



## Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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**Date:** February 11, 2021  
**To:** **Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board**  
**From:** Paul Mandell, Executive Secretary CAAPB  
Peter Musty, Principal Planner and Zoning Administrator CAAPB  
**Subject:** **Agenda Item #6: Sears Site Redevelopment  
(Mixed Use (MX) Master Plan Step #1: Pre-Application)**

Seritage Growth Properties (<https://www.seritage.com/>), owner of the Sears site, has now formally issued to CAAPB a pre-application version of a plan for the Sears site. They are working with design and engineering company Kimley Horn. This Board Meeting will be the first time Seritage has publicly released any ideas for the site since 2014. The Sears store closed its doors at the end of 2019.

**The February 25<sup>th</sup> Board meeting will include a presentation by Seritage and their team, CAAPB Staff and City Staff, and then a chance for Board Members to ask questions. Board Members will also be asked to advise staff on a proposed public/stakeholder engagement approach that will structure in community involvement prior to and as part of work toward Step #2 (Concept Approval) of MX Master Plan review process.** Staff will also review the overall review process outlined in Comprehensive Plan Chapter 7A and the Capitol Rice Development Framework. In addition to development representatives, City of Saint Paul's Director of Planning Luis Pereira will also be present to answer your questions about their role in the development review process.

### In This Memo

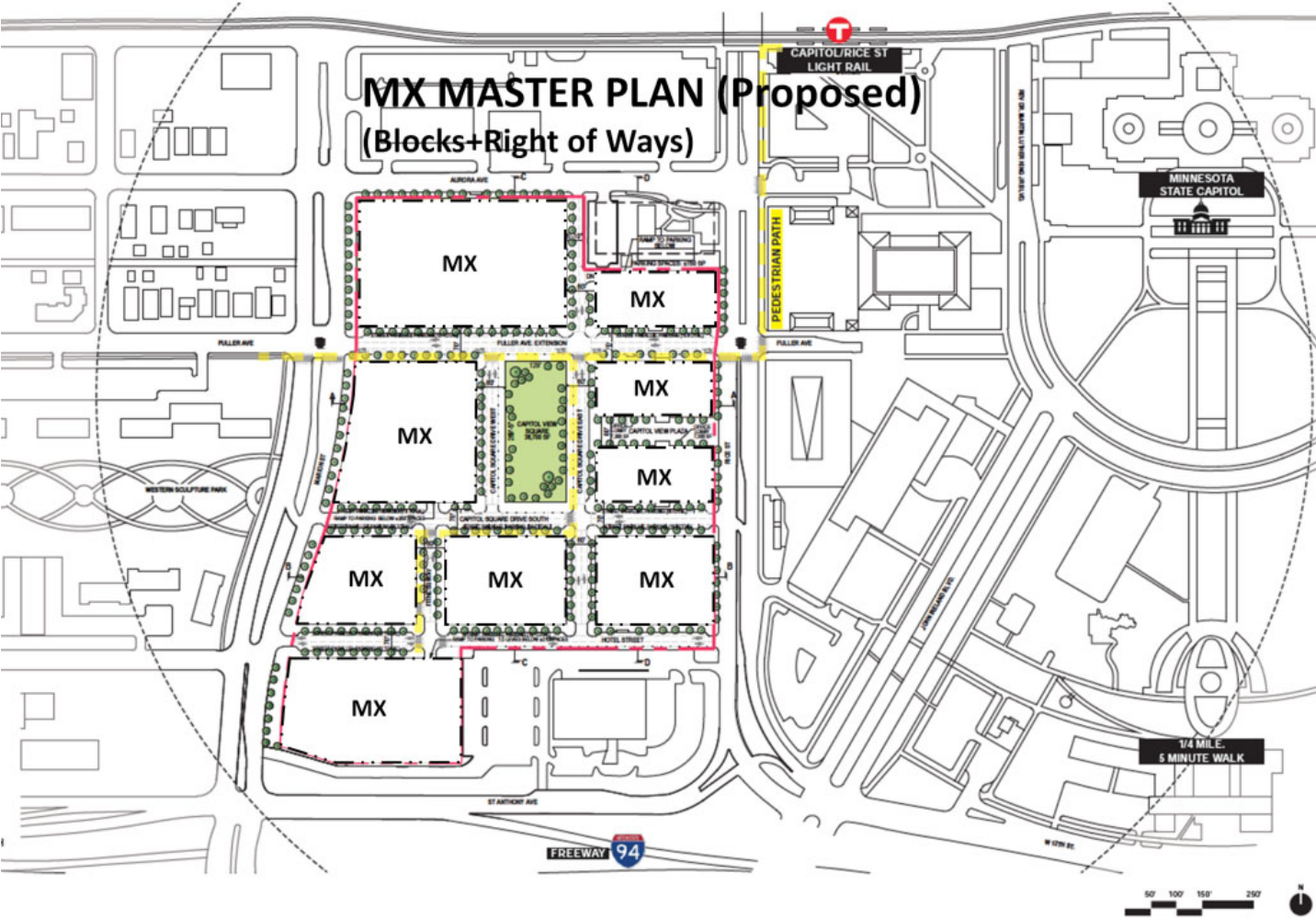
- **Board Member Homework**
- **Developer's Initial Drawings**
- **Staff Notes, including:**
  - MX Master Plan Approval Diagram (Steps #1 - #4)**
  - SUGGESTED BOARD ACTION: Proposed Step #2 Community Stakeholder Engagement**

