



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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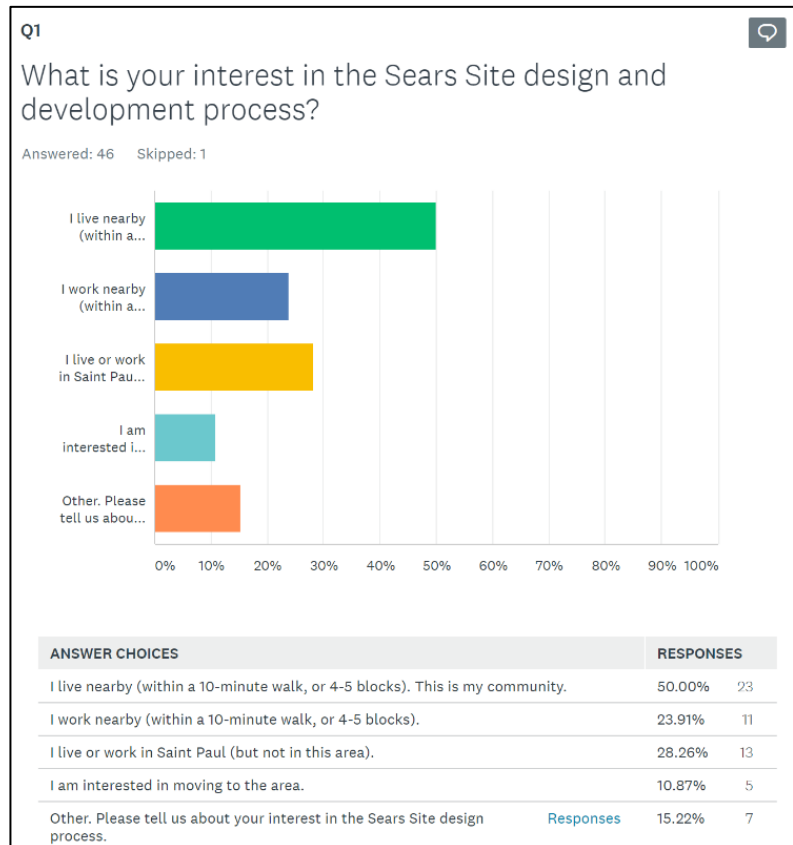
Date: September 20, 2021
To: The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Peter Musty, CAAPB Principal Planner
Subject: **Planning, Zoning and Design Review Update** (*Memo for 09.28.21 CAAPB meeting*)

This board memo contains staff member updates on projects. Board members are invited to contact staff with questions before, during or after the meeting.

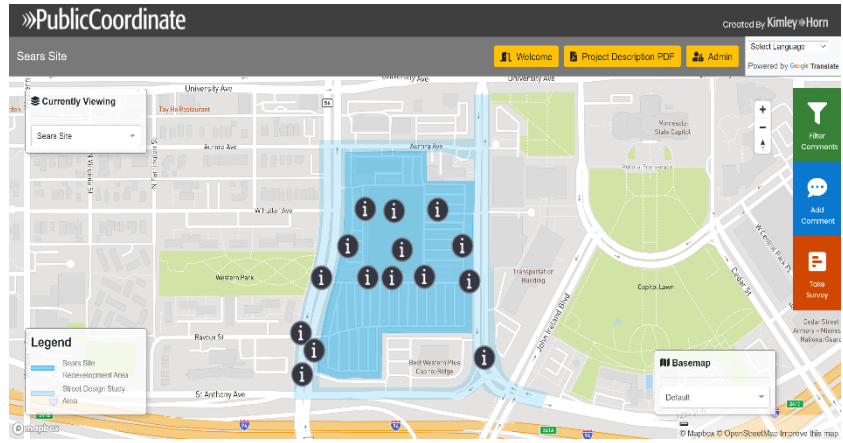
Sears Site Design Process Questions: contact Peter Musty, 612-743-5994 / peter.musty@state.mn.us

The Sears site design process is moving forward steadily. The public-private staff team of site designers, Saint Paul Planners, and CAAPB staff continue to collaborate on the four-tiered public outreach and engagement framework approved by the Board in March. The work builds on the previous framework planning and comprehensive planning, by building connections and gauging broad feedback on design choices for the urban village vision. The engagement activities will inform three iterations of ownership team’s ‘MX Master Plan’ submittal to CAAPB later in 2021/early 2022. The following is an update on progress with community engagement activities.

Community Survey – the survey was soft-launched on the CAAPB website early this summer and has garnered about 60 initial, early responses, with



half of the respondents being nearby residents, and the other half a mix of commuters, Capitol Area workers, or folks from outside the Capitol Area with special interests in the development. Please inquire to staff if you would like to watch the results building in progress, and we will send you a link.



