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# itol Area Architectural And Planning Commission

Biennial Report

1973-75



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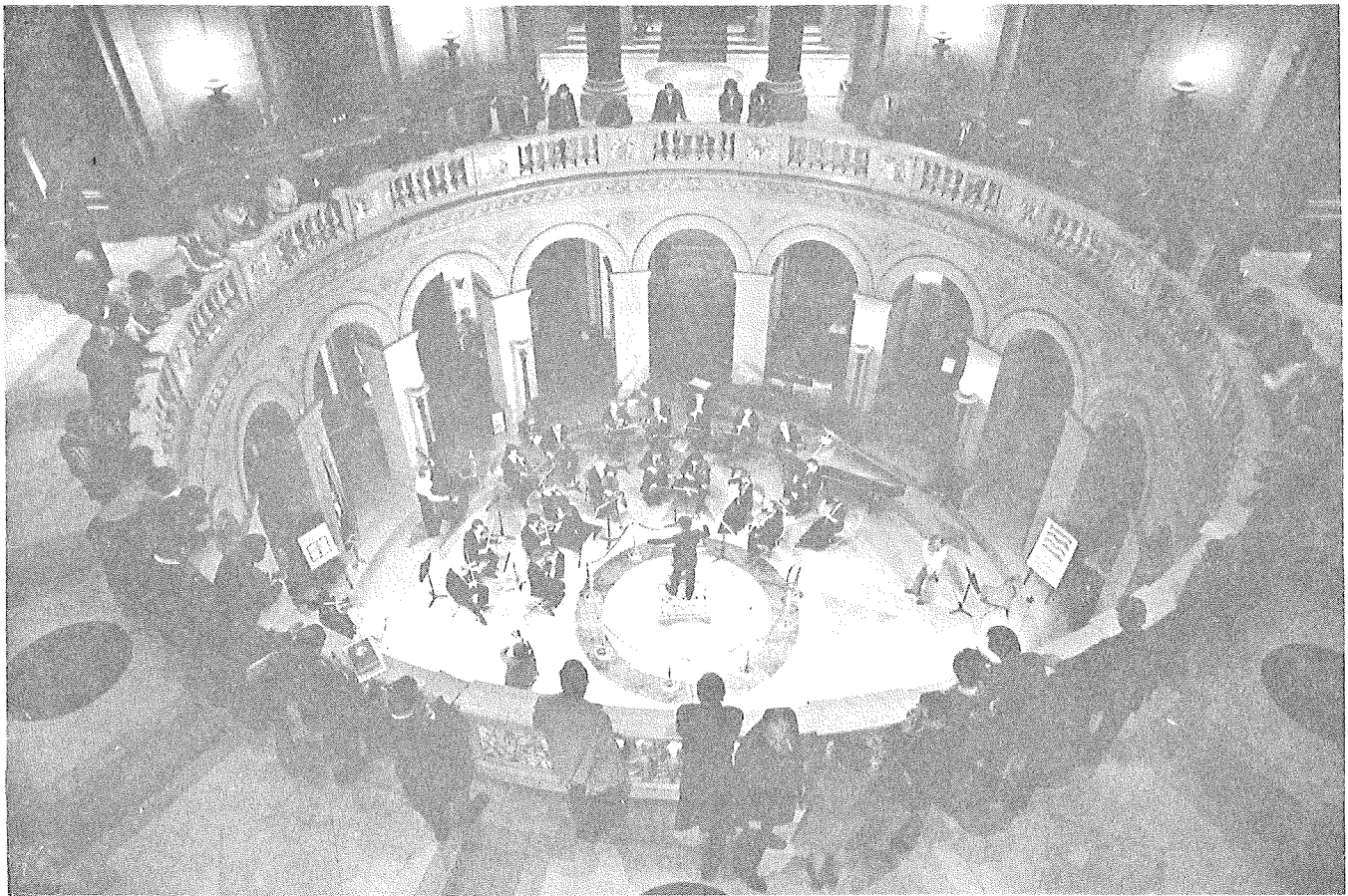


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*"As the nation was sliding into the third longest depression in its history, the people of Minnesota undertook a building project of the first magnitude, a capitol that would mark their emergence from the frontier into the modern world of urbanization."*

— Neil Thompson, **The Minnesota State Capitol: The Art and Policies of a Public Building** (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1974)





# INTRODUCTION: WHERE WE CAME FROM

Some eighty years ago the citizens of Minnesota decided to grace their society with a capitol that would equal any in the land in style and prominence.

