CAPITOL AREA ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING BOARD

CAAPB

Application for Modification of an Existing Artwork on the Minnesota Capitol Grounds

UPDATED MARCH 2025

Commemorative Works on the Minnesota Capitol Grounds

Each commemorative artwork on the Capitol grounds is part of a collection that tells the story of Minnesota and its people. Principle I of the *2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area*, approved in 2021 by the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, sets out the vision, roles and policy for the Capitol Area, as articulated in the excerpt below:

> *"[The Capitol area] is a place to honor individuals, groups and ideas that have shaped Minnesota and contributed to our place in the nation. This is a place to share our many stories and create new ones The Capitol Mall is known as Minnesota's Front Yard, where all are welcome."*

The intent of this Principle will guide the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board in all decisions about commemorative works on the Minnesota Capitol grounds.

Minnesota Administrative Rules on Commemorative Works

Commemorative artwork proposals are reviewed in accordance with administrative rules for commemorative artwork on the Capitol grounds. The full text of these rules is found in Minnesota Rule Chapter 2400.2703.

The rules define a **"Commemorative artwork"** as a monument, memorial, or other type of original piece in any style, expression, genre, or media that is the unique creative expression of an artist designed to memorialize cultural, social, and political aspects of Minnesota's history. A commemorative artwork expresses or reflects the collective memory of an individual person, group, or event. Commemorative artwork serves four primary functions:

A. to memorialize and remember;

B. to inform and inspire the viewer;

C. to have lasting historic and cultural significance; and

D. to accentuate and enhance the urban landscape.

Commemorative artwork may be event-based, temporary, or long-term.

Completing the Application

This document details the required components of an application to the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board to request that it consider the modification of an existing commemorative artwork on the Minnesota Capitol grounds. All parts of this application are to be completed as fully as possible.

Before completing this application, please submit an "Early Inquiry and Consultation Form" to CAAPB staff and meet to discuss elements of the application, how to complete them, and any questions.

If you have additional questions while completing the application, please contact CAAPB staff at CAAPB.input@state.mn.us or 651.757.1500.

Once the application is complete with the information identified in Parts 1 to 5 on the following pages, submit it as a PDF or Word document by email to CAAPB.input@state.mn.us or send by postal mail to CAAPB, Freeman Building, 625 Robert St N, Saint Paul, MN 55155.

Application Information

Part 1 – Applicant Contact Information

a. Full name of the Applicant (may be an individual or an organization)
The American Legion Department of Minnesota

b. First and last name of lead contact person for the application
Michael Maxa

c. Email for the lead contact person
mmaxa@mnlegion.org

d. Phone number for lead contact person
651.424.4613

e. Address for lead contact person
20 W 12th St Room-300A
St Paul, MN 55155-2000

Part 2 – Subject of the Artwork

What artwork is proposed for modification? Please explain in detail including the historical background. (5,000-character max)

Modification and re-installation of the World War I (WWI) commemorative plaque at the Court of Honor to better recognize the men and women who served during the War from the State of Minnesota. The plaque was removed temporarily shortly after the authorization to update the plaque. Replacement of the plaque was signed in to law May 2019, considering public debate over the historical accuracy of the number of Minnesotan troops identified on the plaque.

The original plaque recognized 57,413 Minnesotans as having served in WWI. This figure accounts for the number of men and women who enlisted in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). The AEF were the troops that served in theater, or the war zone. The number did not include Minnesotans training and preparing to go to war in the United States of America. This is a discrepancy of 61,084 Minnesotans who are not given credit for answering the call to duty. A more accurate figure of the number of Minnesotans serving in World War I is 118,497. This figure was cited by Ruben Rosario in a Pioneer Press article he authored titled "All States WWI Vets Deserve to Be Honored - Including Those at Home," published March 12, 2014 (updated November 3, 2015). The columnist draws on identified 104,416 Minnesotan troops in the US Army, 11,236 in the Navy, and 2,845 in Marines as serving during the War.

The plaque should be an inclusive memorial of all Minnesota WWI veterans, regardless of where they served, with AEF, stateside, or on ships. It took more than combat troops to manage the US mission in World War I. Troops deployed played an important role. So too did non-combat personnel who ensured combatants had the supplies, equipment, and manpower needed to carry out the nation's ongoing mission.

Part 3 – Modification Concept

What type of modification is proposed? Please describe. (5,000-character max)

A correction to the plaque to better honor all Minnesotans who served in World War I. Supporting this concept, I suggest keeping the plaque's original design but changing the figure of Minnesota veterans featured from 57,413 to 118,497.

Part 4 – Conditions and Criteria

How does the proposal meet the Conditions and Criteria for the Modification of Existing Artwork? Please answer the following questions as fully as possible. Supporting materials for the answers, such as reports, data, or articles, may be included or cited with a URL link.

