



ANNUAL JOINT MEETING  
NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION  
AND  
NEBRASKA CAPITOL COMMISSION

AGENDA

Tuesday, November 28, 2023  
Hearing Room 1507  
10:00 a.m.

- 1. Call to Order ..... Governor Pillen, Chair
- 2. Roll Call ..... Interim Capitol Commission Clerk, Tammy Honnor
- 3. \*Review/Approval November 15, 2022, Meeting Minutes ..... Governor Pillen, Chair
- 4. Public Comment for Items Not Listed on the Agenda
- 5. New Business
  - A. Capitol Environs Commission Annual Report ..... Collin Christopher
  - B. Capitol Commission Annual Report ..... Brett Daugherty and Roxanne Smith
  - C. Other Business from the Commissions
- 6. Adjourn

Next Meeting Date: November 2024, Date yet to be Determined

**\*Action Item**

**Annual Joint Meeting of  
The Nebraska Capitol Commission  
And  
The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission**

**Meeting Minutes  
November 15, 2022**

**1. Call to Order**

Chief Justice Heavican, in the absence of Governor Ricketts, called to order the annual joint meeting of the Nebraska Capitol Commission and the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission at 10:00 a.m. in Legislative Hearing Room 1507, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska. Chief Justice Heavican announced that this public meeting was operating under the Open Meetings Act and a copy of the Act is posted at each entrance to the hearing room.

**2. Roll Call**

Nebraska Capitol Commission Members

Present:

Chief Justice Heavican

Sharon Kuska

Doug Carey

Thomas Sanderson

Trent Loos – arrived at 10:05 a.m.

Bob Ripley – Non-voting

Absent:

Governor Ricketts

Speaker Hilgers

Jill Dolberg

Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Members

Present:

Kile Johnson

Karen Nalow

Heidi Cuca

Andrea Gebhart

Delonte Johnson

David Quade

Collin Christopher – Non-voting

Absent:

Ann Post

**3. Review/Approval of the November 18, 2021, Annual Joint Meeting Minutes**

Chief Justice Heavican asked if there was any additions or corrections to the minutes. There being none Chief Justice Heavican asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Johnson MOVED to approve them minutes. Mr. Sanderson SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED (8 Aye, 2 Abstain and 5 Absent).

#### **4. Public Comment for Items Not Listed on the Agenda**

There was no public comment.

#### **5. New Business**

##### **A. Capitol Environs Commission Annual Report**

Collin Christopher, Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department, handed out copies of the 2022 Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission draft annual report to commission members.

Mr. Christopher stated the Commission was created in August of 1988 and is responsible for design review of any new façade or site improvements and any redevelopment or new construction projects within the Capitol Environs District. Mr. Christopher also provided background information on the structure of the membership.

Mr. Christopher gave an overview of the projects the Commission reviewed this year that are highlighted in the annual report.

Chief Justice Heavican asked if there has been any movement on expanding the Mall to the east of the Capitol (J Street). Mr. Christopher replied there aren't any immediate plans at this time on the expansion on J Street, however, this could be reviewed in future planning efforts. Mr. Christopher added the Environs Commission does guide the Planning Department when making decisions on how to move forward on projects.

(A copy of the report can be obtained from the City Planning Department. The draft copy provided at this meeting is also on file at the Office of the Capitol Commission.)

##### **B. Capitol Commission Annual Report – Robert Ripley & Roxanne Smith**

Roxanne Smith handed out the 2022 Capitol Commission annual report to the commissioners and informed them she also had copies of the program for the Cornerstone Centennial for those that missed the event.

Mr. Ripley informed the commission that Ms. Smith was instrumental in organizing the Cornerstone event and is the reporter, editor and publisher of the annual report and the quarterly newsletter. Mr. Ripley thanked Ms. Smith for her dedicated work again this year.

Before giving the Capitol Commission annual report Mr. Ripley commented that the Environs Commission guidelines and design standards have guided an enormous amount of work that has been done in the Capitol Environs the past 34 years. Mr. Ripley thanked his colleagues for their exemplary service in creating the proper setting for the Capitol within the Capital city.