A dramatic growth in population and wealth over the previous forty years had stimulated intense feelings of state pride in an era noted for national optimism.

The construction of such an edifice was unprecedented for the state and did not submit to easy accomplishment.

At times it seemed that the building would be finished in an inferior fashion, and at one point the enterprise ran out of money.

The capitol project began with an architectural competition, the results of which were all rejected.

A second competition, held under different rules, finally produced Cass Gilbert's winning design.

The project was criticized frequently in the press for its extravagance and its use of materials not native to the state. There were allegations of poor performance and misconduct on the part of contractors. The whole affair lasted fourteen years from beginning to end.

While the capitol project is remarkable for its boldness from the vantage of the intervening years, it also created problems that have endured and compounded.

One aspect of the project would cause continuing concern: A renaissance monument was set down in the middle of a residential neighborhood of detached houses on the edge of the densely built-up section of the town.

Since then the town has grown into a great city, and with it have grown the functions and demands of state government.

In the meantime the surrounding neighborhood has suffered mixed fortunes.

By mid-century the area was a jumble of incompatible uses; advertising devices obstructed the capitol approaches; housing conditions deteriorated; and the resident population became increasingly concerned about unpredictable state expansion.

From the beginning there had been an effort to give the Capitol approaches that would accent its monumental character and enhance its urban setting.

However, the experience of building the Capitol has proved sufficiently trying to the original Seabury Commission that it adjourned sine die in 1907 without completing its task.

Gilbert himself devised several plans in later years in response to continuing interest in providing a memorial to the state's war dead.

Following the Second World War another commission was created, and this body supervised the building of the present mall and veterans' memorial.

But the public concern was not satisfied and had risen again by the mid-1960s.

This time there was recognition that the impact of a large governmental complex upon the center of a major city, and the reciprocal impact of a dense urban environment upon expanding state operations, demanded attention to more than just the aesthetics of a mall — although the mall was to remain as a significant element in the ensuing plan.

In response to the renewed public concern the 1967 Legislature created the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Commission and gave it authority for comprehensive planning and supervision over the entire area affected by the physical operations of state government.

In the past seven years the CAAPC has completed its basic planning assignments.

The CAAPC, therefore, presents the 1975 Legislature with a program for action to implement its plans.

The CAAPC is mindful of its dual responsibility to guard the state's patrimony and to help the state set an example of orderly development for all citizens.

Accordingly, the CAAPC admonishes the Legislature that the problems created by expansive desires in the past are still with us.

The program the CAAPC proposes is an ambitious one, but it is consistent with the foresight of the past and the urgency of the present need.

## CAAPC: MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES

The CAAPC is composed of three members appointed by the Governor and three members appointed by the Mayor of the City of Saint Paul. The Lieutenant Governor serves as Chairman.

Under legislation enacted in 1974, the number of city appointees will decrease to two effective July 1, 1975, and the number of gubernatorial appointees will rise to four.

In the past the administrative and planning expenses of the Commission were borne equally by the State and the City. The 1974 legislation provided that future funding would be provided solely by the State.

The Commission's authority is set forth in Minnesota Statutes 1974, Section 15.50.