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### Board Member Homework

Board Members are encouraged to:

- 1) Read this memo and call CAAPB's Peter Musty (612-743-5994) with any questions you may have about the information or if you require more information about the proposed process.
- 2) Review Chapter 7A and The Capitol Rice Development Framework at CAAPB website ([mn.gov/caapb](http://mn.gov/caapb)).







## Staff Notes

### **Does the plan support CAAPB (and City, regional) planning (and Capitol Area zoning)?**

Certainly, from a birds-eye level, yes. The street and block plan shown closely follows the CAAPB framework plan approved in 2019, which affirmed the long-established Rice Station Area Plan developed as part of the Central Corridor Development Framework that preceded LRT construction – and so is supportive of the *2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area*. The vision for walkable mixed-use transit-oriented development near stations along the Central Corridor is supported by multiple levels of government to maximize investments in transit infrastructure while achieving renewable energy goals.

In 2010 the CAAPB adopted zoning supportive of walkable mixed-use development patterns (See CAAPB's MX zoning and Central Corridor Overlay in the *Zoning and Design Rules for the Minnesota State Capitol Area*), and the City has since adopted zoning in similar station areas outside the Capitol Area that is consistent with the proposed vision for the Sears site. **The Mixed Use (MX) Master plan process does not include any change to the underlying MX zoning of the Sears parcel.**

At the board meeting, CAAPB staff will acknowledge the basic points of fidelity (so far) to public planning and zoning for the site, including:

- ✓ urban village / transit-oriented vision
- ✓ maintains current height limits
- ✓ restores much of pre-1963 street and block pattern
- ✓ street level connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods
- ✓ internal connectivity (north-south and east-west)
- ✓ multi-modal tree-lined street design
- ✓ establishes community green
- ✓ re-enlivens/re-activates Rice Street

### What are key questions and issues that need discussion and development as the plan iterates?

Among the issues warranting discussion and dialogue in the community:

- traffic impacts
- housing/jobs/services mix
- Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street) Design and crossings
- connection to LRT station/bus routes
- housing diversity/ affordability
- compliance with Saint Paul ped and bike plan
- viewsheds
- neighborhood retail/services
- community green space design
- public art
- sustainable/green infrastructure and buildings
- connection to community green space to Mall and Western Park
- on-street parking
- architectural quality of building design
- lines of sight and visual connections

The Sears process is not just guided by specific standards of the Comprehensive Plan's *Capitol Rice Development Framework* (Chapter 7A), it is also good test of the rest of the Comprehensive Plan. Below are five draft questions that may be posed during community meetings or survey – based on CAAPB's **holistic lens** (from Chapter 3).

**Communities & Families** – Does the development plan support the cultural and community fabric now in place?

**Placemaking & Identity** – Is this design establishing a sense of place and setting supportive and reflective of current and future community?

