



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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Date: May 23rd, 2025
To: Members of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Executive Secretary, CAAPB
Peter Musty, Principal Planner and Administrator of the Rules for Zoning and Design, CAAPB

RE: AGENDA ITEM #7 - Legislative and Other Project Updates

Update on Legislative Session

CAAPB staff and Legislators worked this session to extend the deadline of the Capitol Mall Design Framework Implementation fund, move forward the Vitality Task Force recommendations and release the funds from the Vitality Account. Of the \$5m initially available from the Vitality Account, only \$3m carried forward while the other \$2m was returned to the General Fund for other Legislative directives. The CAAPB was also included in a the Department of Military Affairs and Department of Veterans Affairs bill ([Chapter 30 – SF 1959](#)) for a Commemorative Work for Gold Star and Blue Star families.

In the final State Government bill language ([Chapter 39 – SF3045](#)), three items impacting CAAPB were signed into law in 2025:

- 1) CAAPB received the Governor recommended operating increase ([Chapter 39, Article 1, Section 12](#)).
- 2) The Capitol Mall Design Framework Implementation Fund (\$5m) which expired on December 31, 2024, was extended to June 30, 2027, to continue work of implementing the Capitol Mall Design Framework ([Chapter 39, Article 1, Section 39](#)). CAAPB staff will provide an update on how funds will be spent at the next CAAPB meeting.
- 3) The Vitality Account plan (\$3m) was approved to partner with Ramsey County Sheriff's office to implement the Vitality goals of public safety and livability within CAAPB with a focus specifically on public safety, youth and family programming, and street and neighborhood cleanup and ambassadors ([Chapter 39, Article 1, Section 45](#)).

\$3,000,000 in fiscal year 2026 is appropriated from the Capitol Area community vitality account to the commissioner of administration for a grant to Ramsey County for the Ramsey County sheriff to implement a coordinated public safety and livability plan in the Capitol Area. The plan must be developed in partnership with the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board and their community partners to improve the livability, economic health, and safety of communities within the Capitol Area excluding the state-owned buildings and state leased-to-own buildings in the Capitol Area. The coordinated effort must focus specifically on public safety, youth and family programming, and street and neighborhood cleanup and ambassadors. The Ramsey County

sheriff must consult the commissioner of public safety in all matters involving the Capitol complex prior to the expenditure of these funds. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2029.

CAAPB staff will work with Ramsey County Sheriff's office to finalize the Vitality plan specifics and return to the CAAPB for consultation and review.

More background information on Capitol Area Community Vitality Account:

- **Task Force Report** (approved by CAAPB and referred to legislature March 15, 2024):
https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Item%201%20-%20CAAPB%20Vitality%20Task%20Force%20Recommendations_tcm1087-614376.pdf
- **CAAPB Vitality tracking page:**
<https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/vitality/>
- **Background memo** (outlining the scope of the Community Vitality Task Force):
[mn.gov/caapb/assets/Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force %2B Account - CAAPB Memo July 2023_tcm1087-586125.pdf](https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Capitol%20Area%20Community%20Vitality%20Task%20Force%20Account%20-%20CAAPB%20Memo%20July%202023_tcm1087-586125.pdf)

In the final Department of Military Affairs and Department of Veterans Affairs bill ([Chapter 30 – SF 1959](#)), one item impacting CAAPB was signed into law in 2025:

- 1) CAAPB received direction to go through the Commemorative Works process to establish a Gold Star and Blue Star family Commemorative Work on the Capitol Mall ([2025 Session Law, Chapter 30, Article 2, Section 14](#)).

Subdivision 1. Purpose.

The state of Minnesota wishes to honor and recognize the service and sacrifices of Gold Star and Blue Star families.

Subd. 2. Memorial plaque.

The commissioner of administration shall place a memorial plaque in the court of honor on State Capitol grounds to recognize the service and sacrifices of Minnesota's Gold Star and Blue Star families. The process for determining design and location of the Gold Star and Blue Star memorial will follow the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board commemorative works rules under Minnesota Rules, part 2400.2703. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board shall select a design from the submitted designs to use as a basis for final production. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board must include the commissioner of veterans affairs on the design review committee established under Minnesota Rules, part 2400.2703. The memorial design must be furnished by the person or group who submit the design at no cost to the state.

CAAPB staff will work with Commissioner of Veterans Affairs and return to the CAAPB for an update.

