
Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board Biennial Report FY 2022-2023



“We built the State Capitol on the theory that nothing was too good for Minnesota.”

- Cass Gilbert, Architect, January, 1901

Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)

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As requested by Minnesota Statute 3.197: Staff time to prepare this report and printing of report copies cost approximately \$4,200.

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The Focal Point of Saint Paul

The Capitol Building and Mall are central to the identity of the City of Saint Paul. The dignity, beauty and architectural integrity of the urban design, buildings and landscapes of the Capitol Area are as important today as when they were envisioned over 100 years ago.

The Capitol Building is a preeminent and unifying focal point for the city. The Capitol Building, with its soaring white marble dome, has become part of the identity of Saint Paul and a symbol of the city. Views of the dome serve to reinforce that this is the Capital City.

“The Capitol Building and Mall are central to the identity of Saint Paul and are a unifying focal point for the city, as Cass Gilbert once envisioned.”

- Principle 2 of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area, adopted June 2021



Aerial photo of the Minnesota Capitol campus looking south toward the Mississippi River, showing primary connections of Saint Peter Street, Wabasha Street, and Cedar Street. (Credit: Erdahl Aerial Photos)

The campus plan, as Cass Gilbert envisioned, was both practical and symbolic. The fan of streets, like spokes on a wheel with the Capitol at the center, provided a practical reconciliation the city’s two major street grid systems: the downtown streets aligned with the river and the burgeoning neighborhood streets set on a grid east/west and north/south. Gilbert’s campus plan was also highly symbolic of the connection of state government to:

- commerce (connection to downtown along Cedar Street);
- culture (connection to the Cathedral of Saint Paul along John Ireland Boulevard); and

- nature (connection directly south to the river). This southern connection, part of Gilbert's early plans, was never fully realized as the city developed.

In the developing city of Saint Paul, the campus plan provided a unifying urban design to physically connect the city fabric as well as symbolize the role of government in society. Cass Gilbert could not have known the impacts that Urban Renewal and the highways would introduce in the middle of the twentieth century, as much of the urban fabric that his plan was to lace together was destroyed during that era. Still, the campus today, which sits at the center of the city, connects neighborhoods to the west, north and east through campus to downtown and forms both the termination and spring-point for several major commercial and commuting corridors. Gilbert's grand plan for a walkable, connected, and green unifying campus is still evident in the layers present in the Capitol Area today and are worthy of study for preservation and strengthening.

The Statutory Purpose of the CAAPB

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Commission was created in 1967 to restore a higher standard of quality to the Capitol Area (comprised of 60 blocks surrounding the Capitol Building), after buildings deemed architecturally inappropriate to the Capitol Area were built in the 1950's and 1960's. In 1974, the Legislature changed the Commission to a Board, and designated it as the zoning authority for the 60 block Capitol Area, instead of the City of Saint Paul. The Legislature intended that the Board be comprised of gubernatorial, mayoral, and legislative appointees; and that the Board report directly to the Legislature, unfiltered by any party, special interest group or person, and thus remain protected from political influences.



Map showing Capitol Area geography of 60 city blocks centered on the Capitol, as shown by the red dashed line in the map above. It includes governmental (shown as blue on the map), residential, commercial, office, medical, and other land uses.

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB) oversees planning, zoning and design for a 60-block area on and around the State Capitol campus. Per MN Statute 15B, the statutory purpose for the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, hereafter referred to as the CAAPB or the Board, is to:

1. Preserve and enhance the dignity, beauty, and architectural integrity of the Capitol, the buildings immediately adjacent to it, the Capitol grounds, and the Capitol Area.
2. Protect, enhance, and increase the open spaces within the Capitol Area when deemed necessary and desirable for the improvement of the public enjoyment.
3. Develop proper approaches to the Capitol Area for pedestrian movement, the highway system, and the mass transit system, so that the area achieves its maximum importance and accessibility.
4. Establish a flexible framework for growth of the Capitol Area that will be in keeping with the spirit of the original Cass Gilbert Design.

