



# Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board



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Date: March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
To: Members of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)  
From: Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Executive Secretary, CAAPB  
Peter Musty, Principal Planner and Administrator of the Rules for Zoning and Design, CAAPB

## RE: Other Project Updates

### Update on Legislative Session

CAAPB staff will provide an updated memo regarding 2025 legislation as session progresses.

### ON HOLD, FOR NOW! Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force and Account (\$5.15M)

The end of the 2023 Session brought both relief and surprises to local initiatives throughout Minnesota, including the Capitol Area. After approving the framework that would guide disposition of funds in the community, the Board and Community watched as the language enabling the funds did not pass at the Legislative deadline. Despite the setback, CAAPB staff, consultant *Creation in Common*, partners in the community, and the Task Force followed through with the engagement work of the *Community Voices Initiative*, as planned. There were good results, including the following, found at CAAPB webpage dedicated to the *Vitality Account #3*.

**Background:** The Community Vitality Task Force met regularly since September 2023 and ended their work with recommendations to CAAPB, which are posted here: [See Task Force Recommendations](#). 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 the report will help guide investment of the appropriated \$5 million. The funding supported the work of the Task Force and enabled CAAPB 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 on input from over 70 direct interviews and interactions with community members. Work continues on these levels:

- CAAPB, City staff, Port Authority are meeting regularly to develop a program structure for 2025 and beyond.
- CAAPB legislative members and local representatives are working currently to renew supportive legislation that enables the Board’s program design to be implemented.

It is still envisioned that the account funds will be administered through the following mechanisms over 3-5 years\*:

\*Timeline and amounts subject to change based on City and CAAPB capacity.

- Startup: Safety and Livability (\$2 Million):
    - Possible contracts with the City of Saint Paul: Downtown Improvement District, Office of Neighborhood Safety.
    - Possible metrics: community member survey of sentiment, crime statistics, office tenant lease retention, and anti-displacement.
  - Saint Paul Parks (\$1 Million):
    - Possible contract with the City of Saint Paul Parks: park programming for residents of CAAPB area.
  - Community Vitality Grants (\$2 Million):
    - Conversations with Port Authority and City of Saint Paul to administer grants:
      - Arts grants and business grants.
    - Possible metrics: set goals for # businesses served, % small business retention, # artists supported, # community events
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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%201%20-%20CAAPB%20Vitality%20Task%20Force%20Recommendations\\_tcm1087-614376.pdf](https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Item%201%20-%20CAAPB%20Vitality%20Task%20Force%20Recommendations_tcm1087-614376.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](https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Capitol%20Area%20Community%20Vitality%20Task%20Force%20Account%20-%20CAAPB%20Memo%20July%202023_tcm1087-586125.pdf)

## “KICKED OFF!”: Redesign of Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street from Pennsylvania to John Ireland)

**Update:** Public Works and Planning staff from Ramsey County, MnDOT, City, and CAAPB are partnering to launch design and implementation. There have been two meetings of the Project Management team. CAAPB Staff (Musty) is attending meetings twice a month and is providing the interdisciplinary team policy, studies, and community surveys, and is summarizing recent studies that embody CAAPB priorities in our Comp Plan, stormwater management, urban design, public realm safety, CMDF, and mobility. **Project manager Haila Maze of lead consultant Bolton & Menk will be present September 24<sup>th</sup> to highlight some key elements of the project.**

**Background:** 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, 12<sup>th</sup> Street across interstate to St. Peter).



The project was enabled by a \$25 million provision from the 2023 MN State Legislature, appropriated to Department of Transportation (but just for Rice Street itself – **the length shown in green above**) 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 2023 Board Memo](#).) Appropriation is available until June of 2029. A project webpage will soon be available.

## State Office Building Expansion into Leif Erickson Park

Following the 2023 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. Neither 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”:

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*“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.”*

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## UNDER CONSTRUCTION: New *Temporary* Green Space at Former Ford Building and Lot C

In October 2023, CAAPB approved zoning permitting for the Department of Administration’s 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. The overall parking spaces offered on the modified Lot C will now drop from 206 spaces to 153 spaces.



Next Step: 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, but the surface has been made more level to achieve accessibility standards and to provide flexibility in the near future in case programming needs change.

## Commemorative Works Applications

### World War I Plaque

The World War I plaque is an existing memorial on the Capitol Court of Honor, that commemorates 57,413 Minnesotans who fought abroad during World War I.



In February 2019, during the 91<sup>st</sup> session, bill [HF 810](#) was passed authorizing the replacement of the existing plaque with a new plaque that will take into account all Minnesota veterans who fought during World War I, both abroad and at home. The legislation authorizes the CAAPB to solicit design submissions for the new plaque from the public.

On January 9, 2025, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, through Cole Trace, its Legislative Liaison, reached out to the CAAPB Executive Secretary to inform the Board of the Minnesota American Legion Foundation's intention to foot the bill for the installation of new plaque in the Court of Honor per HF 810.

The CAAPB Executive Secretary met with Mike Maxa, the adjutant for the MN American Legion Foundation to discuss the intention to replace the World War I plaque considering the coming into effect of the [Minnesota Rules 2400.2703](#) in 2022. From the discussion, it was agreed that MN American Legion Foundation will submit a Commemorative Work application for modification of an existing work on the Capitol

Ground for the World War I Plaque, whilst the discussion on how to align the 2019 legislation and new Commemorative Works rules is underway.

