



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board



625 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55155
651-757-1500

<https://mn.gov/caapb/>

Date: Updated May 7, 2024
To: Members of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Peter Musty, Principal Planner and Administrator of the Zoning and Design Rules, CAAPB
Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Executive Secretary, CAAPB

RE: Staff and Project Updates

Office Moves

Due to office consolidations and projects on campus, the CAAPB Office was relocated from Fifth Floor (south) of Centennial Building to a new workspace at the Minnesota Board of Animal Health located in the Department of Health Building at 625 Robert St N, St Paul, MN 55155, in the Capitol Area. CAAPB staff vacated the Centennial space to make room for the MN House, who are taking over a majority of the building during the duration of their SOB Project. CAAPB staff, will continue to work to find a long-range home most conducive and best suited for the work of the CAAPB, recognizing the public nature of our agency.

Update on CAAPB Comprehensive Plan Implementation Work related to 2023 Legislation

Please find detailed language of all 2023 legislation provisions in the [Board Memo posted in June 2023](#). CAAPB staff will provide an updated memo regarding 2024 legislation soon.

+ Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force and Account (\$5.15M)

A Task Force met regularly since September 2023 and ended their work with recommendations to CAAPB, which are posted here: [2024 CAAPB report v7.indd \(mn.gov\)](#) The Task Force (see CAAPB page: <https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/vitality/>) reached its sunset with release of the report. The CAAPB approved the report in March 2024, and it will serve to help guide investment of the appropriated \$5 million. The funding supported the work of the Task Force and has enabled us to procure contracts with Creation in Common and SDK via RFQ using the State's equity-select guidelines – and resulted in a design for use of the \$5M Account that is based in input from over 70 direct interviews and interactions with community members. Work continues on three levels:

- CAAPB and City staff are meeting regularly to develop a program structure for 2024 and beyond.
- CAAPB legislative members and local representatives are working currently to pass supportive legislation that enables the Board's program design to be implemented.
- Board consultant team is finishing engagement work in the first phase of the Community Voices initiative and will be making a recommendation for use of the first \$1M, based on community priorities voiced in the process. As a reminder, the grant design calls for the following priorities:

Grants will be administered through the following mechanisms over the next 3-5 years for:

- **Launch Investments** up to \$300K (in community safety, clean up and technical assistance) beginning 2024.
- **Community Vitality Grants** up to \$1.5 M (micro, small, medium sizes) defined within a grant program finalized and launched as soon as possible. The [Task Force recommended](#) that these are made available in phases from 2025-2027 as direct grants in the areas of **art** and **business vitality**, as well as future funds to support **first-time homeownership** in the Capitol Area, and to ensure availability of **technical assistance to grant applicants**. These funds may be direct or come as enhancements to existing City programs that align with the community priorities outlined above.
- **Community Voices Initiative** up to \$3M set aside to support major initiatives identified by the community. As of March 2024 approval of the [Task Force Report](#), major areas of focus: address **cost-burdened households** (see TF report page 6); address **drug use and addiction** (see pg. 7); advance **programming for teens, kids, and young families** (see pg. 7); improve **disability and accessibility infrastructure** (see pg. 7) The community will be 'voicing' preference for first \$1M in Spring 2024.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE: "Community Vitality Grant Committee"

Staff is working through a key element of the program design, which is to appoint and convene a Vitality Grants Committee. Advice will be sought from Board Members, community, and former task force members regarding this structure: we are proposing a five-member group of community members as suggested in the approved task force report. The primary task is to meet regularly (likely quarterly) and refer projects, through a simple vote, to be brought forward by CACV Administration team for approval by CAAPB Board and, upon approval, certification for payment by City of Saint Paul. The current draft structure is as follows (subject to change):

- **Community Member** - Mayoral Appointment – must be a resident of Capitol Area
- **Community Member** – Mayoral Appointment – mayoral CAAPB appointee
- **Community Member** – Mayoral Appointment
- **Community Member** – CAAPB Appointment – must be a resident of Capitol Area
- **Community Member** – CAAPB Appointment – board member

Appointments will be time-limited, can be made via nomination through a published period, and then If you are interested in providing ideas or feedback on this step of program development, please contact staff.