Capitol Mall Design Framework Implementation – Update

Thanks to the Department of Administration, the Tribal Flag Plaza resumed construction earlier this spring. Eight white pines have been planted, and a ceremony was held with tribal elders prior to their planting. At the base of each flagpole, two plants selected by each tribe—facilitated by Patina Park in the Governor’s Office—will soon be planted. The installation of granite pavers will follow shortly. This important progress was made possible by funding provided this spring by the Department of Administration.

With the recent extension of project funding, CAAPB will need to renew efforts to complete *Phase 1A implementation* for the Upper Mall as approved by the Board in May 2024. Some review of priorities is necessary in light of a new proposal received from the Department of Administration (Admin) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to plant 8 (eight) trees in the upper mall that do not conform with CAAPB approved Capitol Mall Design Framework plans (10 of the 18 trees conform to the plan and have been authorized by staff to move forward and be planted immediately).

The plan submitted by Admin and SHPO is also being reviewed for alignment with the [Board-approved Phase 1 CMDf implementation](#)—particularly the policy direction prioritizing Universal Accessibility standards to modernize and enhance the Upper Mall.

A primary area of conflict concerns the proposed placement of trees along arterial sidewalks. While these plantings would provide valuable shade, improve visitor comfort, and meet key CMDf policy goals around creating a welcoming environment, they would also impact the future ADA-accessible sidewalk alignments that were approved by the Board in May 2024.

To address this, CAAPB staff form a working group composed of selected Board members, Advisors, and staff. This group will be tasked with developing an approach to the upper mall that meets the Board’s accessibility priorities with the CMDf goals of comfort, welcoming, and shade.

DESIGN UNDERWAY: Redesign of Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street from Pennsylvania to John Ireland)

Update: Public Works and Planning staff from Ramsey County, MnDOT, City, and CAAPB are partnering to conduct design and implementation. There have been two meetings of the Project Management team. CAAPB Staff (Musty) is attending meetings twice a month and is providing the interdisciplinary team policy, studies, and community surveys, and is summarizing recent studies that embody CAAPB priorities in our Comp Plan, stormwater management, urban design, public realm safety, CMDf, and mobility.

Background: A major initiative of the *2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area*, ([profiled in Chapter \(Principle\) 4](#)) was to transform the “Capitol Rice Corridor” (includes portion of Como, Rice, 12th Street across interstate to St. Peter).



The project was enabled by a \$25 million provision from the 2023 MN State Legislature, appropriated to Department of Transportation (but just for Rice Street itself – **the length shown in green above**) to include collaborative work with City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Metropolitan Council, State of Minnesota, and, of course, the CAAPB. The project must include implementation of a multi-modal (mobility) hub at University and Rice. (Legislation details can be found in [June 2023 Board Memo](#).) Appropriation is available until June of 2029. A project webpage will soon be available.

State Office Building Update

The State Office Building Renovation and Addition continues to progress. The addition is in progress with structural steel, roofing and concrete block work underway. The original building construction continues with new roof systems, windows and interior wall framing. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing system continue to advance.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: New *Temporary* Green Space at Former Ford Building and Lot C

In October 2023, CAAPB approved zoning permitting for the Department of Administration’s plan to demolish the building and implement an enclosure retaining tunnel access and basic landscaping. The work proceeded and the building has been demolished. Site work including a basic phase of site restoration and construction of the tunnel enclosure has gone forward. Elements from the façade’s doorway were salvaged for potential later reuse. As approved by the Board, a temporary green space will be formed on the old Ford site and now is proposed to be extended as a temporary green space to Rice Street. The overall parking spaces offered on the modified Lot C will now drop from 206 spaces to 153 spaces.



The new condition of green space has been memorialized in permitting as a temporary condition until both the Rice Street project and site redevelopment can occur. The Capitol Mall Design Framework will also provide guidance for the long-range disposition of the space in context of site redevelopment by formatting site redevelopment guidelines.

The project otherwise reduces surface parking, adds green spaces, and the underlying land use of Lot C as a surface parking facility will not be changing with the improvements. CAAPB previously approved the portion of green east of Lot C in Fall of 2023. Even as a temporary condition, investments in reduction of surface parking and addition of green bring Lot C closer to compliance with Comprehensive Plan. There is currently not a plan by FMD to permit the space for events, but the surface has been made more level to achieve accessibility standards and to provide flexibility in the near future in case programming needs change.

