Chapter 7

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INTRODUCTION

The Capitol Campus and its neighborhoods comprise a cohesive and interactive set of adjacent urban districts. The distinct character of each neighborhood is, in part, a response to particular topographies and developmental histories that have created the existing patterns of use, and, in part, a response to influences from surrounding communities. Each neighborhood can enhance its unique identity as well as create observable continuities between areas. Comprehensive and neighborhood planning guides future development decisions and should be done with community involvement.

In the past, however, planning has not always included the community. Even in what is today known as the Capitol Area, there were, prior to creation of the Board, many large changes and developments—the siting and building of the Capitol itself, clearing land for the Mall, widening of Rice Street, development of the Interstate through the Rondo neighborhood, the vast majority of which lies to the west, development of Sears as a superblock—some of which contributed to the displacement of people, homes, businesses, and streets. In the past, some decisions were made with little or no input from those affected as the area changed for what was meant to be the greater good of the city. The impact of some planning decisions can still be felt today in many communities.

The seventh principle of this Comprehensive Plan directly addresses this:

In all parts of the Capitol Area, new development respects community, assets and context.

Good planning and design respects communities. New projects should reflect existing community values and be designed with a deep understanding of the potential direct and indirect impacts on the individuals and groups affected. Public participation is integral to any good planning. The aim of the public participation process is to enable the public to have meaningful input during the planning process. Area residents, business owners, employees, and visitors can be an important source of knowledge for what is working and what needs to be improved. Public participation can take many forms, and community members should have effective ways to give feedback. It is especially important to reach out to people who have historically been overlooked, whether inadvertently or intentionally. One of the goals of the CAAPB is to ensure all are treated with dignity and respect, and that all voices have the opportunity to be heard.

Good planning and design respects physical assets. Reaching out and listening to the community helps planners understand the important key physical assets. Sometimes, these are obvious based on the history of the area, such as an historic building or a major employer.
Some assets are known only to community members, and these are also important to understand and protect—key gathering places, long-term businesses that serve as an anchor to the neighborhood, public art that tells a story—these assets shape the community and make it home. Planning to improve a neighborhood should always work to include these key assets.

**Good planning and design respects context.** New projects can better serve the public when planned with sensitivity to context. Planning must consider community history, important aspects of the community today, and projections for the future. All three lenses are needed to put community input into context and make good planning decisions. Research-based knowledge helps planners in understanding perspectives from individuals and businesses alongside the goals of the larger community. Planning decisions should balance the good of the individual with the good of the community.

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board is committed to community involvement and collaboration in the planning process. This Comprehensive Plan is a step in the ongoing planning process for the next 10-to-20 years; it is an expression of the values of the CAAPB, guided by input from the State, the City of Saint Paul, and the people throughout the Capitol Area. This chapter outlines our approach to planning, including topics covering:

- How is Planning Done in the Capitol Area?
- How is Project Design Reviewed in the Capitol Area?
- Embracing Change in the Capitol Area
How is Planning Done in the Capitol Area?

Proactive planning in the Capitol Area is conducted periodically at multiple scales: comprehensive planning, neighborhood or district planning, and issue-based studies. Policy developed in plan documents and approved by the board are the foundation of board approvals and staff permitting for new projects throughout the Capitol Area (outlined in the next section). Regardless of scale, the CAAPB is committed to planning with respect for the community, assets and context, using the following approach:

**Research.** CAAPB staff will often conduct or participate in studies (or longer ‘planning tracks’) to examine important issues. This work can include extensive review of existing policy including CAAPB plans and reports, neighborhood, city, county, or regional documents, best practices from other areas, and documentation of existing conditions, current issues, trends and opportunities across multiple topics.

**Outreach and Communication.** Interaction with various stakeholder groups is critical to ensure community voices are heard regarding shared values and goals, or specific challenges. Comparing research with feedback provides the basis for brainstorming solutions. Implementers and/or responsible parties may be identified and brought to the table.

**Development of New Policy.** Stakeholder input and information are combined to create new policy.

**Stakeholder Review.** Drafts of new policy can be reviewed with stakeholder groups during development. The nature of the policy revision will often define the type of stakeholder interaction sought. Generally, a mix of stakeholder groups will be involved, including institutions, businesses and property owners, residents, neighborhood resident groups, public bodies, and CAAPB Board members.