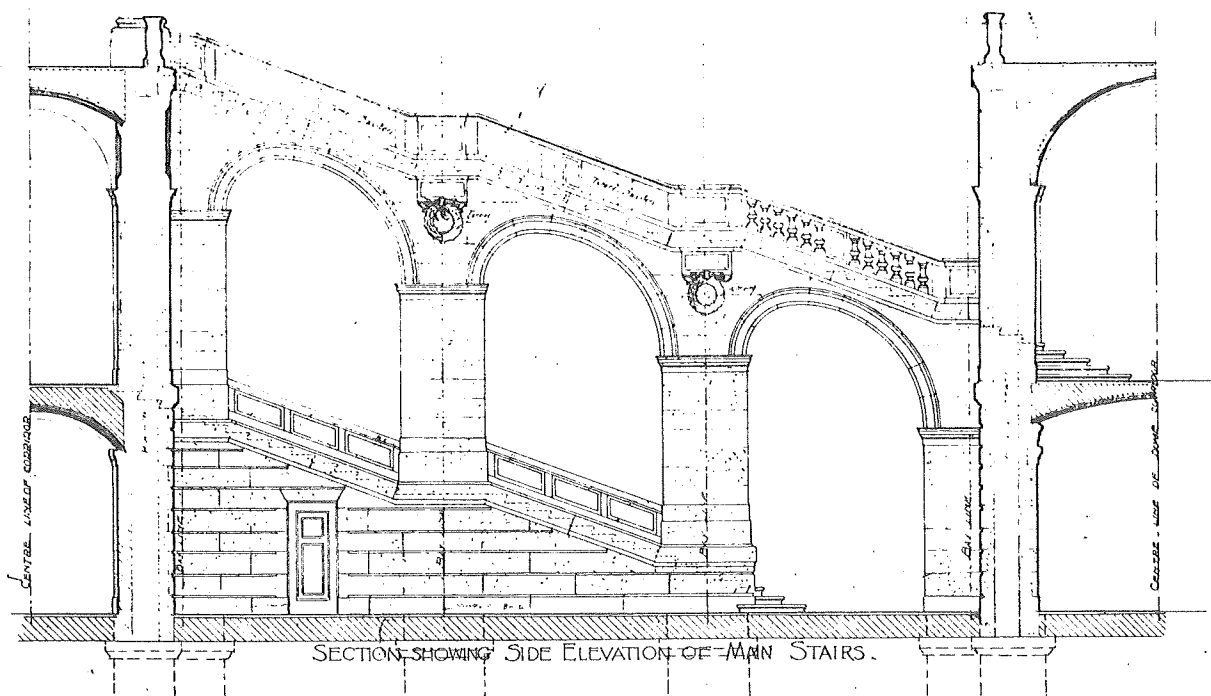
The mission of the CAAPC is three-fold: to protect the Capitol and its approaches from development or alteration which would detract from the historical, cultural, and social importance of the seat of government, to provide for the orderly expansion of state government facilities, and to encourage and foster the development of those residential, commercial, and office uses appropriate to a distinguished site of government activity in a crowded urban environment.

In 1969 the CAAPC adopted a master plan to guide the future development of the Capitol Area. This plan set aside areas for the future expansion

of state government, for housing and local business, and for the institutional and office functions for which demand was anticipated. The master plan, though subject to revision, has been the basis for all the subsequent activity of the agency.

In 1973, as a means for making the requirements of the master plan operational and specific, the CAAPC adopted a zoning ordinance for the Capitol Area. The CAAPC's entry into the field of zoning is specifically authorized by statute. Impetus to this new activity came in part from the imminent construction of a gasoline service station across the street from the Capitol. Adoption of the ordinance followed more than a year of public hearings and revisions.

Administration of the zoning ordinance is still in its initial stages. However, discussions are in progress with the Division of Housing and Building Code Enforcement and the Planning Department of the City of Saint Paul. The CAAPC anticipates agreements will be reached which will allow the delegation of much of the zoning administration workload to those agencies which handle that job for other areas of Saint Paul.



# REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF 1973-75 BIENNIUM

## PARKING STUDY

In 1973 the CAAPC completed a study, prepared by Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc., on the projected parking needs of the area. This study resulted in a report and a proposed program which was submitted to the Legislature at the end of the 1973 session. There was no time then for any action on the report, but portions of the Department of Administration's capital expenditures program for the 1975-77 biennium will be based upon it.

## FUNCTIONAL STUDY - SPACE NEEDS OF STATE GOVERNMENT

In 1973 also, at the specific direction of the Legislature, the CAAPC undertook a study of the needs of state government for office facilities and proposed alternative plans for meeting those needs. That report was presented to the Legislature in 1974, but has received no action so far.

The study reported the following findings:

1. A space crisis in the Capitol Complex creates serious inconvenience for members of the public who come into the area for historical-cultural reasons or because they must do business with the state.

2. Many departments and agencies presently housed within the Complex could perform their tasks just as effectively elsewhere.

3. The existing Capitol Complex buildings cannot accommodate any increase in the functions of state government which would require additional space.

4. After the landscaping portion of the CAAPC plan is implemented and the Centennial Building parking ramp is completed, there will be 2,100 parking spaces fewer than the current need in the Capitol Complex area.

5. Since 1967, more than 1,000 state employees have moved from the Complex to rented space.

6. Since 1967, there have been more than 250 relocations of entire state agencies or divisions of departments in the Complex.

