



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board



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Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board Meeting

March 1, 2024, 11:00 – 1:00 p.m.

DRAFT Minutes

Board Members

Present: Board Chair Lt. Gov. Flanagan, Board Vice Chair Dana Badgerow, Kate Beane, James Garret Jr. Hannah Hills, Rep. Klevorn, James McClean, Rep. Schultz, Sen. Pappas, Melanie McMahon,

Absent: Sen. Nelson, Alicia Belton,

Quorum present? Yes.

Proceedings

Meeting Kick-Off

- Lt. Gov. calls the meeting to order.
- Board member roll call
- Overview of Agenda

Swear in New Board Member – Melanie McMahon

Lt. Gov Flanagan reads out loud the oath. Melanie McMahon is sworn in and Lt. Gov. signs the oath.

Capitol Mall Development Framework (CMDF)

CAAPB Executive Secretary Erik Dahl reads over the legislative language of Sec. 124 Capitol Mall Design Framework (CMDF). He hands it over to Josh Brooks, a member of the consultant group Sasaki chosen to help with the Capitol Mall Design Framework (CMDF) project.

Sasaki Consultant Josh Brooks reminds everyone that the CMDF is a multi-step process with design improvements to the mall or the public realm—it's design guidelines that can start this year. Mr. Brooks begins with outlining the engagement and outreach that has happened already, through pop-ups, the online survey, and the design charrette. He asks for continued support with sending out the survey so that we can have as many engaged diverse and varied responses as possible. He states that in general, people had a lot of positive things to say about the Capitol Mall, but as the questions became more detailed, people said it needed to be more meaningful and there was a split over who feels represented there or not along with safety issues and the desire for a better civic space with more trees and vegetation.

Mr. Brooks answers Rep. Schultz' question about where the results are coming from—from the survey, the design charrette, and the pop-ups that an assistant consultant group Zan have done around the city. Mr. Brooks states 1,400 responses for the survey as of two days ago when the presentation was made and 86 participants over the course of four days during the charrette. Exec. Secretary Erik Dahl says there are 11% of respondents from outside the metro area and Lt. Gov Flanagan emphasizes the request for legislative help to assist with spreading the survey to get more answers. Rep. Schultz wants more voices from rural MN.

Josh Brooks summarizes the research that was conducted. He mentions the four lenses that Sasaki focused on to understand current opportunities and constraints and the use of them to have conversations with the Department of Transportation and the City of St. Paul: Connect, Preserve, Activate, and Grow. Mr. Brooks mentions that Damon Farbor is helping Sasaki with creating a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) which describes the physical history, analyzes existing conditions, and recommends treatment actions to preserve, restore, or rehabilitate the cultural landscape. The CLR informs the CMDF by trying to best understand the historic intentions and features of the site, as well as how it can be adapted to accommodate evolving needs while still paying homage to the past. Mr. Brooks also shares how the CMDF is developed creatively based on the existing CAAPB 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Six policy recommendations to the 2040 Plan Strategy include Security, Activation, Economic Development, Historic Preservation, Parking, and Management. Diving into the 10 Bold Moves, Mr. Brooks shows a scale of Extra Large, Large, and Small project types. The Extra Large category would enhance user experience, including right-sizing roads and reinvigorating nodes that connect the community to the capitol. Large moves introduce new strategies to represent Minnesota's cultural diversity and ecological variety as well as sculpting topography to improve accessibility while also seamlessly integrating security, and celebrating Minnesota's connection to water in all seasons. Some of the small scale moves would be to transform Cass-Gilbert Park into a multi-generational space for play and recreation, or converting Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd into a shared community street. Before going into the 10 Bold Moves, Josh underscores that these moves are not in order of priority or work progress, but that they are simply a list in no particular order. The 10 Bold Moves are:

1. Enhance the User Experience and Make for a More Inclusive and Welcoming Space: increase wayfinding with more engagement, amenity guidelines, digital infrastructure, a visitor amenity building on Cedar and 12th.