1. Has there has been sustained, broad-based, and documented public objection to the artwork? Please describe and provide supporting documents where necessary. (5,000-character max)

There is documented sustained and broad-based objection to the World War I plaque as it is currently designed. Starting in 2014, Minnesota veterans' groups began an effort to modify the WWI commemorative plaque at the Court of Honor. Retired Navy Commander David A. Thompson, in conjunction with The American Legion Legislative chair Peggy Moon, led this effort. Both Thompson and Moon testified before State House "Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy Division" and Senate "Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy" committees to update the plaque. Following these efforts, Minnesota State Senator Greg Clausen sponsored a bill (SF 1940) advocating to modify the plaque. In May 2019, Clausen's bill passed the State legislature with unanimous bipartisan support. On May 17, 2019, MN Governor Walz signed HF 810 into law to correct the WWI commemorative plaque. The bill was filed with the Secretary of State on May 17, 2019 and became effective May 18, 2019.

This legislation "authorized the placement of a World War I Minnesota veterans' plaque… in Capitol grounds Court of Honor to honor all Minnesota veterans who served in the United States armed forces, both at home and abroad." The American Legion Department of Minnesota wants to honor all our Minnesota veterans who wore the uniform during WWI. We are an inclusive organization.

The passed language of SF1940:

The commissioner of administration shall place a memorial plaque in the court of honor on the Capitol grounds to recognize the valiant service of Minnesota veterans who have honorably and bravely served in the United States armed forces, both at home and abroad, during World War I. This plaque will replace the current plaque honoring veterans who served abroad during World War I.

2. How does the proposed modification to an existing commemorative artwork maintain or enhance how the Capitol grounds reflect the state's diverse history and people? (5,000-character max)

The WWI commemorative plaque was displayed on the Capitol grounds but since removed, as the plaque does not accurately reflect the number of Minnesota veterans who answered the call of duty during World War I. Updating the plaque would better represent Minnesotans of all backgrounds --gender, ethnicity, financial status, religion, and races --and their efforts in the War.

A simple google search for Minnesotans serving in WWI identifies a,

Total Served: Estimates range between 118,500 and 120,000, including those in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.

Approximately 118,500 to 120,000 Minnesotans served in the armed forces during World War I. Of this total, roughly 57,400 were deployed overseas to France, with over 3,600 Minnesotans dying in service during the conflict.

Casualties: 1,432 were killed in action, while a total of 3,607 died from all causes, including disease.

If these figures cannot be verified, the plaque language of the plaque could be modified to honor “all Minnesotans at home and abroad” who answered the call to serve in the “war to end all wars.” But, The American Legion is confident on the number of Minnesotans who served.

3. The following criteria will be considered to determine whether the work should be modified. How does the proposed modification meet the following criteria? (5,000-character max)

   A. Makes the artwork more welcoming and engaging to nearby and statewide communities.
   B. Embraces historical facts and fosters a productive range of responses, conversations, and interpretations.
   C. Considers the social and cultural conditions at the time of the artwork's addition.
   D. Prompts reflection, conversation, and awareness of the stories, perspectives, and experiences of historically marginalized or oppressed communities.
   E. Incorporates the views of all interested groups and individuals and considers the relationship of these groups' collective history, heritage, and values to the artwork.
   F. Creates an opportunity to increase public understanding of and dialogue about Minnesota's history.
   G. Enhances the artwork's function as a source of collective identity and belonging for all Minnesotans.
   H. Generates, contributes to, or enhances existing social activity in the surrounding public space.
   I. Represents or commemorates a significant event, group, or individual in Minnesota's history.
   J. Respects the contributions and perspectives of the artwork's creators and the group or individuals depicted in the artwork and the group's or individuals' communities.
   K. Seeks to achieve peace, reconciliation, truth, or justice for individuals, groups, and communities that are not represented or who are misrepresented in the artwork.
   L. Acknowledges evolving social values and accounts for the views and needs of the contemporary community.

The number of veterans who served in WWI from Minnesota should be as historically accurate as possible. We must not forget the unacknowledged veterans that served in World War I. Not only is it an injustice to the families and communities of these very veterans to have been excluded from the plaque, but the modification also promotes public awareness around Minnesotans shared history. For example, as students pay visit to our Capital grounds their teachers will be able to provide a more historically accurate number of Minnesotans who answered the call and explain how the service of so many vets once went unacknowledged. Updating the plaque would make commemorative work more historically accurate.

The plaque was once displayed and it should be displayed once again with the corrected number of veterans from Minnesota who went to war regardless of where they were stationed. The veterans who served came from all walks of life, male and female answering the call to duty to protect the citizens of the United States and or brothers and sisters abroad who were living in a world of tyranny and dictatorship.

We are asking for a simple fix and to correct a wrong and make it more historically accurate.

Part 5 – Funding

Is funding available to pay for the proposed modification and any related restoration of the site around it? (Please describe the expected funding sources and fundraising strategy.)

The Minnesota American Legion Foundation will fund the modification request, if successful. The Legion will use Fund 50, a dedicated fund for projects such as this one. The most recent up to date quote (Great River Granite Co. out of St Cloud MN) came to $5717.38 for the plaque's manufacture. The American Legion Foundation has committed to purchase the plaque and will address the installation when a quote is received.