7. The state currently leases 287,704 square feet of office space in the metropolitan area at an annual cost of \$1,233,289 to house 1360 employees who could perform their functions in state-owned facilities.

8. Based on present rental costs the state will pay at least \$8.5 million for the remainder of the decade to house the current number of employees in rented space. If the state constructed and maintained its own office facilities, it could save a minimum of \$2 to \$3 million over the next seven years.

9. Space problems in the Complex are a result not only of a shortage of space but also of the lack of adequate space planning procedures and policies.

As a result of its findings the report made the following recommendations:

1. That the central management agencies of the three branches of state government must remain in the Capitol Area.

2. That the dispersal of state functions to various leased locations in the metropolitan area, without regard to a plan for agency adjacency requirements and public access, be discontinued.

3. That state functions which do not have to be performed in the Capitol vicinity be located at an alternative office complex unless the following conditions are met for the construction of buildings in the Capitol Complex:

- A. All buildings constructed must be aesthetically harmonious with the Capitol Building and must be consistent with the CAAPC "Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area."

- B. All additional parking for both employees and the public should be provided by ramp or remote facilities so that on-surface parking can be eliminated.

- C. The Capitol Complex area must become an integral segment of the metropolitan transit plan to provide convenient access for both state employees and the public.

- D. The location of agencies in the buildings should be determined in accordance with an overall plan which takes into account the agency adjacency requirements.

4. That some divisions of the Department of Administration be reorganized to create an Office of Space Management to address the complex problem of translating the functions of state government into physical facility requirements. This Office should be responsible for maintaining a current inventory of all space occupied by the state, allocating both state-owned and leased space to state agencies, and for short and long-range planning.

The CAAPC believes that future efforts to meet state office space needs should be evaluated on the basis of this functional needs study.

We are pleased to report that the functional needs study was completed at a cost of less than half the appropriated amount.

### CAPITOL GRAPHICS

In 1973 and 1974, in response to repeated inquiries from the Legislature and the Department of Administration, as well as from the public at large, the CAAPC proposed a scheme of graphics and informational design to identify buildings and activities in the government precinct and in the Capitol building itself.

The schemes will be attractive, easy to read, uniform, and readily accessible to persons who come to the area to conduct business with their government or to observe it.

The graphics study has also produced designs for benches and bus shelters to be installed in the mall area for the convenience of the public. Lock racks for bicycles are also included.

These proposals will form part of the Department of Administration's capital expenditures budget presented to the 1975 Legislature.

### CAPITOL MALL

The CAAPC has long been concerned about the proper development of the Capitol Mall. In 1973 the CAAPC asked Daniel Kiley, one of the architectural advisers to the Commission, to prepare sketches indicating how the master plan goals for the mall might be realized.

The objectives of the master plan were, and remain, the elimination from the mall area of distracting intrusions, such as through traffic and parking, and the re-landscaping of the area to provide a stronger orientation to the architecture of the Capitol.

Re-working the mall would also make the area more enjoyable and usable for the thousands of visitors to the Capitol each year from all parts of the state and nation.

Discussions are presently under way between the CAAPC and the City of Saint Paul regarding the vacation of streets needed to implement the proposal.

If agreement is reached, the CAAPC will ask the Legislature to fund these improvements so that the citizens of the state may have a new mall in time for the nation's bicentennial observance in 1976.

### CAPITOL ANNEX

During 1973 and 1974 the CAAPC accepted a special assignment at the request of the Commissioner of Administration. In cooperation with a committee of legislators appointed by the Governor, the Commission and its architectural advisors assisted in the development of data on alternative sites for a proposed capitol annex building to serve the Legislature and other state agencies.

This work resulted in two published sets of data submitted to the Commissioner and the legislative committee.

### CAPITOL ARCHITECTURAL OVERSIGHT

The CAAPC has authority under the law to safeguard the architectural integrity of the Capitol building. With respect to historic furnishings it shares this authority with the State Historical Society.

While the Capitol is a historic monument, it must also serve the office needs of a modern legislature, as well as the ceremonial functions for which it was designed.

The pressures of modern needs on such a building often produce unsightly modifications, the introduction of inappropriate materials and furnishings, and an expedient disregard for the distinctive architectural features.

The Minnesota Capitol has not escaped these misfortunes.

