



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board



204 Administration Building
50 Sherburne Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55155
651-757-1500

<https://mn.gov/caapb/>

Date: Updated February 28, 2024
To: Members of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Peter Musty, Principal Planner and Administrator of the Zoning and Design Rules, CAAPB
Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Executive Secretary, CAAPB

RE: Staff and Project Updates

Staff Update, and Office Moves

Erik Cedarleaf Dahl took on the role of Executive Secretary, CAAPB also added Cindy Kue to take on position as Office and Communications Specialist. Cindy has been a great fit and Erik, Peter and Cindy together have guided two major parallel planning projects (Capitol Mall Design Framework and Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force).

In addition, due to office consolidations and projects on campus, the CAAPB Office is being relocated again from Fifth Floor (south) of Centennial Building to a new space close by. CAAPB staff will vacate the Centennial space to make room for the MN House, who will be taking over a majority of the building (after this session) during their SOB Project. CAAPB staff, will work to find a permanent space most conducive and best suited for the work of the CAAPB, recognizing the public nature of our agency.

Update on CAAPB Comprehensive Plan Implementation Work related to 2023 Legislation for Capitol Area

Please find detailed language of all legislation provisions in the [Board Memo posted in June](#).

+ Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force and Account (\$5.15M)

A Task Force has been meeting regularly since September 2023. The Task Force (see CAAPB page: <https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/vitality/>) sunsets with release of the report that will serve to help guide investment of the appropriated \$5 million. The funding supports the work of the Task Force and has enabled us to procure contracts with Creation in Common and SDK via RFQ using the State's equity-select guidelines.

The CAAPB Consultant Team and the Task Force is eager to submit their work to CAAPB on March 18th, 2pm-3pm. There is a design for use of the \$5M Account that is based in input from over 70 direct interviews and interactions with community members.

Links

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)

Task Force Members - Chapter 53 SF3035 directs:

"The task force consists of the following members:

- (1) the Executive Secretary of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board; **Erik Cedarleaf Dahl**
- (2) one member of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, appointed by the board;
- (3) two members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker of the house, of whom one must be a member of the majority caucus of the house, and one must be a member of the minority caucus of the house; **Majority member: Representative Samakab Hussein** and **Minority member: Representative Isaac Schultz**
- (4) two members of the senate appointed by the majority leader of the senate, of whom one must be a member of the majority caucus of the senate, and one must be a member of the minority caucus of the senate; **Majority member: Senator Sandy Pappas** and **Minority member: Senator Julia E. Coleman**
- (5) four members who are residents, businesspeople, or members of local organizations in the Capitol Area, appointed by the mayor of St. Paul; and (appointed by Mayor: **Tahnea Brown, Emmanuel Donaby, Hannah Hills, Gloria Contreras-Edin**)
- (6) one member of the public appointed by the governor." **Representative María Pérez-Vega**

More Background: The Capitol Area Community Vitality Account created by the 2023 legislature is an opportunity for the CAAPB to assist our community in the shadow of Capitol directly by funding some of the priorities identified through the community-based process (including identification of cultural and community assets, stakeholder ideas and transparent reporting). Many in our community are navigating through a situation of current stress, and others would like to be ready for coming changes. Some struggle with rent or lease rates. For some there is a daily struggle for housing and food.

Through our work, long range planning, regulating zoning and design proposals and permitting, community members often assume CAAPB is a center-point in dealing with an increasing need for day-to-day solutions. Even though our Statute includes no mandate nor direct roles or responsibility in the community development arena, our statutory purpose and comp plan vision implicates us as a steward of the campus and the community.

The Vitality Account provides CAAPB with a conduit to support the community as it continue to address livability, vitality, economic viability and safety.

+ Capitol Mall Design Framework (\$6M)

See Item #2 on agenda for March 2024 meeting– the draft CMDF has been forwarded for your review and consideration.

+ Redesign of Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street from Pennsylvania to John Ireland) (\$25M)

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).



Figure 4.1: The Capitol/Rice Corridor

\$25 million in funding to advance that project (but just for Rice Street itself – **the length shown in green above**) was appropriated to Department of Transportation, 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 Board Memo](#).) Appropriation is available until June of 2029. **Update: Ramsey County has agreed to draft an RFP to begin project planning.** CAAPB met with partners to begin aligning expectations for the work.

