Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board — Projects Summary

($ in thousands)

Project Title	Rank	Fund	Project Requests for State Funds 2026	2028	2030	Gov's Rec 2026	Gov's Planning Estimates 2028	2030
Capitol Area - Comprehensive Plan Implementation	1	GO	4,750	0	0	0	0	0
Total Project Requests			4,750	0	0	0	0	0
General Obligation Bonds (GO) Total			4,750	0	0	0	0	0

Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board — Agency Profile

https://mn.gov/caapb/

AT A GLANCE

- The Board is responsible for zoning jurisdiction, design review, and planning authority in a 60-block area around the Capitol Building.
- Two full-time, one part-time staff, and three professional advisors serve the Board.
- The Board consists of 12 members appointed as follows: four by the Governor, three by the Mayor of St. Paul, two Representatives by the Speaker of the House, two Senators by the President of the Senate, and the Lieutenant Governor as Board Chair. The Board meets five to six times a year.

PURPOSE

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB) is a small state agency with responsibilities unique to the state. Its mission is:

- To preserve and enhance the architectural integrity of the Capitol Building and area.
- To improve and protect open areas for public enjoyment.
- To develop accessible approaches to the Capitol Area for pedestrians, roadways, and mass transit.
- To establish a framework for growth in keeping with the original Cass Gilbert design.

The Board's framework of operations is a comprehensive plan and codified zoning and design rules, developed with input from stakeholders, approved by the Board, and implemented by staff. The Board coordinates its responsibilities with other state agencies, the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Capitol Region Watershed District, neighborhood planning bodies, commercial and residential property owners, developers, and other private sector professionals.

STRATEGIES

Regulation:

- MN Statute 15B. Capitol Area Planning and Preservation identifies CAAPB's regulatory responsibilities.
- Chapter 15B.03 Subd.6 grants CAAPB general rulemaking authority to adopt rules based on policy guidance in the Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area (updated in 2021).
- MN Rules Ch. 2400 govern Zoning and Design for the MN State Capitol Area (updated in 2012).
- Under MN Rules Ch. 2400, the CAAPB acts on requests for zoning permits or design review approvals for projects within the Capitol Area, within 60 days of receiving a complete application.
- A Saint Paul building permit for projects in the Capitol Area is issued only after the CAAPB has approved a zoning permit. A Certificate of Design Compliance may be required if changes occur during City review.

Development and Planning:

- Provide project-specific guidelines for Capitol Area work and encourage post construction analysis.
- Oversee a development framework and maintenance standards for the Capitol mall and its memorials.
- Conduct open and timely competitions for the design of state buildings and memorials in the Capitol Area.
- Provide open consultation with other state agencies and the City of Saint Paul.
- Initiate funding requests and promote design integrity and restoration – of the Capitol Building and other State buildings in the Capitol Area – in cooperation with the Department of Administration and the Historical Society (MNHS).

Policy:

- The 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area, updated in 2021, identifies principles, objectives, and strategies to guide all CAAPB work and rules under MN Rules Ch. 2400.

The legal authority for the CAAPB is MN Statute 15B (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=15B).

AT A GLANCE

- To upgrade, restore, and maintain the Minnesota State Capitol Building.
- To preserve and enhance the Capitol Area's unique aesthetic and historic character.
- To plan and guide the Capitol Area's future development by maintaining and periodically prescribing a framework for land use and planning via a Comprehensive Plan and accompanying Zoning Rules promulgated through the Administrative Procedures Act.

Factors Impacting Facilities or Capital Programs

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB), in its fifth decade, is served by multiple major planning frameworks to guide its work: *The Strategic Plan for Locating State Agencies* (1993, rev. 1995), its own *1998 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area* and 2009 Amendment which focuses on improvements within the Capitol Area and the *2040 Comprehensive Plan* (adopted in 2021). The CAAPB 2040 Comprehensive Plan continued to develop the long-term vision for the Minnesota State Capitol Area, guiding land use, design, mobility, sustainability, and commemorative works to create a cohesive, welcoming, and resilient civic landscape. It emphasizes pedestrian connectivity, environmental stewardship, and inclusive public spaces that honor history while supporting future growth and community vitality. The *Capitol Mall Design Framework* builds on the 2040 Comprehensive Plan by providing a more detailed vision for the public realm of the Capitol Mall. It outlines strategies for improving accessibility, circulation, and landscape character—enhancing tree canopy, stormwater management, and commemorative spaces—to create a more unified, people-centered civic experience that celebrates Minnesota's democratic and cultural heritage. The CAAPB also governs zoning and design regulations in the 60-block area around the Capitol Building through its *Rules Governing Zoning and Design for the Minnesota State Capitol Area*, which were updated in 2009.