**Economic Vitality** – Does the development spur reinvestment (and new investment) and how could the retail mix serve current and future community members?

**Healthy Living** – How can the plan support healthy environment and healthy choices?

**Energy & Environment** – What are the most important green goals the project should prioritize in trying to meet applicable goals for energy, air, habitat, food, waste and water, etc.?



### Will the MX Master Plan process end up prescribing a certain mix of uses overall (or for each block)?

No. (Not unless the Board decides to reform its *Zoning and Design Rules* so that we enable prescription of specific uses in the MX zoning code.) Smart previous planning by CAAPB in 2010 put in place a form-based

code (vs a land use-based code). Instead of a focus on narrowing the allowable mix of uses over time, the CAAPB code is built to allow for the organic evolution of a diverse urban mix of uses over time.

Instead, CAAPB MX zoning does call for prescription of walkable street level settings with interesting frontages and careful setting of heights to respect views of the Capitol. Similar to Saint Paul's TN zoning near station areas, the Capitol Area's MX zoning focus on built form in turn allows then allows the real estate market more flexibility to determine the highest and best uses over time.

Maintaining the current underlying form-based MX zoning of the site (for each block) will allow for the desired urban village mix to evolve incrementally and may allow redevelopment of the site to happen faster.

**Is the developer asking to increase current height limits for the site?**

No.

**What will the first phase include?**

This is not known yet. We may see a first phase plan or other aspirational build-out plans drafted early on by the development team in order to test the waters in the market, but due to the length of the community and environmental review processes, it would be fairly risky at this point for anyone to commit to specific development programs at this point.

(Full build-out plans may look awfully committal, but they are essentially aspirational until specific block development proposals come forward.)

For now, the developer is proactively choosing to begin *predevelopment* approvals (including public realm master plan, environmental review and then replat/subdivision of the land) before advancing the typical *development* permitting of individual blocks. CAAPB's predevelopment process (*aka MX Master Plan outlined in the PREDEVELOPMENT PROCESS chart below*) will not directly grant the developer zoning permits (or the related City building permits) to begin construction – however it is necessary to achieve a subdivision of the larger 20 acre parcel into more 'developable' 2-4 acre blocks.

Several 'first phases' may be conceived during predevelopment phases, but they will likely not come into full focus until the end of the master plan process (perhaps during Step #4 (*Final Approval*) – or afterward.

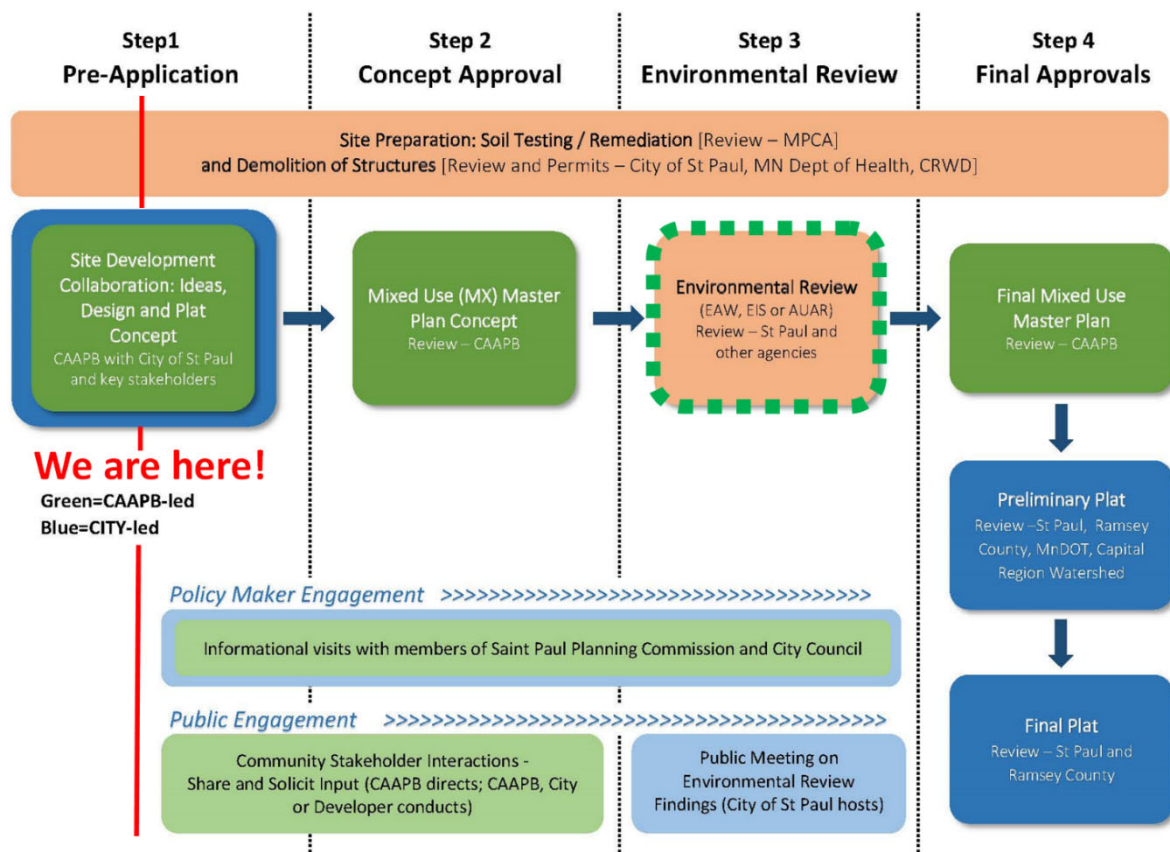
## How long will the entire review process take?