The MN American Legion Foundation is currently working on submitting the application, with continued guidance from CAAPB staff.

## **Blue Star Gold Star Memorial**

On February 17, 2025, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), through Jon Kelly, its Director of Government Affairs, reached out to the CAAPB Executive Secretary to inform the Board of a policy item in the upcoming Governor's budget bill for the department, authorizing a Blue Star Gold Star Families Memorial in the Court of Honor.

"Blue Star Families is a term used to refer to the immediate family members of active-duty service members in the United States military. This tradition dates back to World War I when families displayed banners with a blue star to represent a loved one serving in the armed forces."

"The term 'Gold Star Family' originated during World War I when families displayed service flags with blue stars representing their loved ones serving in the military. If a service member died, the blue star was replaced with a gold star, signifying their ultimate sacrifice. This allowed communities to recognize the immense loss suffered by these families."

On February 20, 2025, the CAAPB Executive Secretary and staff met with Jon Kelly and Ben Johnson, Deputy Commissioner of Programs and Services at MDVA, to discuss the bill's proposed language in view of the Minnesota Rules 2400.2703. The meeting agreed to take into account CAAPB's role in drafting the language, and the Department of Veterans Affairs intends to submit an application to add new Commemorative Work to the Capitol Grounds, should the bill come into effect.

CAAPB staff are currently keeping track of the bill and will provide guidance on the Commemorative Works application processes as required.

## **Commemorative Works Application Forms Review**

Following observations made and applicant feedback received whilst processing active and potential commemorative works applications per [Minnesota Rules 2400.2703](#), CAAPB staff, together with Advisors, reviewed the current Commemorative Works application forms in order to better align them with applicant needs.

The application forms with the proposed reviews are included in this packet.

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Staff is working regularly with Minnesota Historical Society on several other emerging applications for a range of Commemorative Works applications proposing new, modification to existing works, and removals of works on campus. One of which is now beginning consideration at the meeting in March. We look forward to providing a major update on Commemorative Works to the Board this year and may ask interested Board Members to serve in review roles 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, are 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 the 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 Saint 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.

### **Capitol View (at old Bethesda Hospital Site): Exterior Facades Close to Completion**

Construction is underway on the new behavioral health hospital. The following update was provided to CAAPB staff by Kristian Thonvold of Fairview:

- Work on the exterior façade of the building is drawing to a close.
- Construction fencing is planned to come down in April.
- Landscaping will begin after the fencing has been removed.
- Utilities serving the building are all secured.
- Interior work will continue through to the end of construction.

### **Seals**

CAAPB continues to meet with Department of Administration and Minnesota Historical Society to discuss implementation of State Seal replacement in the Capitol and other buildings in the Capitol Complex. CAAPB staff will provide an update to the Board when we have more specific details on cost, design, etc.

### **Multiple Infrastructure Planning and Construction 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)

Planning	Sponsor/Lead Agency	CAAPB role	Timing
<b>Sears Site: MX District Plan</b>	public/private team (Developer (tbd), CAAPB, City)	process and review lead	pre-application meetings in holding pattern as capacities are secured by owner team
<b>Commemorative Works Policy (2022 Update to Rules) Funded \$500K, one time sending, available thru FY27</b>	CAAPB (working with MNHS, Administration under new Rules)	Staff receives inquiries under Rules, looking to improve process with Lindsey Dyer of MNHS	Ongoing. Handful of applications in pre-application stages, with one or more starting formal reviews in 2024
<a href="#">Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study</a>	Capitol Region Watershed District	co-lead	complete
<a href="#">Rethinking I-94</a>	MnDOT	policy and planning committee(s)	ongoing, alternatives about to be narrowed, released
<a href="#">Downtown Commons Study (off-shoot of Rethinking I-94)</a>	MnDOT	steering	Completed Fall 2023, multi-jurisdictional staff team continues to meet
<b>Capitol Heights Development Framework</b>	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, w station area planning resumed
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
<b>DESIGN UNDERWAY: \$25M Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street Redesign/Rebuild)</b>	funds held by MnDOT for City/County/ CAAPB leads design coordination	lead, approval	RFP released by County, with design and engagement team now in place
<b>90% DESIGN: Jackson Street Rebuild</b> (Northeastern boundary of Capitol Area)	City	Staff on PMT	Preliminary input from primary partners and agencies, public engagement in planning
<b>DESIGN UNDERWAY: 12<sup>th</sup> Street Redo</b> (downtown across St Peter bridge, up 12 <sup>th</sup> to John Ireland)	City	Staff on PMT	Team selected, work beginning

<b>UNDERWAY: \$185K Mandatory Update to Rules for Zoning and Design</b>	CAAPB	Opticos lead consultant	2024-2025
<b>COMPLETE: \$1 mil. Capitol Mall Design Framework</b> (Admin. w/ \$5 mil. for implementation)	CAAPB (w/ Dept of Administration)	lead	Approved in 2024
<b>w/LEGISLATURE: \$5 mil. Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force</b>	Task Force completed work in 2024	lead	Hope to finalize funding in 2025.

**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 2025 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.**



**Attachments:**

1. **Application for Addition of CW**
2. **Application for Modification of CW**
3. **Application for Removal of CW**
4. **CW Inquiry and Request for Consultation**