Mr. Ripley said the Capitol Commission has had an active year and the work highlighted in the report is in addition to the work that staff are doing for the HVAC project. Mr. Ripley gave an overview of the programs and highlighted some of the work from the annual report.

Mr. Johnson asked how Mr. Ripley has been able to retain such long-time skilled employees. Mr. Ripley replied since becoming the Office of the Capitol Commission (2004) there has been amazing success in retaining employees because they are dedicated and hardworking people. Mr. Ripley added the staff are a great cohesive group of talented people and he believes they stay because they are committed to and inspired by the building.

Mr. Loos asked what the factors were for more schools not touring the Capitol and is there more that could be done to enhance their visit. Mr. Ripley said although there is a great attendance, Lincoln Schools historically don't send students to tour the Capitol during the school year.

Mr. Ripley asked Ms. Smith to provide input since she deals with the situation daily. Ms. Smith provided the following limiting factors:

- Long distances some students are riding on a bus. Also, buses are often shared with athletic departments that need to transport athletes to/from evening sporting events.
- The Capitol itself is a limiting factor. There are seven (7) tours that can be given a day which limits the number of schools tours per day. Also, there is limited physical space within the Capitol's public spaces that are part of the tour.
- The most recent competition is tours of the football stadium and schools are now planning their day around the stadium tour.

Ms. Smith added there are educational opportunities via Internet on the Capitol Commission website to assist schools by providing information to include in their curriculum for students who can't visit, which provides the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the building.

- Previously Mrs. Ganem funded a virtual tour of the Capitol. Many schools take an advantage of the virtual tour so they don't have to travel long distances or when they are unable to travel to Lincoln.
- First lady Susanne Shore secured grant money several years ago to provide to schools to pay for buses and the gas to travel to Lincoln for tours.

Mr. Ripley added that providing technology is an ally for learning about the Capitol, although, he didn't believe it is an alternative to being at the Capitol but it is better than not having the experience at all.

Mr. Loos said Loop City schedules a tour every year and the bus ride is a 5 hour round trip. Every year he hears that the students are too rushed going through the Capitol. Mr. Loos agreed that he didn't think a virtual tour alone is nearly as effective, however, if students were able to visit the Capitol and use that personal experience and incorporate the virtual tour there will be a much larger impact.

Chief Justice Heavican added that Court too has had little success of getting Lincoln Schools to come to the Capitol for oral arguments.

Mr. Ripley agreed that the issue may be time and expense, however, if tours could be spread out over 12 months in a year instead of the 3 or 4 months during the busy Legislature session more schools may schedule tours.

Mr. Ripley added that there is no substitute for experiencing the Capitol in person to feel the volume inside the building, hear the sounds and sites that can only be experienced first-hand. A distant second choice is technology which at least gives students some exposure to the building.



Mr. Johnson thanked Mr. Ripley and staff for their attention to detail and the work that they do. Mr. Ripley replied that having the support of the broader community is essential. There is tremendous public support for the work our office is doing to keep the Capitol a universally accepted and enjoyed public asset that is attractive for all people to visit.

Mr. Ripley thanked Mr. Johnson and each of the Environs Commission members for their service on the Environs Commission.

### **C. Other Business from Either Commission**

There was no other business.

### **6. Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chief Justice Heavican asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Sanderson MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Carey SECONDED the motion.

Chief Justice Heavican called for a voice vote to adjourn the meeting. The motion PASSED with a unanimous vote of the members present (11 Ayes, 4 Absent).

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

### **Minutes prepared 11/22/2022 by:**

Tammy Honnor, Interim Clerk for the Capitol Commission  
Office of the Capitol Commission

Minutes APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_



2023

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C  
N

DRAFT

Annual Report | Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission





Chief Standing B  
Justice Administrati

The stone monument in the foreground features a plaque with text, likely a dedication or historical note. The text is too small to read clearly but appears to be a formal inscription.





# NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS

## COMMISSION MEMBERS

Kile Johnson, Chair  
Karen Nalow, Vice-Chair  
David Quade  
Heidi Cuca  
Delonte Johnson  
Ann Post  
Andrea Gebhart

## EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

David Cary, Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department  
Maggie Stuckey-Ross, Lincoln Parks and Recreation  
Brent Flachsbart, State Building Division, Nebraska Department of Administrative Services  
Brett Daugherty, Acting Capitol Administrator

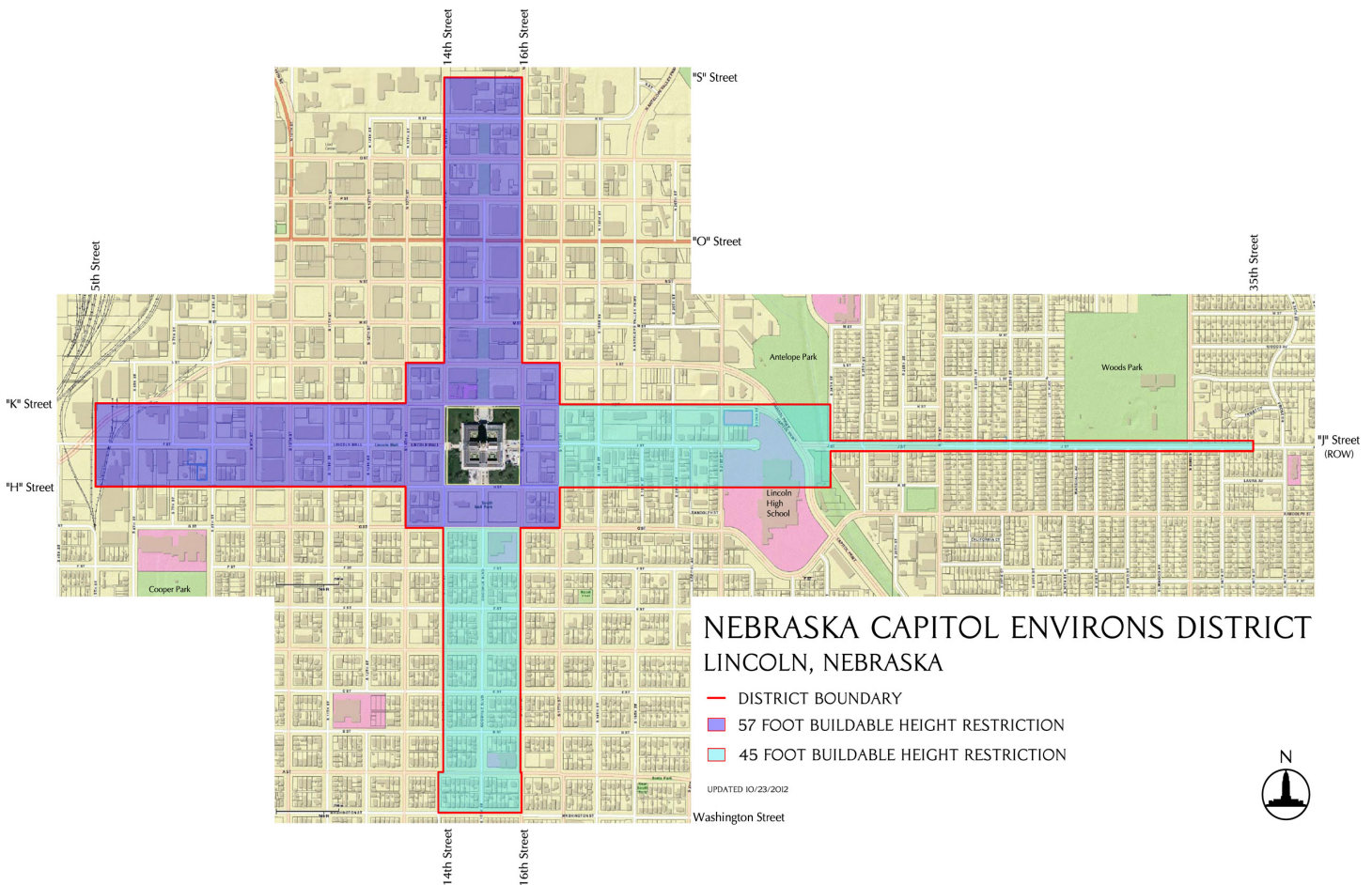
## PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF

Collin Christopher  
Teresa McKinstry  
Paul Barnes

## APPROVED

This document is in draft form - approval date TBD.