However, the Commission notes with satisfaction that the State has committed itself to the restoration and rehabilitation of the building, and the Commission urges the Legislature to restore walled-off corridors and ceremonial areas to public use as soon as may be practical. The Commission also asks that the completion of the interior restoration project be accomplished as soon as possible, preferably in time for the national bi-centennial celebration.

In carrying out its responsibility to safeguard both the Capitol's architecture and the state's restoration investment, the Commission during the past biennium reviewed and advised on the restoration of the Supreme Court, the interior illumination project, the restoration plans for the Capitol cafeteria, a design plan for directories and other informational materials for the interior of the Capitol, and the design for the new Capitol windows. Numerous smaller items involving the alteration of aspects of the public and ceremonial areas of the Capitol were also reviewed by the Commission.

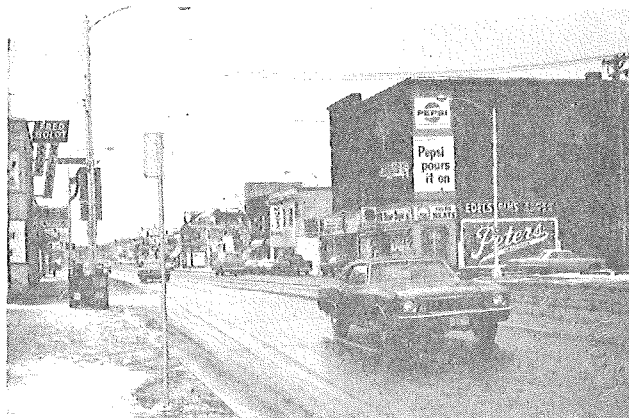
## NORTH END MASTERPLAN IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

The CAAPC, with its charge to oversee not only the immediate environs of a capitol building, but the approaches to it as well, is a unique national experiment in planning for the special needs a seat of government creates when it is located in the center of a large city.

To meet the challenge of this experiment, and to implement the sound planning already done, the CAAPC asked the 1974 Legislature for special funds to develop a proposal showing alternative means through which the portions of the Capitol Area designated for residential and commercial use — mainly the area north of University Avenue — could be developed to provide housing and services to supply the needs of a governmental precinct.

There is a note of urgency to this effort. The zoning ordinance has rendered many of the existing uses non-conforming, but the area — with the exception of a small portion at the west end — has never been designated as part of any urban renewal effort.

Many of the structures in this area have code deficiencies, and many have suffered severe deterioration.



Non-conforming uses are “grandfathered” by the new ordinance, but alterations are difficult, if not structurally or financially unwise. Therefore many of the small property owners in the area have been placed in uncertain circumstances, although the CAAPC has attempted to avoid inflicting unnecessary hardship.

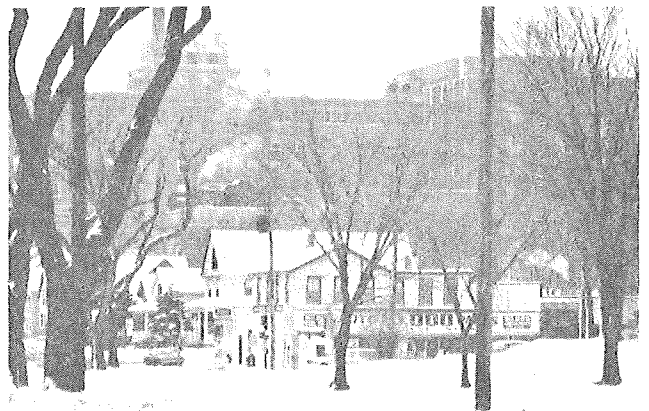
There are property owners who wish to sell, but so far the only alternative purchasers have been the State or land speculators.

For differing reasons acquisition by neither of these appears to be in the long-term public interest.

The State has acquired land in the north end somewhat haphazardly. Continued acquisition by the State makes planned development for a variety of uses difficult because of the State's unwillingness to give up land it has acquired and because of the constant short-term need for space to park cars, store supplies, and provide offices for employees.

The CAAPC believes the public interest is best served by long-range planning and development of state facilities in a rational pattern of location to each other.

The second consequence is also undesirable and increases the need for immediate action.



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The environs of the Capitol do represent desirable real estate to certain groups. These are often the organizations which have a vested interest in continuous efforts to influence the governmental process.

Such organizations have their place, and there is room for them in the Capitol Area; but the CAAPC has looked askance at the prospect of facilities for these groups ringing the Capitol.