+ State Office Building Expansion into Leif Erickson Park

As you know, following the CAAPB action determining the project to be in substantial compliance with the 2040 Comp Plan, CAAPB’s statutory authority to review and approve the rehabilitation and expansion of the State Office Building was removed by legislation.

For more information on the legislation, see previous [June Board Memo](#) now posted on CAAPB homepage. The following is the provision passed citing sections in CAAPB’s Statute 15B and Department of Administration’s Statute 16B pertaining to Commissioner’s duties to CAAPB which “do not apply”:

*“Sec. 11. **CAPITOL AREA LAND USE PROJECTS; ZONING AND DESIGN.** Minnesota Statutes, sections 15B.05, subdivision 3; 15B.06; 15B.08; and 16B.31, subdivision 4, and any rules adopted under the authority of those sections, do not apply to any project to address critical health, life safety, and security needs on the State Capitol complex and for which funds are available on or before December 31, 2023, if the primary affected tenant has given final approval to the project.”*

+ Ford Building Demolition

In October 2023, CAAPB approved zoning permitting for the Department of Administration 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 is proceeding. Elements from the façade’s doorway were salvaged for potential later reuse.

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 new owner Asian Media Access led by Ange Hwang in partnership with Asian American Business Alliance, is 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 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 St 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.

New Behavioral Health Hospital (@ old Bethesda Hospital Site): Demolition and Construction

The old Bethesda hospital is now undergoing foundation and footings and site preparation work following the Fall/Winter demolition, and the site will soon see construction of the new hospital.



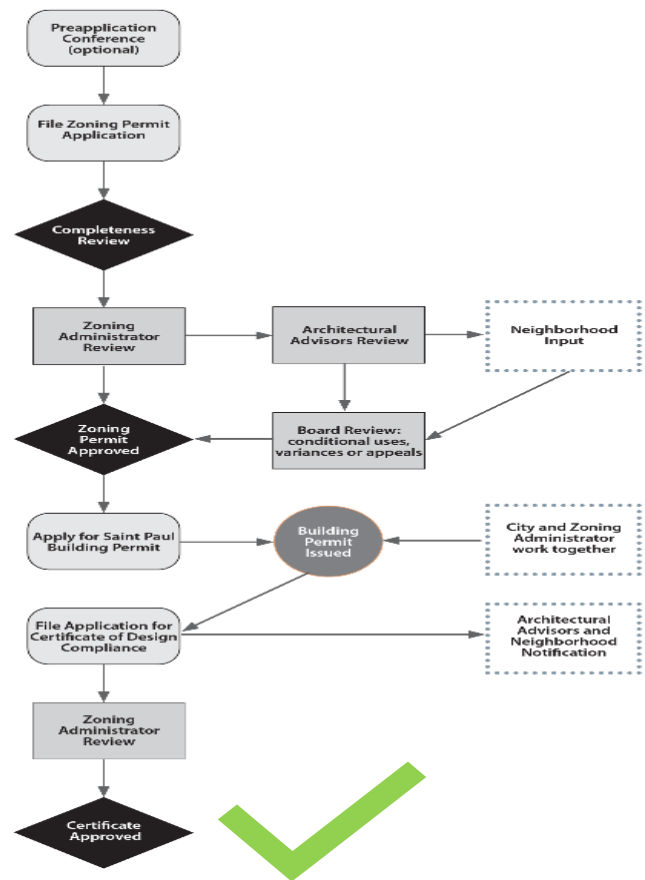
View from Como and @ Capitol Boulevard. Demolition of the former Bethesda Hospital began in late spring. Construction of the new behavioral health hospital will begin late summer or fall 2023.

New Hospital Review: The planning and design review meetings led by staff with oversight of Advisors are a hallmark of the CAAPB process.

