



National Defense Industrial Association



WLS CASE STUDY: EARLY ACTION LEADS TO REAL SAVINGS



BACKGROUND:

National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA), based in Arlington, VA, is the leading defense industry trade association in the United States and dedicated to building a more responsive and collaborative national security community. Its membership includes the most prominent organizations in the national security industry including BAE Systems, Booz Allen Hamilton, Deloitte, Raytheon, and Lockheed Martin.

With its lease at 2101 Wilson Blvd scheduled to expire towards the end of 2017, NDIA engaged WLS in 2015 to evaluate renewal vs. relocation requirements for its headquarters office. The main goals of its real estate strategy were to leverage the soft real estate market in Northern Virginia, refresh NDIA’s organizational culture through architectural redesign and boost operational efficiency while retaining access to the metro and abundant amenities for employees.

“We were at a crossroads—ready for some drastic changes in how our office space was laid out but torn about relocating. We wanted to think about a long-term real estate strategy that would meet current needs and align with our vision of the office culture we wanted to cultivate,” said Terri Swetnam, Chief Operating Officer, NDIA. “WLS dug deep to interview staff, compile targeted market research, and outline options that not only looked impressive, but were also phenomenally useful in bringing all of our stakeholders together behind the same goal.”



CHALLENGE:

NDIA’s old space was too office-intensive, limiting organic collaboration among the staff and cohesiveness between business units. It lacked the conferencing space to accommodate the high volume of meeting and event demands. With nearly two years remaining on its lease, the challenge was to negotiate an aggressive real estate transaction that would allow NDIA to meet its design goals while reducing its annual occupancy costs and completely covering build out costs of a 22,000-square-foot space with concessions from a building owner.



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SOLUTION:

NDIA was based in the three-building Colonial Place in Arlington for nearly 20 years. Drawn to the complex by its high quality professional presentation in a central location with immediate access to a robust amenity base, NDIA liked the building but not its dated offices.

To bring NDIA into a position of strength at the bargaining table, WLS identify multiple options, outside of Colonial Place, where other landlords agreed to completely cover the build out costs while also taking over NDIA's existing lease liability. Responding to this competition, Colonial Place offered NDIA a relocation into one of the complexes' sister buildings to spare NDIA the upheaval of an in-place renovation and began that lease almost a year before the previous one would had expired.

WLS helped NDIA conceptualize a vision for the new space and completely managed the design and build-out process. The old space had interior walls lined with windowless offices. The design made it hard to keep teams together without significant disruption. WLS presented a product that not only looked impressive, but was phenomenally useful.

In the new office, most of the staff are in open office areas where they can see each other instead of hunkering behind closed doors. There are storage rooms for individual teams and a range of group meeting spaces. With state-of-the art building materials, the open concept space even provides a quieter work environment despite its lack of walls.



RESULT:



“Not only was WLS a very approachable team, they took the time to understand us as an organization. This built a foundation of trust that reassured us that they were attuned to our interests and objectives throughout the process. We learned we could rely on them to do their job so well, that we could focus on ours,” added Swetnam. “The results speak for themselves: since our move, prospective staff members have been impressed with the collaborative atmosphere fostered by the new layout, colleagues and association members rave about the meeting spaces, and the staff is communicating and interacting in informal ways that have transformed the way we work in such positive ways. I believe we scored 110 percent on this place and I can’t think of anything that we could have done differently.”