2. Reinvigorate Nodes that Connect the Community to the Capitol in Each Direction: to identify the series of nodes (physical areas, i.e. Rice and University) that are concentrated mobility options/public realm investments.
3. Right-Size the Roads and Reinforce them with Trees: in their research, 77% of the public right is dedicated to cars—these roads are bigger than most interstate highways at 16 feet wide. Proposing 954 new trees. Mr. Brooks shows visions for Rice Street and John Ireland to make the streets more hospitable to pedestrians while maintaining current traffic flow.
4. Sculpt Topography to Improve Accessibility, Seamlessly Integrate Security, and Provide a Platform for Events: some areas of the mall are simply too steep and don't meet ADA regulations. Incorporating low slung walls would decrease the grade and would also function as added security measures and seating.
5. Introduce New Strategies to Represent Minnesota's Cultural Diversity and Ecological Variety: A spatial strategy to give space for a Democracy Stage, Cultural Platform, and History and Relevance.
6. Celebrate Minnesota's Connection to Water in all Seasons: Celebrating water, but also utilizing rain as a resource by the use of water features as an opportunity to address rising temperatures and make use of increased rainfall through sustainable storm water management.
7. Create a Gradient of Planting Strategies that Support Cultural Programming, Sustainable Maintenance, and Human Comfort Goals: 80% of the capitol grounds is covered in lawn, which is great for flexible event space, but not ideal for other recreational use. The strategy here is to plant 439 new trees in the mall area itself, but to plant more naturalistic and less manicured vegetation, but the closer we get to the Capitol, shift to more manicured vegetation.
8. Transform Cass Gilbert Park into a Multi Generational Space for Play, Recreation, and Views: a desire for a more family friendly park that would include a playground, restrooms, an overlook viewpoint, and bus parking. Rep. Klevorn asks if this would be a public or private investment and Mr. Brooks answers that it could easily be done with both—this could be something very easy for the state to do, or that has multiple sources of investment.
9. Establish a Cultural Walk that Draws Visitors in and Provides Opportunities for Representation: this idea evolved from ideas of a scholar's walk, but really connects the three seats of government together and provides opportunity for modern expression—indigenous communities, dynamic modern art that changes throughout the year. A unique and educational space.
10. Convert Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd into a Community Shared Street: Not removing vehicular traffic, but reimagining the space. Allowing vehicular traffic toward the north side, but using a tree line to begin promenades on the south side. Something that can be less pristine, but setup for community, and modern art expression. Lt. Gov. Flanagan appreciates the emphasis for "a place for fun and love." Rep. Klevorn asks if instead of digging up the entire street, if it would be possible to resurface it to a smooth area. Mr. Brooks affirms that it is definitely possible, using Ben Franklin Parkway in Pennsylvania as an example.

Sen. Pappas says she loves the big ideas and requests more bike paths. An idea she has to make Cass Gilbert park more inclusive, is to add a skateboard park to reach more diverse groups and age ranges.

Board Member Dana Badgerow asks about a parking plan because it appears that a lot of parking spaces have been removed. Mr. Brooks answers that only a few hundred spots would be removed and most of these are from the Sears site. Rep. Klevorn asks about more versatile parking for older or disabled Minnesotan parking. Mr. Brooks responds with the desire for convenient parking locations that would help address these demographics.

Consultant Josh Brooks introduces Phase 1 of the Design Framework Implementation. He prefaces that a plan like this would be implemented in different ways—State Implemented Projects, City/County Implemented Projects, Private Implemented Projects, and Maintenance and Operations considerations. For this year, with the \$5 million that has been allocated, the focus would be converting MLK to a shared street and adding trees. Right now, the street is: 10 ft of sidewalk, 36 feet of existing traffic lanes, 6 ft median, 36 ft traffic lanes, and 10 ft sidewalk. The proposal would be for: 23 ft shared walking and biking path, 9 ft on-street parking, 10 ft traffic lane, 10 ft traffic lane, 21 ft promenade, 8 ft landscape zone, 12 ft walking path, and 9 ft landscape zone connecting to the Lower Mall. Mr. Brooks shares the cost estimate right now for this work of MLK to be somewhere between \$4.5-6.5 million. This includes all of the changes to MLK and the tree planting, but not any major utility changes or regional stormwater under MLK.