*The Nebraska State Capitol, designed by architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue in 1920 and built for the people of Nebraska between 1922 and 1932, is a National Historic Landmark and an aesthetic and historic treasure of our state. The purposes of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission (“the Commission”) are to maintain and enhance a dignified setting for the State Capitol, to encourage appropriate public and private improvements within the Capitol Environs District (“the District”), and to protect vistas to the Capitol which extend the impact and inspiration of the building throughout the city and the surrounding countryside.*

## Background

The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission was established in 1988 to strengthen existing protections for the setting of Nebraska’s landmark State Capitol. The Commission’s voting membership of seven citizen volunteers includes five members appointed by the City of Lincoln and two appointed by the State of Nebraska.

In 2023, Kile Johnson served as chair, Karen Nalow served as vice-chair, and Heidi Cuca, Delonte Johnson, Ann Post, David Quade, and Andrea Gebhart continued as commissioners. The seven appointed citizen members were joined by four ex officio members – the Director of the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department or their designee (David Cary), the Director of Lincoln Parks

and Recreation or their designee (Maggie Stuckey-Ross), the Director of Nebraska Department of Administrative Services or their designee (Brent Flachsbart - State Building Division Administrator), and the Office of the Nebraska Capitol Commission’s Capitol Administrator or their designee (Brett Daugherty). Staffing was provided by the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department, including Collin Christopher, Teresa McKinstry and Paul Barnes.

Though the membership of the Commission has been very consistent in recent years, 2023 did see the departure of two long-serving members. In March, Bob Ripley retired from his position as Capitol Administrator, thus requiring him to give up his status

as an ex-officio member of the Commission. Mr. Ripley has been involved with the Commission since its inception in 1988 and his unrelenting advocacy for the preservation and enhancement of the Capitol Environs is unmatched.

In late October, Karen Nalow announced that she would be stepping down from the Commission to take a position with the City Parks and Recreation Department. Ms. Nalow was first appointed as a commissioner in March of 2011, making her one of the longest serving members in the history of the NCEC. Beyond that, her work at Clark & Enersen over the last two decades has been instrumental in shaping and enhancing the urban fabric of the Capitol environs.

Both Mr. Ripley and Ms. Nalow will be greatly missed in their official capacities with the Commission.

The Commission is required by Section 27.56.060 of the Lincoln Municipal Code to meet at least once per quarter. The Commission met eight times in 2023.

## Project Review Summary

In 2023, the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission reviewed eight unique projects, with some receiving multiple reviews. Those projects consisted of three city/county projects, two state projects, one TIF project, and two private development projects.

# 8

## UNIQUE PROJECTS



# 3

CITY/COUNTY  
PROJECTS



# 2

STATE  
PROJECTS



# 1

TIF  
PROJECTS



# 2

PRIVATE  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECTS



## DAS Building

1526 K Street



In February, the Commission approved the State's plans for a series of renovations at the 1526 K Street property. This work included replacement of sidewalks, ramps, steps and railings, cleaning and repair of existing retaining walls, reroofing and replacement of the rooftop mechanical screen wall, and new egress lighting. Much of that work has since been completed.



## State Smoking Shelters

1526 K Street and 1501 M Street

In January, and then again in March, the Commission reviewed and approved the State's proposal to place smoking shelters on their properties at 1526 K Street and 1501 M Street. The 1526 K Street shelter would be located in the parking lot along the 16th Street, while the 1501 M Street shelter would sit adjacent to Centennial Mall. The State expects that the shelters would *"provide refuge from the elements, be maintenance friendly, constructed with resilient materials, have proper smoking receptacles, provide adequate ventilation for passively exhausting smoke from the interior side of the shelter, and have design qualities that support the City of Lincoln Capitol Environs Design Guidelines and Centennial Mall."* Aesthetically, the shelters are designed to complement the look of Centennial Mall, including laser cut, native grass-themed panels.