Commemorative Works Applications

For the June Board Meeting, updates to active Commemorative Works applications (Pillbox, USS Ward Gun, EMS Memorial) will be provided in separate memos.

World War I Plaque

The World War I plaque is an existing memorial on the Capitol Court of Honor, that commemorates 57,413 Minnesotans who fought abroad during World War I.



In February 2019, during the 91st session, bill [HF 810](#) was passed authorizing the replacement of the existing plaque with a new plaque that will take into account all Minnesota veterans who fought during World War I, both abroad and at home. The legislation authorizes the CAAPB to solicit design submissions for the new plaque from the public.

On January 9, 2025, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, through Cole Trace, its Legislative Liaison, reached out to the CAAPB Executive Secretary to inform the Board of the Minnesota American Legion Foundation's intention to foot the bill for the installation of new plaque in the Court of Honor per HF 810.

The CAAPB Executive Secretary met with Mike Maxa, the adjutant for the MN American Legion Foundation to discuss the intention to replace the World War I plaque considering the coming into effect of the [Minnesota Rules 2400.2703](#) in 2022. From the discussion, it was agreed that MN American Legion Foundation will submit a Commemorative Work application for modification of an existing work on the Capitol

Ground for the World War I Plaque, whilst the discussion on how to align the 2019 legislation and new Commemorative Works rules is underway.

The MN American Legion Foundation is currently working on submitting the application, with continued guidance from CAAPB staff.

Blue Star Gold Star Memorial

On February 17, 2025, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), through Jon Kelly, its Director of Government Affairs, reached out to the CAAPB Executive Secretary to inform the Board and request input on a policy item in the Governor's HF2444 budget bill for the department, authorizing a Blue Star Gold Star Families Memorial in the Court of Honor. "Blue Star Families is a term used to refer to the immediate family members of active-duty service members in the United States military. This tradition dates back to World War I when families displayed banners with a blue star to represent a loved one serving in the armed forces."

"The term 'Gold Star Family' originated during World War I when families displayed service flags with blue stars representing their loved ones serving in the military. If a service member died, the blue star was replaced with a gold star, signifying their ultimate sacrifice. This allowed communities to recognize the immense loss suffered by these families."

Following discussions, it was then agreed that CAAPB's role per Minnesota Rules 2400.2703 will be incorporated into the HF2444 budget bill language. The bill has since been passed by the Senate (May 17, 2025), therefore becoming session Law Chapter 30, Section 14., Subdivision 2., and currently reads as follows;

*Subd. 2. **Memorial plaque.** The commissioner of administration shall place a memorial plaque in the court of honor on State Capitol grounds to recognize the service and sacrifices of Minnesota's Gold Star and Blue Star families. The process for determining design and location of the Gold Star and Blue Star memorial will follow the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board commemorative works rules under Minnesota Rules, part 2400.2703. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board shall select a design from the submitted designs to use as a basis for final production. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board must include the commissioner of veterans affairs on the design review committee established under Minnesota Rules, part 2400.2703. The memorial design must be furnished by the person or group who submit the design at no cost to the state.*

The bill was presented to the Governor on May 20, 2025, and is expected to become an official session law in summer 2025.

Updates on Off-Campus Capitol Area Projects

Former Sears Site

New owners continue to build capacity to implement the transit-oriented urban village vision for the site.

The current owners, Asian Media Access, led by Ange Hwang in partnership with Asian American Business Alliance, are currently promoting a range of ideas for long-range reuse of the old Sears building as a centerpiece of larger site redevelopment. They have sought guidance from CAAPB and City staff as they build a development team to support the ownership and design team.

Since the ‘big box’ pattern of the old Sears is currently not legal by Zoning regulations nor Comp Plan policy, introduction of that pattern as a first phase would require amendment to the Comprehensive Plan (and extend the process considerably) unless they also can present an implementable site redevelopment plan that also meets requirements of the Capitol Rice Development Framework (2040 Comp Plan) and before they apply for specific approvals of building projects within the Rules for Zoning and Design.

Lastly, their team is building support to explore technical barriers and development-related environmental studies and infrastructure costs connected with the current site and building realities, and that is taking time. As always, staff will update the Board and the community with information as soon as we are able.