The CAAPB completed the *2040 Comprehensive Plan* in 2021, establishing a long-term vision for the Minnesota State Capitol Area that integrates land use, urban design, mobility, sustainability, and commemorative works within the larger context of Saint Paul and the Capitol City. The plan emphasizes continued residential growth within the Capitol Area's three key sub-districts—East Capitol, Rice-University, and Summit Park—as well as the redevelopment potential of the multi-block Sears site. It also reaffirmed and expanded upon the Capitol Area's policy framework for commemorative works, first adopted in 1993, ensuring that new works reflect Minnesota's evolving history and values.

The *Capitol Mall Design Framework*, completed in 2024, builds upon the 2040 Plan by providing detailed design direction for the Mall and its public realm. It identifies strategies to enhance accessibility, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, and landscape quality—expanding tree canopy, modernizing stormwater management, improving safety and lighting, and unifying commemorative spaces into a cohesive, people-centered civic landscape.

In 2022, the CAAPB updated its Commemorative Works Rules to establish a fair and transparent process for adding, modifying, and removing commemorative works on the Capitol Mall. This update ensures that future commemorations align with contemporary values of inclusion, representation, and civic engagement, while maintaining the dignity and historic integrity of the Capitol Grounds.

Over the past several decades, the CAAPB's planning leadership has guided site selection, design competitions, and review of major public projects, including the completion of multiple state buildings envisioned in earlier plans, such as the Legislative (Senate) Office Building. In partnership with the Department of Administration, the

Board continues to oversee zoning, design review, and the public approval process prior to building permit issuance by the City of Saint Paul.

Recent efforts have also addressed public safety and accessibility, comprehensive wayfinding and signage upgrades, redesigned state parking areas, and the Capitol Complex Lighting Master Plan, which improves both aesthetics and security. The Policy for Works of Art in the Minnesota State Capitol, originally adopted in 1998 and updated in 2016, remains in effect—establishing clear standards and review processes for new art and restoration of existing works.

The CAAPB continues to coordinate closely with partners, including the City of Saint Paul, Metro Transit, Department of Administration, Capitol Region Watershed District, Ramsey County, Minnesota Department of Transportation and others on planning and design efforts to ensure the Capitol Area remains a vibrant, accessible, and enduring symbol of Minnesota's democracy.

Self-Assessment of Agency Facilities and Assets

Preserving and revitalizing the Minnesota State Capitol Building has long been a central priority for the CAAPB. After nearly a century of service, the building's systems and materials had far exceeded their useful life, prompting comprehensive restoration efforts initiated in 2001 and 2005. Working in collaboration with the Department of Administration and the Minnesota Historical Society, the CAAPB helped secure phased funding beginning in 2011 to support a full restoration of the Capitol and its surrounding grounds—ensuring the integrity and function of the People's House for another hundred years.

Today, the CAAPB's focus extends beyond preservation to enhancing and managing the broader Capitol Mall and Complex in partnership with the Department of Administration, the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Metro Transit, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Guided by *the 2040 Comprehensive Plan* and the *Capitol Mall Design Framework* completed in 2024, the Board continues to lead coordinated design and infrastructure initiatives, including the reconstruction of Rice Street, and the creation of new green spaces at the University Avenue and Rice Street intersection to improve accessibility, safety, and public experience.

The Commemorative Works Rules, updated in 2022, established a fair and transparent process for adding, modifying, or removing commemorative works on the Capitol Mall—reflecting the state's evolving values and commitment to inclusion. Under this framework, the USS Ward Gun was respectfully removed, ensuring alignment with contemporary standards for commemorative representation.

The Tribal Flag Plaza was completed in 2025, creating a dedicated space that honors and recognizes all eleven federally recognized Tribal Nations in Minnesota. Together, these initiatives—along with broader improvements to the Mall's landscape, circulation, and public spaces—embody a renewed vision for a civic realm that is both historically grounded and forward-looking.

Through these initiatives, the CAAPB continues to protect the Capitol Area's existing assets while planning for future investments that enhance safety, accessibility, and the public's connection to this symbolic heart of Minnesota. The increasing use of the Capitol Mall for events, gatherings, and commemorations underscores the ongoing need to balance open green space with future memorials—ensuring the Capitol Area remains a place of meaning, memory, and civic pride for generations to come.

Agency Process for Determining Capital Requests

An initial capital project list was developed by examining unfunded requests from previous years and assessing compatibility with the capitol area comprehensive plan and other long-range goals.

Major Capital Projects Authorized in 2024 and 2025

No capital projects from 2024 or 2025 sessions.