The Board, Executive Secretary, and staff have a year-round duty to review and decide on issues directly affecting zoning, planning, development, and/or design within the 60-block Capitol Area. The Board's land use standards and zoning rules focus on quality of design, holistic planning of a mixed-use urban area, quality of experience for people who live, work and visit the area, and friendly and efficient customer service. All public and private projects approved in the Capitol Area must be compatible with the CAAPB-approved [Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area \(https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/\)](https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/) and [MN Rules Chapter 2400 Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board Capitol Area Zoning and Design \(https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/CapitolZoningRulesfinal_tcm1087-280135.pdf#False\)](https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/CapitolZoningRulesfinal_tcm1087-280135.pdf#False).

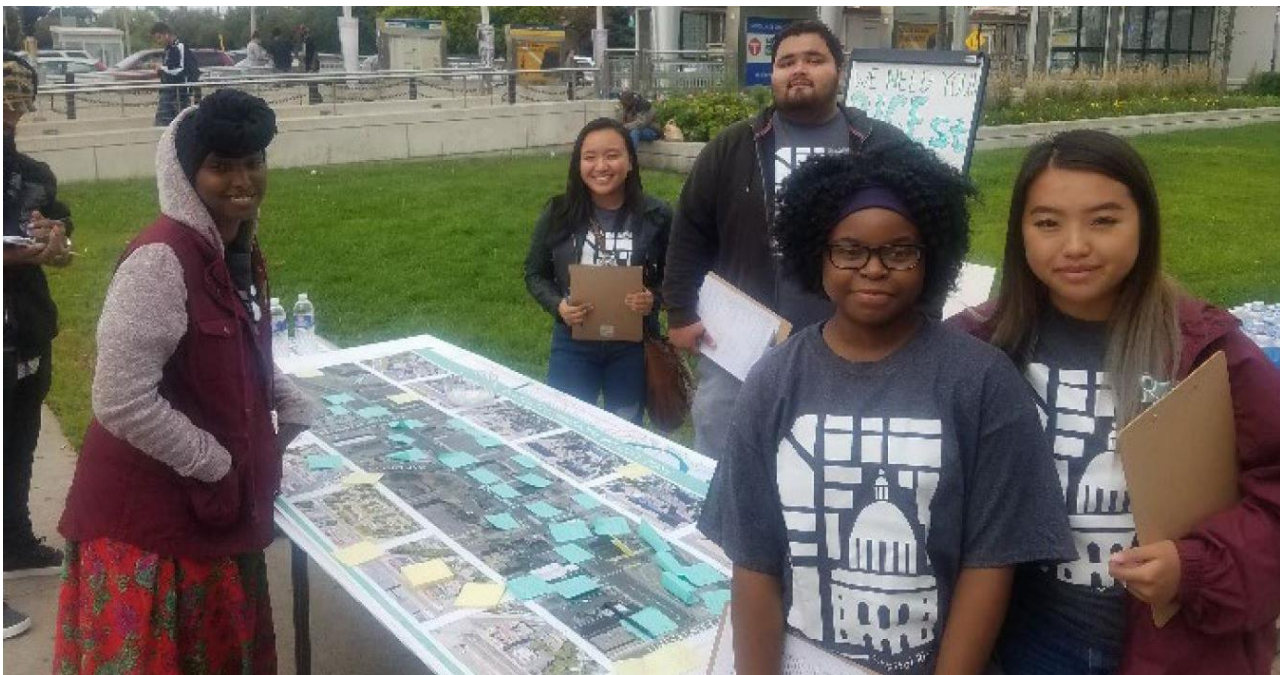


Photo of high school students in Leif Erickson Park, working with Move MN and CAAPB staff on community engagement for Rice Street corridor planning. (Credit: Peter Musty)

CAAPB Roles and Responsibilities

Comprehensive Planning

By statute, the CAAPB must maintain and update every ten years a Comprehensive Plan for the Capitol Area that guides public and private land uses, planning and development. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area, updated in 2021, identifies principles, objectives, and strategies that set the stage for CAAPB's work plan and implementation priorities.

The recently adopted 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota Capitol Area has seven core principles.