**Board Approval and Adoption.** The CAAPB adopts new policy during their Board meetings, which are open to the public.

**BOARD-APPROVED PLANS**

**Comprehensive Plan.** A Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area is required by Minnesota Statute 15B. All projects approved by the CAAPB Zoning Administrator or CAAPB members must align with the last adopted plan or its amendments. The Comprehensive Plan is the enabling document for all zoning regulations administered by CAAPB, and explains the organizing principles behind those regulations.

**Development Frameworks (for Neighborhoods and Districts).** Smaller scale Development Frameworks provide more location specific development guidelines than the Comprehensive Plan. They calibrate the comprehensive plans’ larger organizing principles to a specific area, detailing specific goals for stability, change and growth. When adopted by the Board as a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, they carry the weight of the Comprehensive Plan, similar to municipal ‘small area’ plans.
How Are Projects Reviewed in the Capitol Area?

When new projects and improvements are proposed in the Capitol Area, the CAAPB is required by statute to review and approve those projects according to fidelity to both the comprehensive plan and zoning and design regulations. The CAAPB Board members have the power to make decisions on zoning and design issues during their meetings. Changes to the Comprehensive Plan must follow the approaches identified on the previous page. Otherwise, the Comprehensive Plan will continue to be enacted through use of regulatory tools and design guidance mechanisms defined by statute:

The Zoning and Design Rules

The Rules for Zoning and Design in the Minnesota State Capitol Area (“The Rules”). The CAAPB regulates zoning and design in the Capitol Area through Chapter 2400, Minnesota Administrative Rules - as required by Minnesota Statute 15B. All projects approved by the CAAPB Zoning Administrator or CAAPB members must comply with the rules in this document unless applicants obtain a variance, conditional use permit, or other approval granted by the board itself. CAAPB zoning and design rules replace City of Saint Paul zoning ordinance. The city issues building permits and licenses certain land uses. Since the comprehensive plan, as outlined above, is the enabling policy document for zoning and design regulations, The Rules are typically modified following comprehensive plan approval.

Pre-Application and Inter-Agency Reviews – Before formal submittals, private and public designers and project managers will continue to vet projects, in confidence, for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning and Design Rules with CAAPB staff. Staff routinely collaborates with Advisors and other agencies.

Advisory Committee (aka “Design Advisors” or “Architectural Advisors”) – Statute also requires that three design advisors are consulted regularly to advise staff and board members on the merits of improvements in relation to design matters. Advisors are appointed for time-limited terms by the American Institute of Architects, Minnesota State Arts Board, and CAAPB, respectively.

Zoning Administrator Review - Upon formal submittal of proposed projects, new public infrastructure and private development proposals are first measured for compliance with the comprehensive plan and the zoning and design rules. If within the rules, and the intent of the comprehensive plan, the zoning administrator is empowered to grant permits administratively, without board review.

Neighborhood Input – For large or sensitive developments or development projects that are not in compliance with current comp plan or zoning, a public participation process may be necessary during the design phase prior to Board reviews and approval. For large or sensitive developments or development projects that are not in compliance with current comp plan or zoning, a public participation process may be necessary during the design phase prior to Board reviews and approval.

Board Approved Design Guidelines and Design Competitions. Periodically, CAAPB has and will (often collaboratively with stakeholders) continue to develop guidelines for specific projects or project types. Recent examples address art in the Capitol Building (2019), street design, campus signage, lighting, commemorative works on the Capitol Mall, and solar installations throughout the capitol complex (2017). By statute, certain projects (such as public buildings) beyond a certain cost may be required to be developed through design competition.