1 The survey included an interactive map where respondents could relate their comment to a specific location.

Community Stakeholder Meetings with the following groups were held in Spring and Summer 2021.

1. Mayor Carter, Councilmember Thao and Noecker’s offices (briefing)
2. Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (Board Meeting)
3. Capitol River Council (Development Review Committee)
4. Capitol Ridge / Best Western (ownership: Wheelhouse Capitol)
5. Frogtown Neighborhood Association (staff coordination)
6. Capitol Heights Block Club (regular meeting)
7. Summit University Planning Council (staff coordination)
8. Technical consultation w/ City of Saint Paul staff (stormwater and utilities)
9. Technical consultation w/ City of Saint Paul staff (traffic and mobility)
10. Good Neighbor Center (411 Rice)
11. Frogtown Neighborhood Association (regular Board Meeting)
12. Christ on Capitol Hill Lutheran Church (regular Council Meeting)
13. City Council Policy Session (CAAPB staff participation in update on large developments)
14. Ravoux Resident Council (Ravoux Hi-Rise)
15. Technical work sessions w/ Minnesota Department of Transportation, City, Metro Transit and County reps (street design, traffic and environmental)
16. Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT)
17. Capitol Region Watershed District
18. Greater Saint Paul Building Owners & Managers Association (BOMA): Government Affairs Committee
19. Open House w/Ravoux Resident Council and St Paul Housing Agency (Ravoux Hi-Rise)
20. Minnesota Governmental Relations Council
21. Fall 2021 (tbd) – continued community stakeholder interactions

Research – the developer is completing market research in 2021 to help inform block sizes and building types they will propose. The City is in the midst of studies addressing its citywide capacities for Tax Increment Financing (TIF), affordable housing assistance, and anti-displacement tools. CAAPB is co-leading studies in partnership with Capitol Region Watershed District (described in more detail below) which will generate baseline information and ideas for the Sears Site. CAAPB staff also hope to establish the internal capacity to study Capitol Area neighborhood impacts of the development on Capitol Area housing choice and diversity, and on our commercial areas in regard to the potential impact of new investment on existing businesses.

Community wide panel discussions – Coming soon. The developer/owner (Seritage) has asked that the engagement team slow down the process as they make a shift in strategic thinking for the Seritage portfolio of sites across the country. Locally, Seritage is watching how markets are adjusting as the pandemic plays out as they listen to input from the local community and stakeholders and continue to study the site’s technical issues. They hope to release drawings in the coming months, and with that will be asking for specific community reactions and to elevate community discussions.

Kimley Horn remains the local lead firm working closest with CAAPB staff and City point persons. Staff will invite two new national team members (with background in mixed urban housing) to a near-future meeting so they can meet CAAPB members in person. Rest assured, Seritage has said that Saint Paul Sears site continues to rate highly in its national list of property redevelopment opportunities due to its location; the local market; and the planning framework and process set in place at CAAPB and the City.

What Sears Site Design Shifts May We See Based on Input and Research in 2021?

Drawings anticipated in the near future will allow Seritage and Kimley Horn to articulate specifically how 2021 stakeholder input, the pandemic, and their market research have impacted the site plan. However, a recent update with CAAPB and City staff from the Seritage team made it possible to share this broad summary of where they are:

- **A mixed urban village with green street connections and green space is still supported in the community and by developer.** However, more options may come forward than a single green space, and there may be...
- **More focus on broad residential mix vs a broad commercial mix.** Community is asking for more and more affordable living choices in Saint Paul and along Central Corridor. And luckily, the market research and commuting trends match what is being heard from community: there is more housing need than the demand (or desire) for new office space, especially in this location. Concepts for entertainment or office may be reduced in the next (first formal) version of the plan. As a result, the next plan may show that some blocks get smaller, and the housing types in the plan may increase and diversify, ranging from 3 – 6 stories.
- **Safe crossings and street design along Rice and Marion are big opportunities.** The community, the developer’s site design team, and various public works agencies are aligned on this.

The developer hopes for a first design plan later this fall or winter. The overall process and schedule will continue to be tracked at [CAAPB’s Sears Site Design Process webpage](#). Regular updates will be brought to the Board.

Saint Paul City School Questions: contact Peter Musty

Following CAAPB approvals earlier this year, the school design and development team obtained conditional site plan approval from the City and now remain in collaboration on final revisions to address technical details ahead of receipt of final City permitting. On completion with City, they will apply/receive CAAPB’s Certificate of Design Compliance, a final step required to ensure that City and CAAPB approvals are in alignment. Final land sales have been negotiated with League of Minnesota Cities and City of Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Construction start is scheduled for 2021 with goal of opening for (or during) 2022-23 school year.

