



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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Date: Updated August 11, 2022
To: The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Peter Musty, CAAPB Principal Planner
Subject: **Planning, Zoning and Design Review Update** *(Memo for 08.24.22 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 board meeting.** In this update: St Paul City School Under Construction; Sears Site Predevelopment Design Process; Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study; and Chart: Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

Under Construction: Saint Paul City School

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

Staff continues to work with school director Dr. Meg Cavalier and her development team. Following CAAPB approvals in 2021 and groundbreaking last fall, the building is now under construction.



Photo looking south at three story academic wing facing Marion near between university and Sherburne (foreground).

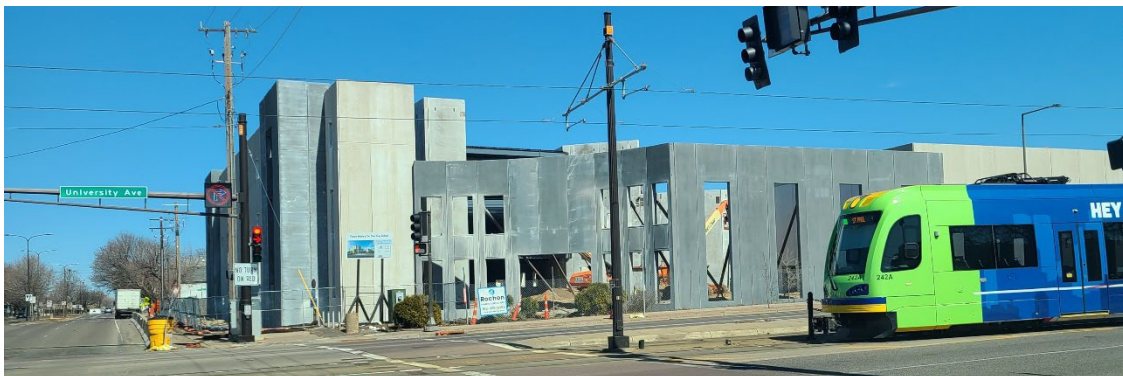


Photo looking north at "corner plaza entry" at Marion and University near lobby, offices and café.

Still on Pause: Sears Site Design Process Questions: contact Peter Musty

The Sears site design process is currently within an official pause since March 2nd, called by the owner Seritage Growth Properties (<https://www.seritage.com/>).

The latest status update:

- Staff had a discussion with Seritage leads following the publishing of [this June 28 article](#) (CoStar online) regarding property ownership moves nationwide and their REIT status. They confirmed that the REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) status of the company has changed to C-Corporation, giving Seritage more flexibility with new developments. This has to do with requirement to issue earnings in dividends as a REIT. Their objective is to sell off up to 40 of their existing retail sites nationally, allowing them to focus on several larger redevelopment sites such as the site in Saint Paul. They reiterated commitment to resuming development planning soon but for now remain on pause with this site in St Paul – which as they related has to do with uncertainties in Saint Paul as much as the larger changes as a company. It is clear that increasingly, as their pause extends, public information and engagement around the design of the larger vision will need to be rebooted.

Otherwise, the following **information Staff provided to you in April 2022** remains true:

“Seritage continues to evaluate its redevelopment opportunities for the former Sears site in light of new restrictions. We remain committed to the site and aim to have an updated concept in the coming months, at which time we’ll work with the CAAP board and City on public engagement.”

- Seritage leads visited St. Paul in December 2021 and toured the site, meeting with CAAPB/City staff and about five stakeholder groups. At that time, based on both their internal market research and community input, there was indication that Seritage was favoring more residential focus (less office) in the urban village mix, but the underlying small block urban village vision (with a central green) would remain intact. In 2022, Seritage team activities slowed, due in part to their increasing concerns centered around the status of the city-wide rent control issue and how that might impact delivering residential choices at the Sears site. Seritage called for a formal pause on public or private design and engagement activity as of March 2nd, 2022.
- The public-private staff team of site designers, Saint Paul Planners, and CAAPB staff is still intact and remain in general contact. According to Seritage and local engineering lead Kimley Horn, the engagement activities is still intended to inform three iterations of the ownership team’s ‘MX Master Plan’ submittal to CAAPB. The last drawings issued to staff, however, are still the March 2021 renderings that we’ve shared with the Board and the public and are on the CAAPB webpage.
- The four-tiered public outreach and engagement framework (a. community meetings, b. survey, c. design reviews of new drawings, and d. community topical discussions), approved by the Board in March of 2021, remains intact. However, engagement has only been partially implemented due to the delays in receipt of any new design revisions/drawings for the community to review.

- According to Seritage leads, the designs that eventually come forward will be largely consistent with the vision submitted in 2021, with more of a housing focus in response to market conditions and community input. The public realm and community space framework will build on the previously approved framework planning and comprehensive planning, which calls for a walkable block pattern of a range of uses within an ‘urban village’ vision.
- CAAPB staff memos provided at each Board Meeting (since Seritage visited Board Meeting in March 2021), have traced the progress of stakeholder meetings in 2021 – that information along with the overall process and schedule will continue to be tracked at [CAAPB’s Sears Site Design Process webpage](#).



John Ireland Bridge Repair and Reconstruction: Planning Underway

Questions: contact Peter Musty

MNDOT is initiating a planning and design process for the John Ireland freeway bridge, which is due for structural repair. CAAPB staff and Advisors will assist MndOT in gathering input of immediate stakeholders. **The gatehouses (identified in the red circles in the photo below) are not included in the project**, and MndOT has expressed interest in keeping any new bridge details within the character of the landscape design vision established within the mall design framework established via large competition in the 1990’s. New design changes necessary will be tracked for approval. Updates will be brought to the Board throughout the process.

Infrastructure Planning: Multiple Projects Ongoing in Capitol Area

Questions: contact Peter Musty

With three more presented in January to the Board, CAAPB planning activity is back 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.

Implementing the Comprehensive Plan Questions: contact Peter Musty

Updated for August 2022 Board Meeting. Implementation of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan policies is underway. 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 will be offered chances to observe, participate in, or advise steering committees or community discussions.

Planning	Sponsor/Lead Agency	CAAPB role	Timing
Sears MX District Plan	public/private team (Developer, CAAPB, City)	process and review lead	paused
Commemorative Works Policy (Update to <i>Rules</i>)	Task Forces>CAAPB	lead	ongoing
Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study	CRWD	co-lead	Ongoing, Fall Technical Advisory Group kickoff and tour
Rethinking I-94	MNDOT	committee(s)	ongoing (2018 start)
Downtown Commons Study (off- shoot of Rethinking 1-94)	MNDOT	steering	ongoing
BRT Station Area Planning: Rush Line (Purple Line)	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	Point person for Station Area Planning and on Technical Advisory Committee	ongoing
Summit Ave. Regional Trail Master Plan	City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation	Technical Advisory Committee	ongoing
Capitol Mall Design Framework	CAAPB (w Dept of Administration)	lead	2023?
Capitol Heights Development Framework	CAAPB (leveraging Station Area Planning process)	lead	2023?
Update to <i>Rules Governing Zoning and Design</i>	CAAPB	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 (Clapp- Smith)	ongoing