More background information on Capitol Area Community Vitality Account:

- **Task Force Report** (approved by CAAPB and referred to legislature March 15, 2024):
<https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Item 1 - CAAPB Vitality Task Force Recommendations tcm1087-614829.pdf>
- **CAAPB Vitality tracking page:**
<https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/vitality/>
- **Background memo** (outlining the scope of the Community Vitality Task Force):
mn.gov/caapb/assets/Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force %2B Account - CAAPB Memo July 2023 tcm1087-586125.pdf
- **Task Force Members** - Chapter 53 SF3035 directs:
"The task force consists of the following members:

- (1) the Executive Secretary of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board; Erik **Cedarleaf Dahl**
- (2) one member of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, appointed by the board.
- (3) two members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker of the house, of whom one must be a member of the majority caucus of the house, and one must be a member of the minority caucus of the house; **Majority member: Representative Samakab Hussein** and **Minority member: Representative Isaac Schultz**
- (4) two members of the senate appointed by the majority leader of the senate, of whom one must be a member of the majority caucus of the senate, and one must be a member of the minority caucus of the senate; **Majority member: Senator Sandy Pappas** and **Minority member: Senator Julia E. Coleman**
- (5) four members who are residents, businesspeople, or members of local organizations in the Capitol Area, appointed by the mayor of St. Paul; and (appointed by Mayor: **Tahnea Brown, Emmanuel Donaby, Hannah Hills, Gloria Contreras-Edin**)
- (6) one member of the public appointed by the governor.” **Representative María Pérez-Vega**

- **Additional Background:** The Capitol Area Community Vitality Account created by the 2023 legislature is an opportunity for the CAAPB to assist our community in the shadow of Capitol directly by funding some of the priorities identified through the community-based process (including identification of cultural and community assets, stakeholder ideas and transparent reporting). Many in our community are navigating through a situation of current stress, and others would like to be ready for coming changes. Some struggle with rent or lease rates. For some there is a daily struggle for housing and food. Through our work, long range planning, regulating zoning and design proposals and permitting, community members often assume CAAPB is a center-point in dealing with an increasing need for day-to-day solutions. Even though our Statute includes no mandate nor direct roles or responsibility in the community development arena, our statutory purpose and comp plan vision implicates us as a steward of the campus and the community. The Vitality Account provides CAAPB with a conduit to support the community as it continue to address livability, vitality, economic viability and safety.
- **Additional Background:** The Capitol Area Community Vitality Account created by the 2023 legislature is an opportunity for the CAAPB to assist our community in the Capitol Area community around the Capitol directly by funding some of the priorities identified through the community-based process (including identification of cultural and community assets, stakeholder ideas and transparent reporting).
- Many in our community are navigating through a situation of current stress, and others would like to be ready for coming changes. Some struggle with rent or lease rates. For some there is a daily struggle for housing and food. Through our work, long range planning, regulating zoning and design proposals and permitting, community members often assume CAAPB is a center-point in dealing with an increasing need for day-to-day solutions. Even though our Statute includes no mandate nor direct roles or responsibility in the community development arena, our statutory purpose and comp plan vision implicates us as a steward of the campus and the community. The Vitality Account provides CAAPB with a conduit to support the community as it continues to address livability, vitality, economic viability and safety.

+ Redesign of Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street from Pennsylvania to John Ireland) (\$25M)

A major initiative of the *2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area*, ([profiled in Chapter \(Principle\) 4](#)) was to transform the “Capitol Rice Corridor” (Includes portion of Como, Rice, 12th Street across interstate to St Peter).



\$25 million in funding to advance that project (but just for Rice Street itself – **the length shown in green above**) was appropriated to Department of Transportation, to include collaborative work with City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Metropolitan Council, State of Minnesota and, of course, the CAAPB. The project must include implementation of a multi-modal (mobility) hub at University and Rice. (Legislation details can be found in [June Board Memo](#).) Appropriation is available until June of 2029. **Update: Ramsey County has released a draft RFP to begin project planning.** CAAPB met with partners to begin aligning expectations for the work. A project webpage will be available once an engagement team is in place.

+ Capitol Mall Design Framework (\$6M)

See Item #1 on agenda for this May 15, 2024 meeting– which will focus on deliberation of the first phases of implementation.

+ State Office Building Expansion into Leif Erickson Park

As you know, following the spring CAAPB action determining the project, when taken with accompanying community legislation (above), to be in ‘substantive’ compliance with the 2040 Comp Plan, - CAAPB’s statutory authority to review and approve the rehabilitation and expansion of the State Office Building was removed by legislation. CAAPB staff nor Advisors have been involved in decision-making on the project since May of 2023.