Bethesda Shelter Questions: contact Peter Musty

Shortly after December 2020 Board approvals, Ramsey County opened the doors at [Bethesda Shelter](#). The facility provides 100+ beds (now at full capacity) along with 24/7 services for those experiencing homelessness. The CAAPB permit for the shelter runs through spring 2022. The facility is also permitted for an additional 60 beds for COVID respite, but the demand has been very low for respite care, with between 1-5 people nightly. Ramsey County has now partnered with The Salvation Army to lead day-to-day operations and management.

A key condition of CAAPB approval was the convening of a regular group on monthly basis. The **Bethesda Good Neighbor Group has met monthly since December – and features reporting by** Ramsey County leads, the contracted Shelter director, Shelter security contractor, M Health Fairview representative, Saint Paul Police Department, Capitol Security, and a range of stakeholder representatives from the community. Discussion and questions surround shelter operations, relevant neighborhood and resident safety issues, public safety statistics, physical improvements, communication and information sharing, and community building opportunities. CAAPB's Peter Musty facilitates the group with Pastor Joy McDonald Coltvet of Christ on Capitol Hill Lutheran Church and Hannah Hills of Capitol Heights Block Club. [Download the group's 5x8 Informational Flyer for printing and distribution or for circulation to neighbors and community networks.](#) On May 20th, followed up by a meeting in August, Pastor Joy and group member Londel French of Education Minnesota coordinated 'Good Neighbor Training' to increase understanding of issues commonly faced by our unhoused community members.

Looking forward: Another condition of Board approval was that the owner (MHealth Fairview) come forward by December 2021 with a statement regarding plans for the facility after May 2022, when permits and leases expire. **CAAPB Staff looks forward to bringing you an update on long range Bethesda reuse very soon.**

Implementing the Comprehensive Plan Questions: contact Peter Musty

Implementation of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan policies will take many years, but it starts in 2021. There are several tracks that continue, 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 or even to advise on steering committees or for discussions with community.

Planning	Sponsor/Lead Agency	CAAPB role	Timing
Sears MX District Plan	public/private team (Developer, CAAPB, City)	process and review lead	underway
Commemorative Works Policy	Task Forces>CAAPB	lead	underway
Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study and Strategic Framework Plan	CRWD	co-lead	2021 start
Capitol Mall Design Framework	CAAPB (w Dept of Administration)	lead	2022?
Rethinking I-94	MNDOT	committee(s)	underway (2018 start)
Downtown Commons Study (off-shoot of Rethinking 1-94)	MNDOT	steering	2021 start
BRT Station Area Planning: Rush Line (Purple Line)	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	steering	late 2021 start
Update to Rules Governing Zoning and Design	CAAPB	lead	2022?
Capitol Heights Development Framework	CAAPB (leveraging Station Area Planning process)	lead	2022?
BRT Station Area Planning: Robert Rice Line	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	steering	2023?
Capitol River Council Development Committee	CRC	staff has seat	ongoing

SHORT PRESENTATION at Sept 28th CAAPB meeting

Capitol Area Stormwater Study/Strategic Planning

Questions: contact Peter Musty

The Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) and CAAPB are partnering with a goal of facilitating baselining, strategies, best practices, and implementation of four planning efforts identified in the Comprehensive Plan: The Capitol Mall Development Framework, the Capitol Heights Development Framework, The Sears Site MX Master Plan, and visioning for the Capitol Rice Corridor. The work beginning later this year will include analysis of the Capitol Area's overall sub-watershed, its current conditions, and will baseline stormwater patterns. This information will inform creation of a framework of district level practices and interventions that will help to solve identified stormwater management problems. The study will also include development of strategic actions focused on the four planning and design initiatives mentioned above. Next steps:

1. Anna Eleria, Planning, Projects & Grants Division Manager for CRWD and Mark Doneaux, Executive Director of CRWD, will be present September 28th to speak about the planning and can answer any questions you may have.
2. A consultant will be contracted and funded through CRWD.
3. A steering committee will be formed of key stakeholders in the district to review progress on the plan and advise.
4. CRWD and CAAPB Staff will return to the Board when work is further along for updates, and it is possible that staff will ask the Board to review and approve elements of the study or strategies developed.



To assist CRWD staff in demonstrating support for full funding to their Board, CAAPB staff have offered to suggest a resolution to the Board in support of the plan:

Suggested Language of Board Resolution:

The **Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board** (Board) wishes to express appreciation to the **Capitol Region Watershed District** for the opportunity to partner on the **Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study and Strategic Framework Plan** (exact naming subject to change). The Board has been made aware of the extent of the work, recognizes its potential outcomes, and is hopeful it will result in critical foundational work for district level improvements to watershed and stormwater management in the Capitol Area. The Board also recognizes and supports the intent to involve a diversity of stakeholders who can provide a variety of expertise and perspectives to this project. The Board authorizes staff to contribute the time necessary to support the work, and is further appreciative to CRWD's sponsorship of their staff time and the work of a consultant team.