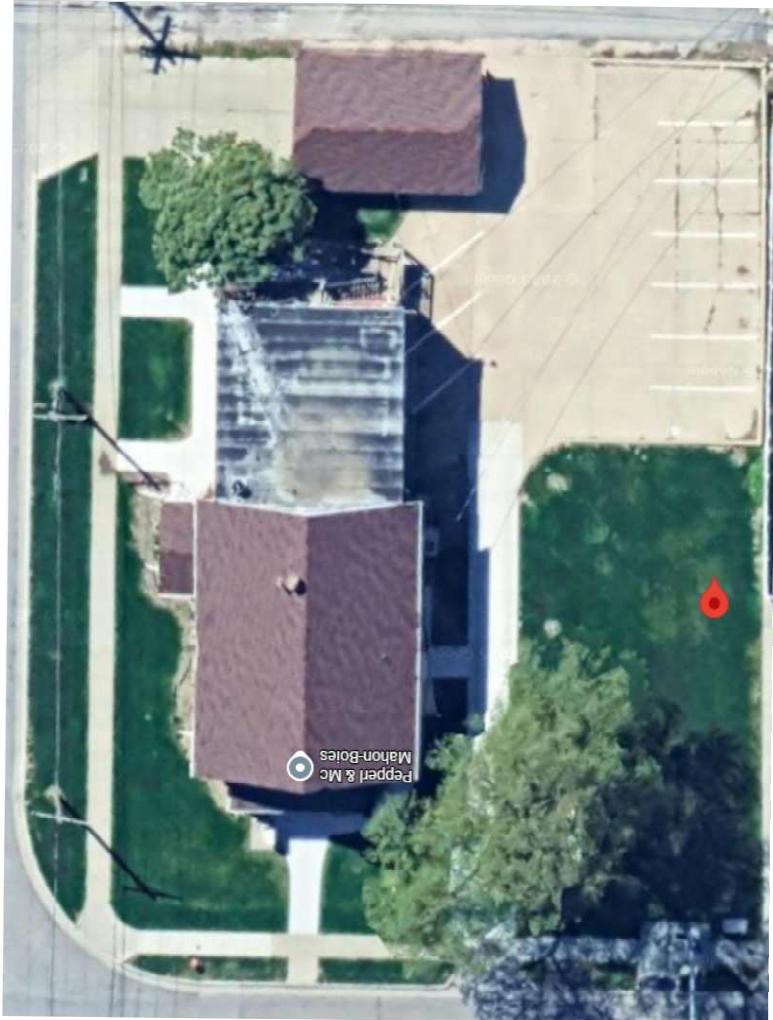
Zoning:

- R-1 to R-8 Residential District
- AG Agricultural District
- AGR Agricultural Residential District
- O-1 Office District
- O-2 Suburban Office District
- O-3 Office Park District
- R-T Residential Transition District
- B-1 Local Business District
- B-2 Planned Neighborhood Business District
- B-3 Commercial District
- B-4 Lincoln Center Business District
- B-5 Planned Regional Business District
- H-1 Interstate Commercial District
- H-2 Highway Business District
- H-3 Highway Commercial District
- H-4 General Commercial District
- I-1 Industrial District
- I-2 Industrial Park District
- I-3 Employment Center District
- P Public Use District



One Square Mile:
Sec.05 T09N R07E





December 9th, 2025

Dear City Lincoln,

My name is Leah Arington. I am the Executive Director of Theatre Arts For Kids (501c3) here in Lincoln, Nebraska. We are currently rebranding to be Lincoln Children's Theatre. We received our letter of determination in 2011 and have been going strong since. We provide quality performing arts education to kids of all ages in the Lincoln and surrounding areas. We provide classes in singing, acting, dancing and theatre.

We are in the due diligence phase of purchasing the 4547 Calvert ST building. In 1979, this building received the 1979 equivalent special permit for an academy. We request a special permit for the building to be zoned for an academy going forward.

There will be three different types of classes offered in the space.

- a. Private lessons with one student and one teacher. In this case, there would be a maximum of two teachers teaching at one time on the largest shift (two private lessons). These lessons are back-to-back. At the transition time, there would be a maximum of two instructors and two students in the building at one time.
- b. Small group lessons with six students and one teacher. In this case, there would be a maximum of two teachers teaching at one time on the largest shift (two small group classes). These lessons are back-to-back. At the transition time, there would be a maximum of two instructors and 12 students in the building at one time. I have done these with a 15 minute or 30-minute separation and could do that if this structure is needed.
- c. Workshops with 24 students and two teachers. Workshops take place on Saturdays 9:30am - 3:30pm for 8 - 15-week sessions. Depending on the session, Friday nights 6:00pm - 9:00pm are also used.

There are currently eleven parking spots which would cover the three students to one parking spot ration. With a max of twenty four students in the building, we would need eight parking stalls for students/parents and two additional spots for the two instructors for a total of ten spots.

There is currently no handicap parking which we would add immediately to comply with all ADA regulations. An ADA accessible entrance would also be added.

Sincerely,

Leah Arington
Executive Director
Theatre Arts For Kids
(Lincoln Children's Theatre)
402.202.1087; info@tafk.org