For more information on the legislation, see previous [June Board Memo](#) now posted on CAAPB homepage. The following is the provision passed citing sections in CAAPB’s Statute 15B and Department of Administration’s Statute 16B pertaining to Commissioner’s duties to CAAPB which “do not apply”:

*“Sec. 11. **CAPITOL AREA LAND USE PROJECTS; ZONING AND DESIGN.** Minnesota Statutes, sections 15B.05, subdivision 3; 15B.06; 15B.08; and 16B.31, subdivision 4, and any rules adopted under the authority of those sections, do not apply to any project to address critical health, life safety, and security needs on the State Capitol complex and for which funds are available on or before December 31, 2023, if the primary affected tenant has given final approval to the project.”*

+ Ford Building Demolition and New *Temporary* Green Space in Design and Funding Stages

In October 2023, CAAPB approved zoning permitting for the Department of Administration plan to demolish the building and implement an enclosure retaining tunnel access, and basic landscaping. **The work proceeded and the building has been demolished.** Site work including a basic phase of site restoration and construction of the tunnel enclosure is proceeding in 2024. Elements from the façade’s doorway were salvaged for potential later reuse. As approved by the Board, a temporary green space will be formed on the old Ford site, and now is proposed to be extended as a temporary green space to Rice Street – and the overall parking spaces offered on the modified Lot C will now drop from 206 spaces to 153 spaces.



Next Step: community discussions with stakeholders, and the finalized site plan will be forwarded to the CAAPB board members. At this time, staff have determined that no board votes related to zoning are triggered by the project via the Zoning Rules. The new condition of green space may be memorialized in permitting as a temporary condition until both the Rice Street project and site redevelopment can occur.

The Capitol Mall Design Framework will also provide guidance for the long-range disposition of the space in context of site redevelopment by formatting site redevelopment guidelines.

The project otherwise reduces surface parking, adds green spaces and the underlying land use of Lot C as a surface parking facility will not be changing with the improvements. CAAPB previously approved the portion of green east of Lot C in Fall of 2023. Even as a temporary condition, investments in reduction of surface parking and addition of green bring Lot C closer to compliance with Comprehensive Plan. There is currently not a plan by FMD to permit the space for events.

Commemorative Works Applications

Staff is working regularly with Minnesota Historical Society on several emerging applications for a range of commemorative works applications proposing new, modification to existing works, and removals of works on campus. All of the applications are in a 'pre-application' stage. We look forward to providing a major update on Commemorative Works to the Board this year, and perhaps activating the Board in decision making as required by the new Commemorative Works rules now in place in MN Rules Chapter 2400.

Updates on off-campus Capitol Area Projects

Former Sears Site

New owners continue to build capacity to implement the transit-oriented urban village vision for the site.

The newest owners Asian Media Access led by Ange Hwang in partnership with Asian American Business Alliance, is currently promoting a range of ideas for long range reuse of the old Sears building as a centerpiece of larger site redevelopment. They have sought guidance from CAAPB and City staff as they build a development team to support the ownership and design team.

Since the 'big box' pattern of the old Sears is currently not legal by Zoning regulations nor Comp Plan policy, introduction of that pattern as a first phase would require amendment to the Comprehensive Plan (and extend the process considerably) unless they also can present an implementable site redevelopment plan that also meets requirements of the Capitol Rice Development Framework (2040 Comp Plan) and before they apply for specific approvals of building projects within the Rules for Zoning and Design.

Lastly, their team is building support to explore technical barriers and development related environmental studies and infrastructure costs connected with the current site and building realities, and that is taking time. As always, staff will update the Board and the community with information as soon as we are able.

Review: Sears closed in 2018. Subsequent planning led to final approval of the Capitol Rice Development Framework in 2021, confirming the longstanding transit-oriented walkable vision for an urban village, reestablishing an urban pattern of mixed uses reconnecting neighborhood across the site around a central green space. Seritage, as the former owner, participated with CAAPB and the City to engage the community on design alternatives for the urban village vision as found on CAAPB website. The process affirmed the public realm vision of smaller blocks within a network of tree lined streets with a new central park, and the market research reported by owner and community input steered land use toward the predominantly mixed residential demand (vs new office). In early 2022 came an investor related delay due to uncertainty around St Paul's new rent control regulations. In late 2022, Seritage decided to list the site for sale. The site was bought by the current owners after initial purchase by another entity.