Working with ‘good neighbor’ groups, block club and local stakeholders in an orderly design and zoning review process is the way we ensure that buildings meet carefully established land use, built form, material standards, sustainability metrics, parking ratios, mobility goals, and walkable frontage regulations. In the Capitol Area, it’s how we ensure that the Capitol Area’s comprehensive principles, as well as city and county are addressed. It includes healthy communities, energy, mobility, historic resources and economic best practices. Its how we protect trees and public spaces. Its how we ensure that historic resources are protected, and its how we ensure that the COMMUNITY values are clearly translated to others that want to invest (change) the community. It is also how our values as a Capitol Area community become embedded into projects. Undergoing the review and approval process with Fairview+Acadia ensured best practices, including:

- demonstration of highest and best land use;
- sensitivity to immediate urban context, including compliance with district frontage, height and frontage (walkability), parking and lighting standards;
- adequate provisions for traffic, parking and site circulation;
- calibration to regional climate (materials, landscaping and planting);
- reuse of materials;
- reservation of major and minor public art locations;
- careful disposition of site historic resources, including careful documentation of existing building;
- collaborative development of innovations in site stormwater practices, building energy performance;
- public streetscape enhancements and improvements including art, canopy and privately funded benches for the public;
- enhanced street landscaping;
- higher standards in building design and massing;
- site and worker mobility/access best practices.

General Application Process



The new behavioral health hospital will be the fourth major new building entitled by CAAPB in six years.

Since 2017, Fairview Acadia's new behavioral health hospital is now the fourth new building in the Capitol Area that has successfully navigated CAAPB planning, design and zoning review and approvals and through subsequent City infrastructure and building permitting. Three other buildings have also been approved by CAAPB using the same approach, including the **new clinic/shopfront** building at Rice and Como (opened 2018), the **new micro-unit apartment building** at Park and Como (2019), and the **new K-12 St Paul City School** at University and Marion (2022)!

Multiple Infrastructure Planning 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)

John Ireland Bridge Repair and Reconstruction: Planning Continues

MNDOT continues conducting a planning and design process for the John Ireland freeway bridge, which is due for structural repair. CAAPB staff and Advisors are assisting MnDOT in their effort at gathering input of community and immediate stakeholders. The gatehouses of the bridge are not affected by any part of the project, and MnDOT has expressed interest in keeping any new bridge details within the character of the landscape design vision established during the mall design framework competition in the 1990's. Discussion is still centered on functional considerations of improvements at the intersection of 12th and John Ireland. New design changes will be tracked for approval, and updates brought to the Board.

Most recently: four preliminary options have now been developed and are under review that retain the function and existing design character, including restoration of the existing grassy median (at its current width) to maintain views and to accommodate large civic events. Based on suggestions from the community, City and CAAPB, project staff are reviewing feasibility of reducing the bridge from four lanes to two, much like John Ireland north of the bridge to MLK Boulevard.

Planning	Sponsor/Lead Agency	CAAPB role	Timing
Sears Site: MX District Plan	public/private team (Developer (tbd), CAAPB, City)	process and review lead	New owner in pre-application meetings with City and CAAPB staff.
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. Several "early inquiries", but no applications yet filed under new CW Rules.
Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study	Capital Region Watershed District	co-lead	Ongoing, Fall 2022 Technical Advisory Group kickoff and tour, June 2023 TAG meeting
Rethinking I-94	MNDOT	committee(s)	ongoing (2018 start)
Downtown Commons Study (off-shoot of Rethinking 1-94)	MNDOT	steering	Completed Fall 2023.
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, planning to resume 2024-25

BRT Station Area Planning: METRO G-Line (Robert to Rice)	Ramsey County and Metro Transit	Staff on Technical Advisory Committee, CAAPB approves station location and design in Capitol Area	Station locations under planning and design development
FUNDED: \$25M Capitol Rice Corridor (Rice Street Redesign/Rebuild	funds held by MNDOT for City/County/ CAAPB leads design coordination	lead, approval	funding expires 2029
FUNDED: \$185K Mandatory Update to Rules for Zoning and Design	CAAPB		2024-2025
FUNDED: \$1 mil. Capitol Mall Design Framework (Admin. w/ \$5 mil. For implementation)	CAAPB (w/ Dept of Administration)	lead	Draft CMDF completed, currently under consideration by Board.
FUNDED: \$5.15 mil. Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force	CAAPB (broad set of appointees)	Lead, must start meetings by fall, '23	work in 2023-24, report to CAAPB in Spring 2024

Bottom Line: Staff is implementing the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Implementation of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan policies is underway, with a big boost from 2023 legislation. 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 may be offered chances to observe, participate in, or advise steering committees or community discussions.

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