Rep. Hussein asks about plans to better incorporate the neighborhoods next to the Capitol. Mr. Brooks answers that it is included in the Big Idea of bridging the connecting nodes of the neighborhoods and Capitol. He also mentions the current transformative CAAPB project that will invest \$25 million into Rice Street. Exec. Secretary Erik Dahl adds that the Rice Street Reconstruction will not be happening until 2029.

Board Member Melanie McMahon inquires about the funding timeline because receiving input from technical teams, to additional survey responses and comments takes time. Exec. Secretary Erik Dahl answers that the project needs to be started by December 31st, 2024. Rep. Klevorn requests for the help of Rep. Schultz and Sen. Pappas to help her draft a proposal to potentially extend the date to get the project started without rushing it to make sure that it is done well since the money has already been allocated. Rep. Schultz agrees.

Rep. Schultz acknowledges that the plan implements the majority of the concerns that were heard during the charrette. He requests again the participation of rural Minnesotans. He wants the focus on MLK to be more temporary and commerce based installations, including rotating food trucks instead of permanent pieces. Rep. Schultz also comments about the need for bathrooms. He considers how to better support and sustain these types of installations and opens the possibility of paying to use the bathrooms, referring to his European travel

experience, or even collecting from food trucks for the amount of time spent in the space. Consultant Josh Brooks refers to the two potential bathroom spaces that were proposed, one being the Visitor Center along Cedar and 12th, and the other being in Cass Gilbert Park. Mr. Brooks agrees with generating revenue in the Capitol Mall area to help pay for maintenance and encourages it. Rep. Maria Perez-Vega comments about the fee to use the restrooms and how it could be an uncomfortable or inaccessible feature. Rep. Schultz emphasizes that it was a solution or an idea and does not need to be implemented. Rep. Klevorn alludes to not charging user fees, but having paid sponsorships, i.e a healthcare company wanting to promote health by helping pay for the playground. She also mentions having lived in Europe for four years, the \$0.25 paid to use the restrooms would not be considered a user fee as it is a tip for the person who maintains the restrooms.

Lt. Gov. Flanagan reinforces that once there is a better idea of where the project is going, there will be more opportunities to work in partnership with the city, county, or philanthropy to determine opportunities for investment. She asks for additional reflections from Rep. Klevorn from her time at the charrette. Rep. Klevorn loved it—to see the amazing synthesis of community input and Sasaki being present to draw it and clarify their thoughts. She comments on the idea of opening the northeast corridor into the Capitol having come entirely from the community.

Board Member Dana Badgerow commends the hard work of the consultant group and the staff.

Rep. Schultz encourages building out engagement amongst personal networks and spheres of influence. Lt. Gov. Flanagan will send an email out to all legislators to connect people to the survey.

Rep. Klevorn desires for the Capitol Mall to be inviting from top to bottom with the inclusion of lights.

Board Member Hannah Hills inquires about the type of trees. Mr. Brooks says bringing in a mature tree is costly and difficult. At approximately \$150,000 a tree the chances of survival and finding a tree to relocate, is hard. Mr. Brooks elaborates a few tree specifics and general guidelines from previous projects as well as looking into multiple nurseries to find the desired amount of trees.

Board Member Dana Badgerow redirects the conversation to approve preliminarily the first phase, stating that all feedback will be accepted in a 30 day comment period. She moves to approve Phase 1. Rep. Schultz seconds it. The motion is approved with 10 ayes and 0 nays. Sen. Pappas clarifies that there was a blank date on the amendment that was just adopted. Exec. Secretary Erik Dahl gives a date of April 12th. Ms. Badgerow amends her motion to include

the date of April 12th. Rep., Klevorn seconds the motion. Mr. Dahl goes through roll call and the motion passes with 10 ayes and 0 nays.

Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force Update

Lt. Gov. thanks Rep. Perez-Vega and Rep. Hussein for their efforts and engagement with the Task Force.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

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