- **Principle 1: As Minnesota's seat of government and destination for thousands each year, the Capitol Area offers the highest quality experience to visitors.**
- **Principle 2: The Capitol Building and Mall is central to the identity of Saint Paul and serves as a dominant and unifying focal point of the city, as Cass Gilbert once envisioned.**
- **Principle 3: The entire Capitol Area provides an integrated, high quality, human scale public realm experience.**
- **Principle 4: The Capitol Area is an urban multi-modal district, seamlessly connected to destinations.**
- **Principle 5: The Capitol Area is a model workplace, employing best practices in service to the public.**
- **Principle 6: Land use diversity is encouraged throughout the Capitol Area.**
- **Principle 7: In all parts of the Capitol Area, new development respects community, assets and context.**

The CAAPB consults and collaborates with many partners to foster projects that better connect the Capitol, the Mall, and the campus to the greater Capitol Area and beyond. CAAPB's primary partners are the Department of Administration, the Minnesota Historical Society, the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Metro Transit, Capitol Region Watershed District, members of the public and community organizations, other state agencies, non-profit organizations, major public and civic institutions, public and private property owners, architects, engineers, and developers.

Regulatory Authority

Minnesota Statute 15B. Capitol Area Planning and Preservation identifies CAAPB's regulatory responsibilities.

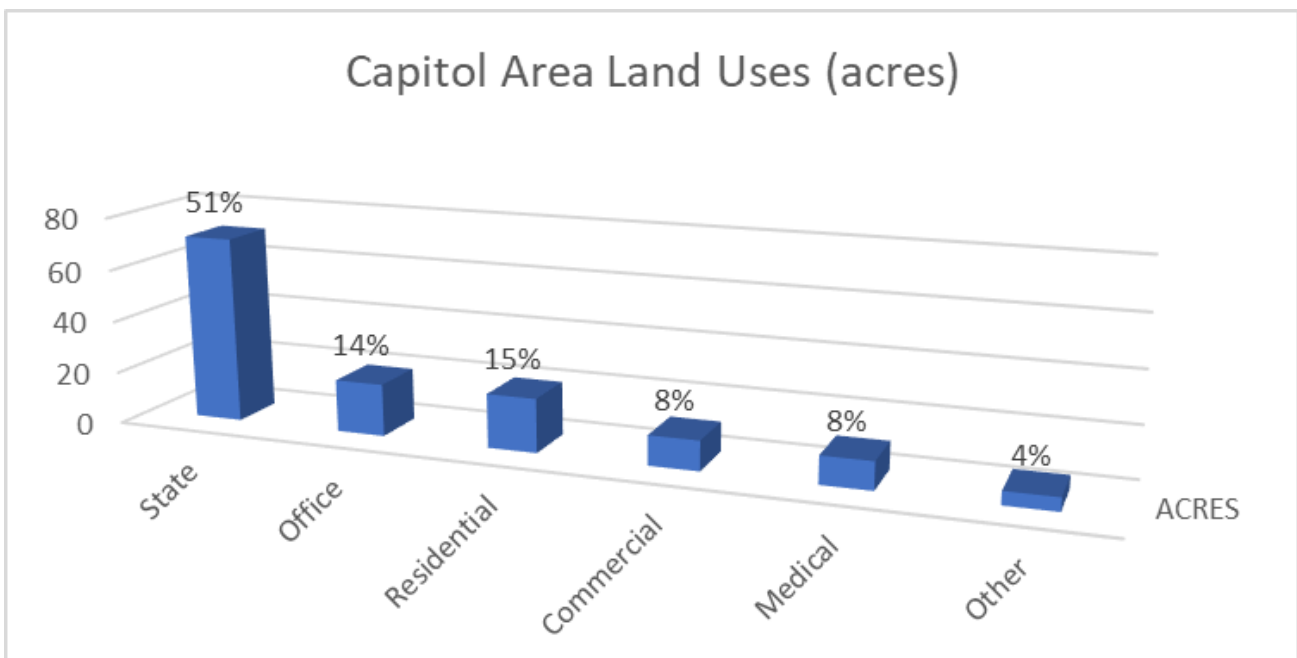
15B.03 Subd.6 grants the CAAPB general rulemaking authority to implement the principles and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area. The 60-block Capitol Area is a mix of public and private land uses. Over 50% of the land is state property. Followed by office and residential at around 14% each, and commercial and medical at about 8% each.

The total assessed value of all land and buildings in the Capitol Area in 2021 was \$612 million.