Stakeholder and Advisor input is not confined to planning efforts, it is also structured into project design reviews ahead of permitting.
Embracing change in the Capitol Area

Cities go through natural cycles of investment and dis-investment, through cycles of growth and cycles of recession. As described previously in this plan, ongoing investments in new and existing buildings, new streets and transportation technologies can impact communities in both positive and negative ways. Without careful planning and civic engagement, our history shows that we can lose track of the well-being of communities, to look past resources or take them for granted – leading to investments in the name of progress that fail to protect valuable resources and assets. The Board wishes to address this, with focus on the following:

Managing the Effects of Rapid Growth in Communities

Growth and investment is necessary in every community. Ideally, it happens in a form, scale and pace that creates nothing but positive impacts in communities. This plan calls for continued dialogue about the impacts that new growth and redevelopment can have in communities. Typical discussions may need to be convened surrounding the issues of housing, traffic impacts, safety, etc. The Board, along with City, County and State partners, should continue these dialogues with the community and/or key stakeholder during both the planning and review of new projects. The Board will remain open to new practices that seek to ensure that communities are fairly represented early in all Board processes.

Communicating with Diverse Audiences

It will be important to continue to communicate effectively with neighborhood groups, established businesses, as well as under-represented new American and immigrant communities as to the impacts of planning, regulations and new projects. In the past three decades, funding has often been provided to address community outreach communication for public buildings, with an average of one building constructed every four years. During the same period, new private development, proceeding at a similar rate, has allowed for Board staff to accommodate outreach without additional resources. It is anticipated that the pace of new private growth and development will increase in the Capitol Area. This may necessitate new resources to continue to accommodate a high standard of community access to the Board’s planning and design procedures.
Integrating Historic Assets into Projects

As stated earlier in this chapter, it will be important to continue informing projects by establishing greater knowledge about the presence of historic resources and by presenting those resources in many stages of the community development process. The following may become necessary to develop in the Capitol Area:

- Establish (and conduct updates as necessary) an historic resources survey for archaeology, buildings, and cultural/social assets in the Capitol Area.
- Revisit the CAAPB regulatory review process of projects, with a goal of meeting or exceeding standards set by the City of Saint Paul regarding historic resources. (See sidebar)

What Does Saint Paul Say?

Heritage and Cultural Preservation is covered in the SAINT PAUL FOR ALL 2040 Comprehensive Plan on pages 138-141:

Goal 1: A leader in the use of best practices towards an equitable and sustainable approach to the preservation, conservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of publicly-owned historic and cultural resources (includes Policy HP 1-5)

Goal 2: The preservation of built, cultural and natural environments that express the identity and sense of place of Saint Paul (includes Policy HP 6-9)

Goal 3: The consideration of heritage and cultural preservation goals and priorities in all City departments, initiatives, policies, practices and processes (includes Policy HP 10-11)

Goal 4: City investments in built, cultural and natural environments and in cultural and historic resources that reflect broader City priorities (includes Policy HP 12-16)

Goal 5: Broad stakeholder understanding and application of heritage and cultural preservation planning tools and resources (includes Policy HP 17-19)

Among the first assembly plants for the Model-T, the Ford Building on University Avenue provides another stately presence on University Avenue, along the urban edge of Leif Erickson Park. Designed and built in the same era as the Minnesota State Capitol, it has been an important anchor of the community’s physical and economic fabric in the community for over 100 years. The buildings’ structural integrity and embodied energy is considerable, and its modular, open plan with massive columns and great natural light has allowed for a variety of different uses over time. Much of its beautiful dismantled brick cornice has been removed and stored within. State owned since 1952, and now vacant for over a decade, the building’s National Register nomination received unanimous support from State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Board. After initial federal review, the nomination was returned based the integrity of the original architecture.

For the Board’s location specific policy on the Ford Building and its block, see Chapter 7A or “The Capitol Rice Development Framework”, developed following a year of community input in 2017-18. Summary: disposition alternatives from full demolition to full reuse should be equally considered at the time funding is procured for larger block redevelopment. Sensitive integration of this community asset into redevelopment (adaptive reuse) could be a shining example of sustainable integration of community historic assets into new projects, and may be worth the investment.
**DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS: GUIDING INCREMENTAL RE-INVESTMENT IN DISTRICTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

Following the Comprehensive Plan, district and neighborhood planning may occur. In addition to the Capitol Campus, the Capitol Area has three district/neighborhood planning areas:

- Capitol Rice (covered in Chapter 7A)
- Capitol Heights (covered in Chapter 7B)
- Fitzgerald Park (covered in Chapter 7C)

While Comprehensive Planning looks at the entire Capitol Area and writes policy to guide future development decisions, district *Development Frameworks* outline detailed goals for stability, change and growth in a community.