The CAAPC believes that other functions, including the critical need for housing, must also be served in the immediate vicinity of the Capitol.

The Legislature granted the CAAPC's request for special funds, and the CAAPC has contracted with the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of the City of Saint Paul to undertake the work. The results are forthcoming and will be presented as a separate report to the 1975 Legislature.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Prior to 1974 the CAAPC contracted with the State Planning Agency for administrative services. However, the increasing workload caused by the adoption of the zoning ordinance and the number of major activities in which the Commission is involved rendered this part-time arrangement unworkable.

The Commission, therefore, decided to hire its own full-time executive secretary and expects this move to produce long-term operating economies by allowing more efficient use of the professional consultants the CAAPC is required to retain by statute.

The newness of this arrangement, combined with a turnover in administrative leadership for the Commission and a heavy workload in preparation for the 1975 Legislature, make the 1974-75 fiscal biennium unrepresentative of normal years in its heavy use of consultant's time.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

1974 legislation requires the CAAPC to submit a program of capital expenditures for each ensuing biennium to advance the implementation of the master plan. Cost estimates are to be supplied by the Commissioner of Administration.

The CAAPC's proposals for capitol graphics, parking, and the capitol mall are included in the following Department of Administration list of proposals. The CAAPC's proposals for North End masterplan implementation will be presented separately at a later date.

The CAAPC hereby submits its legislative proposals, together with its recommendations upon other significant improvements proposed by the Commissioner of Administration for the Capitol Area as of this date.

## PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. "Remodel, air condition, and equip Capitol Building cafeteria, \$277,000."

This request by the Department of Administration would allow the restoration of the cafeteria to its original, "rathskeller", appearance. The original restaurant, and its destruction, is an interesting aspect of the Capitol's history. Restoration is heartily recommended.

2. "Construction of a quick lunch facility in the Capitol, \$50,000".

This request by the Department of Administration would solve a persistent problem: the need for fast food service in the Capitol, especially when the Legislature is in session. The makeshift solution in the second floor corridor is not only unsightly and odorous; it causes debris to be littered throughout the most spacious areas of the building and increases the risk of damage to the Capitol's expensive-to-repair fabric and furnishings. This request would provide a fast-food facility in an enclosed area and is recommended.

3. "Restoration and preservation of the exterior of the Capitol Building, \$550,000."

Minnesota's priceless and irreplaceable monument has been as much the victim of the pollutants of industrial civilization as any other building its age. The funds requested would provide for the repair of severely damaged portions of the building's exterior and for the stabilization of the remainder. The repairs are vital if future generations are to continue to enjoy their Capitol. The request is recommended.

4. "Implementation of the first phase of the Capitol South Mall landscape development and

improvements to the landscaping in several areas of the capitol complex; improvements to the capitol complex grounds, including signage, public seating, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, bus shelters, etc., \$1,190,000."

This item includes as its largest component the request for the re-landscaping of phase one of the Capitol Mall, discussed earlier in this report. The granting of this request will finally make the mall an accessible and usable place for the public. Other items in this request include funding for directional signage, benches, bike racks, and bus shelters, the designs for which were commissioned and approved by the CAAPC. The item is recommended.

5. "Additional funds for Capitol Building directories, interior signage, public area waste receptacles, and coat racks, \$17,000."

This item would meet a longstanding need in the Capitol Building itself, providing uniform, attractive directories and signs. It would also standardize some of the more ordinary items of capitol furniture and replace the present random selection of these items with waste receptacles and coat racks of superior design, appropriate to a capitol. The item is recommended.

6. "Modifications to Capitol Complex buildings to provide for safe use by handicapped persons, \$40,000."

The seat of government should be accessible to all citizens. The item is recommended.

7. "Funds for the programming, competition, and preliminary plans and specifications for a facility to park at least 750 cars to serve the west side of the Capitol Complex, \$250,000."

This item is recommended, but with the

following comments: Primary objectives of the CAAPC since its inception have been the removal of automobiles from the mall area and the reduction of the vast expenses of asphalt which mar the approaches to the Capitol from every direction. The CAAPC has no doubt that some additional parking ramps and garages must be provided in the Capitol Area, but it questions whether the state can continue on the assumption that every car entering the Capitol Area should be parked in a state-provided facility. The CAAPC recommends that the state seriously investigate alternatives which reduce the number of state employees who drive into the Capitol Area, whether by means of car pooling, mass transit implementation, remote parking with transit links, or some other method.