CAAPB rules are detailed in MN Rules Ch. 2400, which govern Zoning and Design for the Minnesota State Capitol Area. The CAAPB regulates the character, height, and location of buildings and other structures, yards and open spaces, the percentage of open space on lots, and the use of land, buildings, and other structures within the

area. MN Rules Chapter 2400 Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board Capitol Area Zoning and Design also includes design guidelines, review procedures, and standards for proposed uses and construction in the Capitol Area. The CAAPB must act on requests for zoning permits or design review approvals 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 is often required to ensure compliance after the changes that have occurred during City review.

The last full update of the zoning and design rules occurred in 2012 to implement the then recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. A full update of the rules is required in FY24-25 to ensure conformance with the 2021 update of the Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota Capitol Area. A specific section of the rules governing commemorative works on the Capitol grounds was updated in late 2022, as described later in this report.



Bar chart showing mix of land Uses in the Capitol Area as percent of total acres.

Project Planning and Design Review

The CAAPB is actively involved in planning and design review of any construction activities that may significantly affect “the dignity, beauty and architectural integrity of the area.” State agencies and other public bodies considering Capitol Area projects must consult with the Board before developing plans. Funds for the Board's design review and planning services must be provided by the public agencies if the Board determines its services are necessary. As part of its work, CAAPB may perform one or more of the following activities:

- Provide to the legislature a report on the status of implementing the comprehensive plan and a program for capital improvements and site development.

- 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. For projects over \$1,000,000, the Board determines if a design competition is needed to secure a high quality and cost-efficient design.
- Provide open consultation with other state or public 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 Administration and the Historical Society.

Significant private projects in the Capitol Area are encouraged to seek planning and design review input from the CAAPB prior to submittal of a zoning application, to ensure that the developer understands all zoning and design standards that apply. CAAPB will inform and engage community members and key stakeholders during planning and design review to provide transparency and opportunities for public input. Public notification and opportunities for input are required for any public or private project going to the Board for zoning or design approval.

FY 22-23 CAAPB Accomplishments

The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board seeks the highest standards of planning, design, and construction within three realms: (1) the Minnesota Capitol Building; (2) the Capitol Campus Buildings and Grounds; and (3) the Greater Capitol Area of public and private properties and public infrastructure in the blocks around the Capitol campus.

On average, the CAAPB issues 15-25 zoning permits per year, such as Conditional Use permits, Sign permits, Temporary Use permits, and Variances. Permitted projects in the Capitol Area range include rezonings, demolitions, additions, new buildings, events, new or modified signs, remodeling, site improvements, and storefront upgrades. The bulk of zoning work happens before permit issuance--responding to zoning and design rules inquiries, predevelopment meetings, public and stakeholder engagement, and regular consultation with architects and developers throughout plan review.

Activities and accomplishments of the CAAPB between July 2021 and November 2022 are summarized below.

(1) Minnesota Capitol Building

The State Capitol Building is the most important building in Minnesota. Any significant changes to the Capitol's appearance, or to artwork within the Capitol building, must be jointly approved by the CAAPB and the Minnesota Historical Society. The [Policy for Works of Art in the Minnesota State Capitol](https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Accessible_Policy_for_Works_of_Art_tcm1087-335119.pdf) (https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Accessible_Policy_for_Works_of_Art_tcm1087-335119.pdf) (adopted in 1998 and updated in 2015) guides all artwork decisions. Standards for the repair, alteration, appearance, furnishing, and general maintenance of the Capitol's public and ceremonial areas are determined by the Board and the Department of Administration.

FY22-23 CAAPB Capitol Building Consultations and Reviews:

- **Nellie Stone Johnson statue** - Collaborated with Department of Administration, Minnesota Historical Society, artist, and public committee on the final design and installation of the Nellie Stone Johnson statute in the north corridor of the Capitol. Celebration and statue unveiling occurred on November 21, 2022.
- **Capitol Repairs** – Collaborated with Minnesota Historical Society to reviewed and approve plans for paint touch ups, stenciling, plaster repairs and metal refurbishing – Justices' Dining Room, Supreme Court ceiling, House Chamber entry and gallery, and several hallways.