($ in thousands)

Capitol Area - Comprehensive Plan Implementation

AT A GLANCE

2026 Request Amount:	$4,750
Priority Ranking:	1
Project Summary:	The following are independent projects that follow the implementation plan and priorities of the Capitol Mall Design Framework (CMDF), approved in 2024 following a local, regional and statewide process engaging thousands of Minnesotans.

Project Description

#1 - Community Commons Pre-Design: Rev Dr Martin Luther King Blvd ($750k) Top community priority in approved Capitol Mall Design Framework. Includes street redesign to improve traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation; clarify parking and drop-off areas; address whether the street should follow Municipal State Aid rules, enhance stormwater management under MLK Jr. Blvd; and expand the tree canopy along the street and plaza, complemented by new seating. Design will expand stormwater infrastructure beneath MLK Jr. Blvd to capture and manage stormwater from the Upper Mall and surrounding regional areas, in coordination with the Capitol Region Watershed District, City of Saint Paul, and the Department of Administration. Funds would be shared by CAAPB and City of St Paul to conduct design work.

#2 - Wayfinding: Capitol Area ($500k—predesign) - Predesign includes developing an integrated array of upgrades to improve the visitor experience of campus following three major building projects.

- Visitor Arrival and Wayfinding Project - provides for pre-design of wayfinding system campus-wide. Includes design of permanent wayfinding and interpretive signage; environmental and cultural landmarks; spatial design features such as paving patterns, lighting (for visibility and ADA compliance), seating, planting, and landscape forms that define public gathering and circulation areas; and accessibility improvements integrated with adjacent public realm, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure.

#3 – Commemorative Circle Accessible Walkway Project: Lower Mall ($3.5M) - Includes design and construction of the new elliptical walkway to connect and organize Commemorative Works in the Lower Mall, extending the Tribal Flag Plaza walkway completed in 2025. The vision for the new Commemorative Circle includes the completion of a unifying elliptical and accessible walkway to connect and provide a needed organization for the array of works now populating the lower mall. This walkway would make the lower mall more accessible and welcoming, incorporating benches along the sidewalks, enhanced lighting, security cameras, and call boxes to improve safety and comfort for all visitors.

Project Rationale

#1 – Community Commons Pre-Design: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd ($750k)

Rationale:
This project responds directly to the Capitol Mall Design Framework's emphasis on creating a vibrant, accessible, and ecologically resilient public realm. As the top community priority, the redesign of MLK Jr. Blvd will improve multimodal circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular traffic, while clarifying parking and drop-off areas for enhanced functionality.

The project will expand the tree canopy and provide new seating, strengthening the boulevard's role as a welcoming community space and enhancing its environmental quality. Importantly, the proposed stormwater infrastructure under MLK Jr. Blvd will capture and manage runoff from the Upper Mall and surrounding regional areas, supporting CAAPB's goals for sustainable water management and collaboration with the Capitol Region Watershed District, City of Saint Paul, and Department of Administration.

By integrating circulation, ecological resilience, and public amenities, this project establishes MLK Jr. Blvd as a central, safe, and welcoming community commons while aligning with the Comprehensive Plan's objectives for connected, environmentally responsible, and people-centered design.

#2 – Wayfinding: Capitol Area Predesign ($500k)

Rationale:
Following major campus building projects, the visitor experience will require a cohesive wayfinding and interpretive system to enhance orientation, accessibility, and public engagement. This predesign effort supports CAAPB's commitment to a legible, safe, and inclusive public realm by planning an integrated network of permanent signage, cultural and environmental landmarks, spatial cues, and accessible circulation paths.

The project will address key accessibility and safety considerations, including ADA-compliant lighting, seating, and landscape design that define gathering spaces and circulation corridors. By aligning wayfinding with transit, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure, the project ensures that visitors and residents can navigate the Capitol campus with clarity and ease, improving both experience and safety.

This predesign directly implements the Comprehensive Plan's priorities for clarity of circulation, integrated public realm amenities, and accessibility, ensuring a unified visitor experience that respects the cultural and civic significance of the Capitol grounds.

#3 – Commemorative Circle Accessible Walkway Project: Lower Mall ($3.5M)

Rationale:
The Lower Mall currently hosts a growing array of commemorative works that lack a unifying spatial structure. This project addresses the Capitol Mall Design Framework's goal of creating legible, accessible, and welcoming civic spaces by designing and constructing a new elliptical walkway that extends the Tribal Flag Plaza pathway completed in 2025.

The walkway will connect and organize commemorative elements, providing a clear circulation route and enhancing public accessibility. Benches, lighting, security cameras, and emergency call boxes will create a safe and comfortable environment for visitors. By integrating universal accessibility, site amenities, and circulation clarity, the project strengthens the Mall's role as a civic gathering space that is welcoming, inclusive, and respectful of cultural significance.

