



## Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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Date: October 3, 2025  
To: Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board  
From: Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Executive Secretary, CAAPB

**RE: AGENDA ITEM #7 – Capitol Mall Design Framework Implementation – Phase 1 Update and Recommendation for Additional Tree Planting in the Upper Mall**

### Background

In May 2025, the Board approved Phase 1 of the Capitol Mall Design Framework (CMDf), which included schematic designs for ADA/Universal Design sidewalks in the Upper Mall. This action represented an important first step toward implementing the CMDf's vision of creating a more inclusive, accessible, and welcoming Capitol Mall.

Since that approval, all trees planted in the Upper Mall have been consistent with the schematic designs and planting layouts endorsed by the Board. These plantings support the CMDf's policy guidance to expand tree canopy, improve visitor comfort, and enhance ecological resilience, while also respecting the historic context of the Capitol Mall.

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### Current Issue

In summer 2025, the Department of Administration, working in collaboration with arborists and reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), developed a 20-tree planting plan for the Upper Mall. Of these:

- **12 trees have already been planted** in alignment with the approved sidewalk design and have been verified to have no impacts to the viewsheds of the Capitol.
- **8 additional trees remain unplanted**, as their proposed locations conflict with the previously approved Phase 1 sidewalk alignment.

While these 8 trees do not conform to the original sidewalk schematic, they would provide important canopy expansion benefits consistent with CMDf planting strategies. SHPO has reviewed the full 20-tree plan and determined that no adverse effect to viewsheds of the Capitol would result from these plantings.

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### Analysis

- **CMDf Policy Alignment:** The CMDf directs us to increase tree canopy, enhance visitor comfort, and support a sustainable, climate-adapted landscape while preserving viewsheds and ensuring safety.
- **Accessibility Commitment:** The Board's approval of ADA/Universal Design sidewalks remains a central component of the CMDf. While the original Phase 1 schematic proposed a specific alignment, ADA and universal accessibility goals can be achieved through alternate means and future project phases across the Mall and broader Capitol Area.

- **Balance of Objectives:** Approving these 8 trees allows us to achieve canopy and environmental goals now, while continuing to advance accessibility improvements in parallel (see attached design).

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## Recommendation

I recommend that the Board:

1. **Approve planting of the 8 additional trees** in the Upper Mall as soon as feasible, consistent with the Department of Administration's 20-tree plan and SHPO review.
2. **Affirm the CMDF's dual commitment** to both tree canopy expansion and ADA/Universal Design.
3. **Acknowledge flexibility in implementation of both, 1. and 2.;** that universal accessibility and tree canopy expansion need not be mutually exclusive, and that alternative alignments and design strategies beyond those detailed in previously approved schematics for the Upper Mall may be brought forward that seek to balance ADA/universal accessibility goals with expansion of canopy.

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## Next Steps

- Upon Board approval, Administration staff will proceed with planting the 8 trees as soon as feasible.
- Staff will return to the Board later with updates on subsequent Phase 1 implementation, including an additional tree planting strategy throughout the Capitol Mall.

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## Suggested Board Resolution

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board ("Board") authorizes the planting of eight (8) additional trees in the Upper Mall as part of the Capitol Mall Design Framework (CMDF) Phase 1 CMDF Implementation Project, part of a larger twenty-tree plan developed by the Department of Administration based on previously approved schematics. The Board appreciates the State Historic Preservation Office determinations that the planting plan will have **no adverse impacts** on the visibility to and from the south (front) façade of the Capitol building. The Board authorizes the Executive Secretary to coordinate with the Department of Administration to proceed with planting these eight trees as soon as practical. The Board also affirms:

1. support for expansion of tree canopy across the Mall, campus, and Capitol Area to enhance human comfort, ecological resilience, and beauty, while seeking to preserve views of historic resources and ensuring public safety;
2. commitment to investing in the expansion of ADA/Universal Design, including to the circulation paths and programmable spaces of the Upper Mall;
3. flexibility in the implementation of both 1. and 2.; that universal accessibility and tree canopy expansion need not be mutually exclusive, and that alternative alignments and design strategies beyond those detailed in previously approved schematics for the Upper Mall may be brought forward that seek to balance ADA/universal accessibility goals with expansion of canopy.

The Board also asserts that approval of this resolution is limited to the planting of the eight additional trees in the Upper Mall that deviate from previously approved schematics. In its future decisions, the Board maintains full commitment to both **tree canopy expansion** and **universal accessibility** as complementary goals of the Capitol Mall Design Framework.

## Attachment

**Attachment A:** CMDF Upper Mall Tree Study\_2025 09 19