Photo of unveiling celebration for Nellie Stone Johnson statue in the Minnesota State Capitol on November 21, 2022. (Credit: Merritt Clapp-Smith)

(2) Capitol Campus Buildings and Grounds

CAAPB is specifically responsible for guiding and approving any changes or improvements to the Capitol grounds, as authorized under Section 15B.08, subdivision 3, which grants the CAAPB decision-making authority. “No substantial change or improvement may be made to public lands or public buildings in the Capitol Area without the written approval of the board.” This includes public buildings, statuary or other memorials or public art, public open spaces, landscaping, and roadways. State agencies and other public bodies who consider building or grounds projects in the Capitol Area are required to consult with the Board. The Board reviews and votes on all plans for substantial alterations and/or improvements to ensure compliance with [Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area \(https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/\)](https://mn.gov/caapb/planning/) and [MN Rules Chapter 2400 Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board Capitol Area Zoning \(https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/CapitolZoningRulesfinal_tcm1087-280135.pdf#False\)](https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/CapitolZoningRulesfinal_tcm1087-280135.pdf#False) and Design.

For capital budget proposals in the Capitol Area, the Commissioner of Administration must consult with the Board before plans are developed, and regarding building sites and design standards. The Board provides the Governor and Legislature a statement as to the request's impact on the Capitol Area and its compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan.

CAAPB is the lead agency for planning, design and review of commemorative works on the Capitol grounds, in consultation with the Minnesota Historical Society. Board review of memorials and artwork on the Capitol grounds is done under MN Rules Chapter 2400.2040 and 2400.2703 [Rules Governing Commemorative Works on the Minnesota Capitol Grounds \(https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/CapitolZoningRulesfinal_tcm1087-280135.pdf#False\)](https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/CapitolZoningRulesfinal_tcm1087-280135.pdf#False). On November 21, 2022, updated rules for commemorative works on the Capitol grounds went into effect. The rules describe the steps and criteria that the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board uses to review public proposals for the addition of new works, or proposals for the modification or removal of existing works.

FY22-23 CAAPB Planning and Project Review of Capitol Buildings, Grounds, and Memorials:

- **Update to Rules governing commemorative works on the Capitol grounds** - Amended rules were the culmination of two years of CAAPB work, based on research and public engagement conducted by two task forces. Rule amendments were heavily informed by input from the Department of Administration and Minnesota Historical Society, comments from two public comment periods and a hearing, and recommendations of the Minnesota Revisor and two Administrative Law Judges.
- **Minnesota’s Medal of Honor Memorial** - Collaborated with Department of Administration, Minnesota Historical Society, artist, and public committee on the final design, construction, and installation of the Minnesota Medal of Honor memorial on the Capitol grounds in front of the Veteran Services building. Celebration and unveiling on September 22, 2022.
- **Vietnam Veterans Memorial** – Collaborated with Department of Administration and public committee to review and approve repairs to lettering and degraded physical features of the monument.
- **State buildings and grounds** – Reviewed and approved site and building upgrades, maintenance, repair, or other public improvement projects in the G-1 or G-2 (Government) zoning districts initiated by the Department of Administration. (Trend is 5-15 projects per year.)

- **Capitol Mall Design Framework** – Assessed opportunities and needs for the Capitol Mall. Drafted a work plan, budget estimate, and RFP to update the Framework, with a focus on visitor experience, event and gathering spaces, safety and security, sustainable landscape design and plantings, and historical design integrity.
- **Capitol Grounds Landscaping** - Collaborated with the Department of Administration to review and approve repairs or alterations to landscaping, walkways, lighting, and other features on the Capitol grounds.



Photo showing plantings at the Women's Suffrage Memorial in foreground and State Capitol building and State Office Building in the background. (Credit: Peter Musty)

- **State Office Building** – Reviewing remodeling/addition concepts as they come forward for design, zoning, and Comprehensive Plan compliance.
- **Ford Building** – Informally reviewing site plan for vacant parcel if building is torn down.
- **MNDOT's John Ireland Bridge Replacement** – Reviewing design.
- **BRT Station** - Reviewed and approved station design and location.
- **Evie Carsharing (<https://eviecarshare.com/>) / car charging station on Aurora Street** – Reviewed and approved design and location.

