



## Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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Date: October 3, 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: AGENDA ITEM #11 – Other Project Updates**

#### **Project Updates in this Memo:**

- 1) Rice Street Redesign (also see full memo)
- 2) State Office Building
- 3) Commemorative Works (not mentioned / in the works)
  - a. WWI Plaque
  - b. Blue Star Gold Star Memorial
- 4) Former Sears Site
- 5) Capitol View Mental Health Hospital
- 6) **TRACKING TABLE:** Multiple Infrastructure Projects and Studies
  - a. NEW to table: Centennial Office Building Study, John Ireland Bridge Reconstruction

### **Redesign of Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street from Pennsylvania to John Ireland)**

For the October 2025 Board meeting, the preferred street design alternative will be brought forward for consideration. **Please see separate memo for full update.**

**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.

## State Office Building Update

The State Office Building Renovation and Addition continues to progress. The addition is in progress with structural steel, roofing, and concrete block work underway. The original building construction continues with new roof systems, windows, and interior wall framing. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing system continue to advance.

## 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



*Image of existing World War I plaque at the Court of Honor*

application for modification of an existing work on the Capitol Ground for the World War I Plaque, while 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 and request input on a policy item in the Governor’s HF2444 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.”

Following discussions, it was then agreed that CAAPB’s role per Minnesota Rules 2400.2703 will be incorporated into the HF2444 budget bill language. The bill has since been passed by the Senate (May 17, 2025), therefore becoming session Law Chapter 30, Section 14., Subdivision 2., and currently reads as follows;

*Subd. 2. **Memorial plaque.** The commissioner of administration shall place a memorial plaque in the court of honor on State Capitol grounds to recognize the service and sacrifices of Minnesota's Gold Star and Blue Star families. The process for determining design and location of the Gold Star and Blue Star memorial will follow the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board commemorative works rules under Minnesota Rules, part 2400.2703. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board shall select a design from the submitted designs to use as a basis for final production. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board must include the commissioner of veterans affairs on the design review committee established under Minnesota Rules, part 2400.2703. The memorial design must be furnished by the person or group who submit the design at no cost to the state.*

The bill was presented to the Governor on May 20, 2025, and is expected to become an official session law in summer 2025.

CAAPB staff have been actively supporting Cole Trace, MDVA Legislative Liaison, with the application process for the plaque addition and expect to receive a formal submission shortly.

## **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 current 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.

**Update - September 2025:** There are three notable updates:

- We are still waiting for site owners to form a full development team to continue with site design and planning.
- Thanks to an [Active Transportation grant from the Department of Transportation](#), Staff has participated as a primary resource with site ownership in a bike and walk audit coordinated by MnDOT and lead consultant Alta. The project is evaluating connectivity from the site to neighborhoods, and districts surrounding anticipates pre-application meetings to resume in summer of 2025. The work will assist in review of site planning. The owner has signed off on location of intersections and BRT stations proposed by the Rice Street Design Team.
- Temporary activities continue on the site under the [temporary permitting guidelines](#) set in place by CAAPB in 2021. The site owner regularly submits permits to allow activities that are under 12 days or less and operate during daylight hours unless formal notification is made to neighbors. Several activities that began this summer are now under review and may come forward for Board review in the near future.

For more information, please contact staff.





### Capitol View Mental Health Hospital (at old Bethesda Hospital Site): Opening in October

Staff recommends that if you haven't, that you please walk or drive by the site when you are on campus.

Construction is finishing up on Capitol View Mental Health Hospital <https://www.capitolparkmentalhealth.com/>.

The following update was provided Sept 19 to CAAPB staff by Garrett Smith of the Acadia/Fairview team:

*"The hospital is scheduled to start taking patients in October. I have attached a couple pictures of the completed facility ...they showcase the beautiful building sitting perfectly downtown adjacent to the Capitol!"*



## 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 pre-application meetings, CAAPB, City)	process and review lead	pre-application meetings currently paused as development team formed by owner
<b>Commemorative Works Rules (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	CAAPB Commemorative Works Fellows Tina Chimuzu (2024) and Ella Coon (2025) have led process and are providing updates to Board/Advisors
<a href="#">Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study</a>	Capitol Region Watershed District	co-lead	Complete, CAAPB accepted in March 2025
<a href="#">Rethinking I-94</a>	MnDOT	policy and planning committee(s)	ongoing, alternatives being narrowed
<a href="#">Downtown Commons Study (off-shoot of Rethinking 1-94)</a>	MnDOT	steering	Completed Fall 2023, multi-jurisdictional staff team continues to meet
<b>Capitol Heights Development Framework</b>	CAAPB (leveraging Station Area Planning)	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	Two station area plans will be brought forward by the County team for comment and Board approval in late 2025 or early 2026.
BRT Station Design: METRO G-Line	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	Staff on Technical Advisory Committee, CAAPB approved station location and design in Capitol Area, approved design and location of stations is integrated into 30% Rice Street plan under consideration by Board.	Station locations approved by CAAPB in March 2025. Metro Transit participating 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	partner, CAAPB approvals	See staff memo: community process near completion, community preferred alternative has been released and is under review
<b>Jackson Street Rebuild</b> (Northeastern boundary of Capitol Area)	City	Staff on PMT	Approved by CAAPB in March 2025, undergoing implementation
<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	Design team and engagement underway, options in vetting
<b>UNDERWAY: \$185K Mandatory Update to Rules for Zoning and Design</b>	CAAPB	Opticos lead consultant	ongoing in 2025, review process ongoing
<b>COMPLETE: \$1 mil. Capitol Mall Design Framework</b> (Admin. w/ \$5 mil. for implementation)	CAAPB	lead	Approved in 2024, trees planted in upper mall, tribal flag plaza open
<b>Capitol Mall Design Framework Implementation</b>	CAAPB (w/ Dept of Administration)	Co-lead	Funding extension by Legislature (June 30, 2027)
Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force	Task Force completed work in 2024, legislature authorized funding in 2025 session	lead	\$4M Legislation approved, Update provided in separately.
<b>NEW:</b> John Ireland Boulevard Bridge	MnDOT	CAAPB has approved bridge design, will study entire JIB end to end in 2026 with MnDOT funding commitment	Construction about to begin following Twin Cities Marathon (October 3-5).
<b>NEW:</b> Centennial Office Building Study	Dept of Administration	CAAPB Guidance, Review/Study, Approvals	Predesign study by Administration near completion; identifying cost, design and technical parameters

**We continue to be VERY Busy!** Staff is implementing the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the Capitol Mall Design Framework. 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.**