Review: Sears closed in 2018. Subsequent planning led to final approval of the Capitol Rice Development Framework in 2021, confirming the longstanding transit-oriented walkable vision for an urban village, reestablishing an urban pattern of mixed uses reconnecting the neighborhood across the site around a central green space. Seritage, as the former owner, participated with CAAPB and the City to engage the community on design alternatives for the urban village vision as found on CAAPB website. The process affirmed the public realm vision of smaller blocks within a network of tree-lined streets with a new central park, and the market research reported by owner and community input steered land use toward the predominantly mixed residential demand (vs new office). In early 2022 came an investor-related delay due to uncertainty around Saint Paul’s new rent control regulations. In late 2022, Seritage decided to list the site for sale. The site was bought by the current owners after initial purchase by another entity.

UPDATE JUNE 2025: Staff anticipates pre-application meetings to resume in summer of 2025. For more information, please contact staff.

Capitol View (at old Bethesda Hospital Site): Exterior Facades Close to Completion

Construction is underway on the new behavioral health hospital. The following update was provided to CAAPB staff by Kristian Thonvold of Fairview:

- Work on the exterior façade of the building is drawing to a close.
- Construction fencing is planned to come down in April.
- Landscaping will begin after the fencing has been removed.
- Utilities serving the building are all secured.
- Interior work will continue through to the end of construction.

Multiple Infrastructure Planning and Construction Projects Ongoing in Capitol Area

CAAPB planning activity is 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. (Questions: contact Peter Musty)

Planning	Sponsor/Lead Agency	CAAPB role	Timing
Sears Site: MX District Plan	public/private team (Developer pre-application meetings, CAAPB, City)	process and review lead	pre-application meetings just resumed
Commemorative Works Policy (2022 Update to Rules) Funded \$500K, one time sending, available thru FY27	CAAPB (working with MNHS, Administration under new Rules)	Staff receives inquiries under Rules, looking to improve process with Lindsey Dyer of MNHS	Ongoing. Handful of applications in pre-application stages, with three in varying stages formal reviews
Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study	Capitol Region Watershed District	co-lead	Complete, CAAPB accepted in March 2025
Rethinking I-94	MnDOT	policy and planning committee(s)	ongoing, alternatives being narrowed
Downtown Commons Study (off-shoot of Rethinking I-94)	MnDOT	steering	Completed Fall 2023, multi-jurisdictional staff team continues to meet
Capitol Heights Development Framework	CAAPB (leveraging Station Area Planning process)	lead	On hold. (see Station Area Planning)
BRT Station Area Planning: METRO Purple Line (Robert to Jackson)	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	Staff is on Technical Advisory Committee, Design Review Team, updates Admin and Capitol Heights reps	Station approved, delay due to alignment studies, station area planning resumed
BRT Station Design: METRO G-Line	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	Staff on Technical Advisory Committee, CAAPB approves station location and design in Capitol Area	Station locations approved by CAAPB in March 2025. Metro Transit participating in Rice Street planning and design led by Ramsey County, City and CAAPB plus partners
DESIGN UNDERWAY: \$25M Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street Redesign/Rebuild)	funds held by MnDOT for City/County/ CAAPB leads design coordination	partner, CAAPB approvals	design parameters and public

Jackson Street Rebuild (Northeastern boundary of Capitol Area)	City	Staff on PMT	Approved by CAAPB in March 2025, undergoing implementation
DESIGN UNDERWAY: 12th Street Redo (downtown across St Peter bridge, up 12 th to John Ireland)	City	Staff on PMT	Design team and engagement underway, options in vetting
UNDERWAY: \$185K Mandatory Update to Rules for Zoning and Design	CAAPB	Opticos lead consultant	ongoing in 2025. Legislative funding expires June 30, 2025.
COMPLETE: \$1 mil. Capitol Mall Design Framework (Admin. w/ \$5 mil. for implementation)	CAAPB (w/ Dept of Administration)	lead	Approved in 2024
Capitol Mall Design Framework Implementation	CAAPB (w/ Dept of Administration)	Co-lead	Funding extension by Legislature (June 30, 2027)
Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force	Task Force completed work in 2024	lead	\$3M Legislation approved, Update above.

We continue to be Busy! Staff is implementing the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the Capitol Mall Design Framework. For many items, Board Members may be offered chances to observe, participate in, or advise steering committees or community discussions.

Questions? **Please contact CAAPB Staff directly.**