(3) The Greater Capitol Area

The Board has similar review and regulatory authority for the non-state properties in the Capitol Area. The Board reviews and approves all plans for substantial alterations and improvements to public and private lands, infrastructure, parking facilities, and buildings in the non-State properties the Capitol Area. These projects must also comply with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Rules for the Capitol area. If a plan is approved, the CAAPB issues a zoning permit. This zoning permit is required before the City of Saint Paul can issue a building permit for the project. A CAAPB Certificate of Design Compliance is then often required.

FY22-23 CAAPB Greater Capitol Area Planning, Reviews, and Permitting:

- **Bethesda Shelter and COVID Respite** – Facilitated monthly meetings of Bethesda Good Neighbor Group with Ramsey County and St. Paul police representatives during operation of homeless and COVID respite shelter.
- **New Mental Health Facility at Bethesda site** – Worked closely with project representatives Fairview Health and Acadia to discuss, review, and approve [plans for a new mental health hospital \(https://mn.gov/caapb/share-views/\)](https://mn.gov/caapb/share-views/). Led a design and review committee with community representatives and Fairview/Acadia representatives. Engaged Capitol Region Watershed District and Xcel Energy in sustainable building and site design conversations with project architects.
- **Former Sears site redevelopment** – Engaged with public to understand the site redevelopment priorities of the community. Prepared [a shared vision and general concept for redevelopment \(https://mn.gov/caapb/zoning/sears-site/\)](https://mn.gov/caapb/zoning/sears-site/) of the Sears site through regular meetings with property owner Seritage, their designers, and the City of Saint Paul planning staff.
- **Capitol Area Stormwater Management Study** - Collaborated with Capitol Region Watershed District on a study to identify opportunities for improved, cost-effective stormwater management in the Capitol Area. (<https://www.capitolregionwd.org/projects/capitol-area-stormwater-management/>).
- **Bus Rapid Transit** – Participated in consultant team selection, Station Area Planning guidance, and Technical Advisory Committees for design of six stations on three lines connecting the Capitol Area to the region coming to the Capitol Area, anticipated in next two to six years ([B-Line \(https://www.metrotransit.org/b-line-project\)](https://www.metrotransit.org/b-line-project), [G-Line \(https://www.metrotransit.org/g-line-project\)](https://www.metrotransit.org/g-line-project) and [Purple Line \(https://www.metrotransit.org/purple-line-project\)](https://www.metrotransit.org/purple-line-project))
- **MNDOT’s Downtown Commons** - Identified issues and stakeholders to focus on during planning.
- **City of Saint Paul corridor projects** - Tracking, reviews, and approvals of Summit Avenue (John Ireland/Kellogg) and Capitol City Bikeway multi-modal improvements.
- **MNDOT’s Rethinking I-94** – Participating in Policy and Planning Committee (<https://talk.dot.state.mn.us/rethinking-i94>)



Photo of CAAPB representatives meeting with Fairview-Acadia design team to consider new mental health facility for the Bethesda site. (Credit: Merritt Clapp-Smith)

- **Opening of [St Paul City School \(https://www.stpaulcityschool.org/\)](https://www.stpaulcityschool.org/) (at University and Marion)** – Reviewed and approved site plan and zoning permit for construction of a new school, following engagement with the community, City of St. Paul and key stakeholders.



Photo of St. Paul City School under construction along University Avenue. CAAPB worked closely with school leadership and architects on planning, design, and approval. (Credit: Peter Musty)

FY24-25 CAAPB Priority Activities

The following projects are required or high priority activities to be undertaken by CAAPB in FY24-25.

- **Capitol Area Zoning and Design Rules** - Update MN Rules Chapter 2400 to ensure that CAAPB's regulatory role and responsibilities for zoning, permitting and design review in the sixty-block Capitol Area comply with the legally adopted policies of the recently updated Comprehensive Plan, as required under MN Statutes 473.864, Subd. 1 & 2. CAAPB zoning and design rules govern the 60-block Capitol Area, instead of the City of Saint Paul zoning ordinance.
- **Capitol Mall Design Framework** – Update the Capitol Mall Design Framework plan (last updated in 1990) to identify location-specific design and landscape recommendations for the Capitol Mall and adjacent areas. The plan will address design of civic spaces and streets, changes or upgrades to public or private buildings and public areas around them; organization and placement of memorials and commemorative artworks; landscape design and climate hardy planting and maintenance strategies; programming, safety and wayfinding for visitors; and continuity of traditional places for events, gatherings, and civic engagement. An update of the Capitol Mall Design Framework is required by 2025 to implement policies and priorities in the Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota Capitol Area.
- **Former Sears Site** – Guide private redevelopment of the site to meet the intent and standards a MX Mixed Use District zoning designation (Capitol Rice Development Framework), and the Comprehensive Plan vision for a mixed-use, walkable, and transit-oriented, mixed use urban village at the site.