This project aligns with the Comprehensive Plan's emphasis on accessibility, public engagement, and

integrated spatial design, ensuring that the Lower Mall is a coherent and meaningful environment for both visitors and community members.

Overall Alignment:
Together, these projects advance the CAAPB Comprehensive Plan and Capitol Mall Design Framework by:

- Improving mobility and accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.
- Enhancing ecological sustainability through stormwater management and urban canopy expansion.
- Strengthening visitor experience, safety, and cultural legibility via wayfinding, lighting, and security infrastructure.
- Creating cohesive, welcoming public spaces that honor the Capitol Mall's civic and commemorative significance.

Project Timeline

#1 – Community Commons Pre-Design: MLK Jr. Blvd ($750k)

- Year 1: Pre-design, site studies, community input, conceptual design
- Year 2: Refined design, engineering, approvals, final design

#2 – Wayfinding: Capitol Area Predesign ($500k)

- Year 1: Site analysis, concept development, early stakeholder feedback
- Year 2: Refined predesign, ADA/accessibility planning, final documentation

#3 – Commemorative Circle Accessible Walkway Project: Lower Mall ($3.5M)

- Year 1: Design development, community/stakeholder review, final design
- Year 2: Construction and project completion

Other Considerations

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

N/A

Description of Previous Appropriations

Project Contact Person

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Governor's Recommendation

The Governor does not recommend capital funding for this request.

($ in thousands)

Capitol Area - Comprehensive Plan Implementation

PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES

Funding Source	Six Prior Years	FY 2026	FY 2028	FY 2030
State Funds Appropriated and Requested				
General Obligation Bonds	$ 0	$ 4,750	$ 0	$ 0
State Funds Pending				
Non-State Funds Already Committed				
Non-State Funds Pending				
TOTAL	**$ 0**	**$ 4,750**	**$ 0**	**$ 0**

TOTAL PROJECT COSTS

Cost Category	Six Prior Years	FY 2026	FY 2028	FY 2030
Property Acquisition	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
Predesign Fees	$ 0	$ 1,250	$ 0	$ 0
Design Fees	$ 0	$ 500	$ 0	$ 0
Project Management	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
Construction	$ 0	$ 3,000	$ 0	$ 0
Relocation Expenses	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
One Percent for Art	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
Occupancy Costs	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
Inflationary Adjustment	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
TOTAL	**$ 0**	**$ 4,750**	**$ 0**	**$ 0**

IMPACT ON STATE OPERATING COSTS

Cost Category	FY 2026	FY 2028	FY 2030
IT Costs	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
Operating Budget Impact ($)	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
Operating Budget Impact (FTE)	0	0	0

SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR DEBT SERVICE PAYMENTS

	Amount	Percent of Total
General Fund	$ 4,750	100 %
User Financing	$ 0	0 %

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	
The following requirements will apply to projects after adoption of the bonding bill.	
Has the project owner requesting state funds reviewed and agree to meet the applicable capital requirements listed in the "Statutory Requirements" below and in the "Capital Budget Requirements" section of the MMB Capital Budget Instruction documents?	Yes
Is this project exempt from legislative review under M.S. 16B.335 subd. 1a?	No
Predesign Review (M.S. 16B.335 subd. 3):	
Does this request include funding for predesign?	Yes
Has the predesign been submitted to the Department of Administration?	No
Has the predesign been approved by the Department of Administration?	No
Will the project design meet the Sustainable Building Guidelines under M.S. 16B.325?	N/A
Will the project designs meet applicable requirements and guidelines for energy conservation and alternative energy sources (M.S. 16B.335 subd. 4 and 16B.32)?	N/A
Have Information Technology Review Preconditions been met (M.S. 16B.335 subd. 5 & 6)?	N/A
Will the project comply with the targeted group purchasing requirement (M.S. 16C.16 subd. 13)?	Yes
Will the project meet public ownership requirements (M.S. 16A.695)?	Yes
Will a use agreement be required (M.S. 16A.695 subd. 2)?	N/A
Will program funding be reviewed and ensured (M.S. 16A.695 subd. 5)?	N/A
Will the matching funds requirements be met (M.S. 16A.86 subd. 4)?	No
Will the project be fully encumbered prior to the Cancellation Deadline (M.S. 16A.642): December 31, 2030?	Yes
M.S. 16A.502 and M.S. 16B.31 (2): Full Funding Required	Yes
M.S. 473.4485: Guideway Project	
Is this a Guideway Project?	No
Is the required information included in this request?	N/A