This is hard to predict. It is helpful to remember that there is a predevelopment process (shown above), which itself could take up to a year or so; then development process for individual buildings after that. The advantage here is that CAAPB has a framework plan and approval process in place, based in previous station area and City planning, and flexible zoning code that the developer is choosing to work within (so far!). Some of the larger questions are: condition of the land and soils, the length of environmental reviews, and the real estate market.

After the final plat approvals in the predevelopment master planning process, development entitlements for an individual building usually may then take 6-18 months, depending on the building type and location.

## PREDEVELOPMENT PROCESS

(Page 40, Capitol Rice Development Framework)





### How will the community be engaged during the process?

CAAPB staff and the developer, in collaboration with the City, will craft an engagement/review process that is appropriate for each step. All activities will follow the principles for sensitivity for context, respect for communities and context and equitable access for all voices we've just approved within the Comprehensive Plan. Staff will request that the Board pre-approve the types of engagement activities before each step.

Accordingly, at this board meeting, CAAPB staff will present ideas for engagement (for Step # 2 Concept Approval) that have been developed/vetted with developer and the City. The suggested board language below summarizes the basic approach that has been developed.

### Suggested Language of Board Action **FOR BOARD APPROVAL**

"The Capitol Area Architectural & Planning Board (CAAPB) directs staff to work with development team (and in collaboration with City staff) to develop and implement a set of community stakeholder engagement activities that will ensure community members are involved during **Step #2 of the MX Master Plan Review Process** prior to and as part of the Board's consideration of a complete Concept Plan submission. The activities should ensure opportunity to all community members, and will include:

- community wide forums (minimum of three)
- meetings with property owners, neighborhood groups, elected officials, and other key institutional stakeholders
- survey (online)
- reviews by municipal staff
- web posting of three draft iterations of the MX Master Plan submission package, reflecting input gained at the beginning, middle and end of stakeholder engagement activities"

### What are the types of drawings and documents the developer will be producing for the Board?

The Capitol Rice Development Framework outlines submission requirements of the developer. The developer's three submissions planned within Step #2 (*Concept Approval*) will reveal increasing levels of decisions and details as the community vetting is conducted. The three packages expected will include documents related to:

- base mapping and site analysis
- public realm plan (new streets, public spaces and potential improvements along Marion and Rice etc.)
- development regulating plan (aspirational build outs)
- illustrative imagery
- mobility & parking planning (MaPP)
- design for community green
- topography, stormwater, utilities and district energy planning



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