New Behavioral Health Hospital (@ old Bethesda Hospital Site): Construction Underway!

Construction is underway on the new hospital. At the time of this memo staff is awaiting an update on timeline for opening of the new hospital. An update for opening date will be included in packet for the next Board Meeting if not in advance.

Multiple Infrastructure Planning Projects Ongoing in Capitol Area

CAAPB planning activity is in full swing following Board adoption of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area in June 2021, structured by The Capitol Area Principles. See table on next page for updated status. (Questions: contact Peter Musty)

John Ireland Bridge Repair and Reconstruction: Planning Continues

MNDOT continues conducting a planning and design process for the John Ireland freeway bridge, which is due for structural repair. CAAPB staff and Advisors are assisting MndOT in their effort at gathering input of community and immediate stakeholders. The gatehouses of the bridge are not affected by any part of the project, and MndOT has expressed interest in keeping any new bridge details within the character of the landscape design vision established during the mall design framework competition in the 1990's. Discussion is still centered on functional considerations of improvements at the intersection of 12th and John Ireland. New design changes will be tracked for approval, and updates brought to the Board.

Most recently: Project leads have forwarded a preferred scheme based on a traffic study – and it shows retention of four lanes across the bridge. At the same meeting, City and CAAPB highlighted the evolving community vision for John Ireland developed in the CMDF. Next steps are unclear. All appreciate the opportunity the charrette introduced to ensure that all improvements to John Ireland be thought through in an integrated way. We hope to update the Board this summer on the details of the project.

Planning	Sponsor/Lead Agency	CAAPB role	Timing
Sears Site: MX District Plan	public/private team (Developer (tbd), CAAPB, City)	process and review lead	New owner in pre-application meetings with City and CAAPB staff.
Commemorative Works Policy (2022 Update to Rules) Funded \$500K, one time sending, available thru FY27	CAAPB (working with MNHS, Administration under new Rules)	Staff receives inquiries under Rules, looking to improve process with Lindsey Dyer of MNHS	Ongoing. Applications are all in pre-application stage, with some being finalized for formal reviews in 2024.
Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study	Capital Region Watershed District	co-lead	Ongoing, Fall 2022 Technical Advisory Group kickoff and tour, June 2023 TAG meeting, report in final stages.
Rethinking I-94	MNDOT	committee(s)	ongoing (2018 start)
Downtown Commons Study (off-shoot of Rethinking 1-94)	MNDOT	steering	Completed Fall 2023.
Capitol Heights Development Framework	CAAPB (leveraging Station Area Planning process)	lead	On hold. (see Station Area Planning)
BRT Station Area Planning: METRO Purple Line (Robert to Jackson)	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	Staff is on Technical Advisory Committee, Design Review Team, updates Admin and Capitol Heights reps	Station approved, delay due to alignment studies, planning has resumed, with development principles and recommendations in formation.
BRT Station Area Planning: METRO G-Line (Robert to Rice)	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	Staff on Technical Advisory Committee, CAAPB approves station location and design in Capitol Area	Station locations under planning and design development. Metro Transit will participate in Rice Street planning and design led by Ramsey County, City and CAAPB plus partners.
FUNDED: \$25M Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street Redesign/Rebuild)	funds held by MNDOT for City/County/ CAAPB leads design coordination	lead, approval	RFP released by County, with design and engagement team to be in place by summer 2024
FUNDED: \$185K Mandatory Update to Rules for Zoning and Design	CAAPB		2024-2025

FUNDED: \$1 mil. Capitol Mall Design Framework (Admin. w/ \$5 mil. For implementation)	CAAPB (w/ Dept of Administration)	lead	Draft CMDF completed, currently under consideration by Board.
FUNDED: \$5.15 mil. Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force	CAAPB (broad set of appointees)	Lead, must start meetings by fall, '23	work in 2023-24, report to CAAPB in Spring 2024

Bottom Line – We continue to be Busy! Staff is implementing the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Implementation of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan policies is underway, with a big boost from 2023 legislation and we can be hopeful for supportive 2024 legislation. There are several tracks that continue from before adoption of the plan, and several that are new. All of which will be brought forward to the Board where the timing dictates, or when action is required. For many items, Board Members may be offered chances to observe, participate in, or advise steering committees or community discussions.

Questions? **Please contact CAAPB Staff directly.**