As far as the present proposal is concerned, at least three potential sites for the suggested ramp have been identified by the Barton-Aschman study of the CAAPC. One of those sites is underground and two are above grade. The CAAPC desires to work with the Department of Administration and the Legislature to decide upon the most desirable site, but the CAAPC believes the project should be undertaken in conformance with M.S. 1974, Chapter 15.50 and with the Commission's masterplan and zoning ordinance.

#### **OTHER PROPOSALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION UPON WHICH THE CAAPC DESIRES TO COMMUNICATE ITS OBSERVATIONS**

1. "Remodeling of the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors of the State Office Building for use by the Legislature, \$2,295,000."

The CAAPC takes no position upon the Legislature's desire to have the State Office Building remodeled for its use. The CAAPC does suggest, however, that in the interests of long-term economy and efficiency, the State Office Building should be remodeled in a manner that is consistent with a long-range, coherent plan to meet the future office needs of the Legislature and that the degree of remodeling should be related to its anticipated longevity.

If the Legislature desires to remodel the State Office Building, the CAAPC sees no reason to proceed via an architectural competition to obtain the design and therefore recommends that this project specifically be exempted from the competition requirements of Minnesota Statutes 1974, Section 15.50.

2. "Land acquisition in the Capitol Area: Minnesota Education Association Building, \$2,000,000."

The CAAPC takes no position on this proposal at this time. However, the CAAPC offers the following observations: The Commission has believed that it is desirable to restrict the state from operations farther north than Sherburne Avenue in order to preserve large enough blocks of land for alternative residential development nearby to the Capitol and to provide sufficient room for existing private institutions to expand in a manner that will not impede future residential development.

Nevertheless, the CAAPC realizes that the acquisition of the MEA Building could form part of a logical scheme to meet the future needs of the Legislature and its closely allied functions. If the proposal to acquire the building were part of a rational, long-range plan for the Legislature, the CAAPC would support acquisition and re-zoning.

The CAAPC also believes that state land acquisition in the area north of Sherburne has been unwise in one instance and recommends that the state permit re-zoning the block it owns bounded by Como Avenue, Cedar Street, Charles Avenue, and Capitol Heights. Re-zoning would make this plot available for its logical uses — residential or park development.

3. "Office Building for the Public Employees' Retirement Association in the Capitol Area."

The CAAPC takes no position on whether the P.E.R.A. should be permitted to build or whether it should be permitted to build in the Capitol Area. If the Legislature does allow the organization to build in the Capitol Area, however, all requirements of the statutes, the master plan, and the zoning ordinance should be followed.

The CAAPC has indicated to the P.E.R.A. that suitable sites properly zoned for a building of the use and size contemplated are available on the east side of the Capitol Area. The CAAPC would view such a building as the first stage in the implementation of its long desired link between the Capitol Area and downtown Saint Paul. Any building constructed by the P.E.R.A. in the Capitol Area, therefore, should be built in such a fashion as to form an obvious and integral part of such a connecting link.

Since the building as proposed would bring state employees into the Capitol Area who are not presently employed there, additional cars

would come into the area, exacerbating an already saturated parking situation. The parking requirements of the zoning ordinance would also have to be met on the site of the proposed building, and the state should pursue the possibility of building the large proposed ramp in the air rights over the Interstate 94 right-of-way so as to continue the connecting link to Saint Paul. Consideration should be given to acquiring the Taystee Bakery whether or not that site is specifically required for the P.E.R.A. building

because the bakery is in the direct path of the connecting link.

The CAAPC opposes any effort to exempt a P.E.R.A. building in the Capitol Area from the design competition requirements of the statutes and recommends that P.E.R.A. be authorized by the 1975 Legislature to spend only the amounts necessary to obtain a design and construction cost estimate. Building funds could be approved by the Legislative Advisory Commission or by the full Legislature at a later date.

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*"Minnesotans deserve to be proud of their state capitol, which has throughout this century been considered one of the nation's finest. They should be proud too that during the past decade alert citizens and concerned officials have worked together to preserve this outstanding historical monument."*

— The Minnesota Legislative Manual, 1973-1974  
(Saint Paul: State of Minnesota, 1973).

# CAPITOL AREA ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Lieutenant Governor Rudy Perpich, Chairman

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Gary Grefenberg, Executive Secretary

January 10, 1975

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