- **New Behavioral Health Hospital** – Track construction of a new Behavioral Health Hospital at the former Bethesda site for zoning and design compliance.
- **Commemorative Works on the Capitol Grounds** – Review and vote on any applications for the addition, modification or removal of commemorative works on the Capitol grounds, in accordance with the recently updated rules governing commemorative works, MN Rules Chapter 2400.2040 and 2400.2703.
- **State Office Building improvements** – Review and provide input on building plans and design to ensure consistency with MN Rule Chapter 2400 Zoning and Design, and with objectives for the Capitol Mall and grounds as identified in the Comprehensive Plan and the Capitol Mall Design Framework.
- **Capitol Heights Development Framework** – Adopt an urban design framework outlining policy guidance for design of open space, sustainable practices.
- **Capitol Area Stormwater Management** - Begin project planning and design to identify site specific opportunities to shift stormwater runoff into an amenity linked to a district-scale stormwater management and treatment system.

FY23 CAAPB Operations and Budget

The CAAPB’s base budget is appropriated from the State’s General Fund. The Board's FY23 base budget of \$365,000 is distributed as follows:

- Salary and benefits 76%
- Rent 10%
- Other operating expenses 9%
- MNIT services 5%

The general work and daily operations of CAAPB occur at a predictable level, but CAAPB’s regulatory activities occur on an ‘as needed’ and time sensitive basis that is beyond the Board’s control. Such activities are contingent upon the real estate market, economic conditions, community needs, and unanticipated events in the Capitol Area.

In FY24-25, the CAAPB is statutorily required to update its Zoning and Design Rules for the Minnesota Capitol Area, which is a time and resource intensive project. In the same biennium, CAAPB should update the 30-years old Capitol Mall Design Framework and be diligent and inclusive in its review of Commemorative Work applications. CAAPB hopes to secure additional funding to hire temporary staff and consulting expertise to help advance these important projects.

Board Members, Staff and Advisors

Under MN Statute 15B, CAAPB is structured as a twelve-member Board chaired by the Lieutenant Governor, with four members appointed by the Governor, three members appointed by the Mayor of Saint Paul, two members appointed by the President of the Senate, and two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. An Advisory Committee of three architectural or planning professionals advise the Board on architectural, planning, and landscaping matters in the Capitol Area. The Board meets every two to four months, or at the call of the Chair when a zoning permit or project review is required of the Board.

The CAAPB currently employs two full-time and one part-time staff. Staff have expertise in planning and design at the site, block, neighborhood, and corridor scales, as well as zoning, project management, and strategic systems planning. This enables their informed participation in and review of projects ranging from design of walkable streets and redesign of Rice Street, to planning for transit, stormwater management, redevelopment of the former Sears site, and framework planning for the Capitol Mall. With limited resources, staff relies on interactions with collaborative teams, partner contributions of staff time, grants for consultant work, and the participation of community members and stakeholders in planning for their future.

Board Members

Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, Chair

Dana Badgerow

Dr. Kate Beane

Alicia Belton

Representative Mike Freiberg

James Garrett Jr.

Representative Jerry Hertaus

Hannah Hills

James McClean

Senator Carla Nelson

Senator Sandy Pappas

Daniel Yang

Staff

Merritt Clapp-Smith, Executive Secretary (July 2021– present)

Peter Musty, Principal Planner; Zoning and Design Administrator (July 2016 - present)

Laura Dotson, Part-time OAS Intermediate (October 2021 - present)

Architectural Advisors

Michael Bjornberg, FAIA, CID, NCARB, AIA
Minnesota Appointee

Denita Lemmon, AIA, CARB, LEED AP, CAAPB
Appointee

Vacant, State Arts Board Appointee