## NCSA Building

440 S 13th Street



In April, the Commission approved plans to develop the vacant lot at 440 S 13th Street. This is a site that was demolished in 2020 and will soon be occupied by the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. The project includes a new two-story, 30' tall building clad with brick that will sit at the corner of the S 13th Street and K Street intersection, fronting both streets with no setbacks. The footprint for the building is estimated to be 72' x 72' in size. The existing parking lot will be resurfaced and restriped, bending around the building in an "L" shape and supporting 42 parking stalls.

In June, the applicant returned with a landscape plan that the Commission approved. In addition to providing the typical parking lot landscaping, the applicant agreed to restore some of the streetscape beds in the public right-of-way. The project is currently under construction.





## Pershing Block Redevelopment

### 220 Centennial Mall S

In July, the Commission approved a modified proposal from the developers of the Pershing Block for their first phase of development. The modifications from the previously approved proposal can be grouped into two categories:

- **Façade modifications** – The most noticeable façade change relates to the color palette for the façade. The original plans submitted in 2022 showed a light brick product on the lower level with a darker brick on the upper levels. The updated plans offer a reverse approach – light brick below and dark brick above. Beyond that, the window placement/transparency appears to have been modified in subtle ways that do not have a material effect on the quality of the facades.
- **Building setback modifications** – The 2022 plans were processed and reviewed by staff with the assumption that the building was being built to the M, N and 16th Street property lines, as is standard for new development in downtown Lincoln. The modified proposal shows a 3’ setback from S 16th Street, and a 4.5’ setback on the M and N Street sides.

Ultimately, the Commission was supportive of the façade modifications and understanding of the setback modifications, given the complexities of the development plans for this site. Shortly after this approval, demolition began on Pershing Auditorium in order to allow for redevelopment to begin.



## Community Action Barrier

1821/1843 K Street



The Commission also approved an update to Community Action's plans for a protective barrier along the K Street side of the their building at 1821/1843 K Street in July. Community Action had previously received approval to locate a cable restraint system barrier in front of their building to protect the building and its users from vehicles failing to negotiate the turn off of Antelope Valley Parkway. In July, they submitted a landscape plan to help soften the look of the barrier system from the public right-of-way. Though the barrier is now in place, the landscaping has yet to be installed.

## Bike Racks on Lincoln Mall

1023 Lincoln Mall



July also saw the Commission approve placement of two new bike racks on Lincoln Mall, in front of Lincoln Literacy at 1023 Lincoln Mall. The bikes were proposed as part of a bike rack request program that the city initiated in 2023. Though the Commission had concerns about allowing bike parking to front the Mall, they ultimately decided to grant the request to help encourage additional activity. They also asked the city to explore bike rack standards in 2024 to ensure that future installations fit the urban fabric of Lincoln Mall.



# Lincoln/Lancaster Co. Civil Protective Custody Center

635 J Street



In August, the Commission approved façade and site improvements for the Lincoln/Lancaster County Civil Protective Custody Center at 635 J Street. The façade-related work is to include repair to the existing brick and stone, the addition of exterior tile, and new doors, windows, signage, and an entry canopy. Proposed site improvements include new sidewalks and stairs.



In September, the Commission reviewed a request by LES to locate new switchgear equipment in the vacated alley just east of the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte sculpture. While the Commission understood the energy needs created by added demand in the area, they worried about adding another utility box in an area already full of equipment. To address this concern, they asked LES to work with State and City staff to come up with a screening solution that would limit the visual impact of the utility equipment from Centennial Mall.

After on-site discussions with said staff, LES came back with a revised proposal in November that showed the addition of a double row of native grasses that would help offset the visual impact of the switchgear.



1515 F Street Infill Housing - In Progress



St. Mary's Catholic Church Renovation - Complete



2 Landmark Centre on Lincoln Mall - Complete

## Looking Forward

In 2024, the Commission will be asked to review a number of significant projects, including the streetscape designs for phase I of the Pershing block redevelopment and the portion of the Downtown Corridors streetscape project that intersects the Capitol Environs District. There are also a couple of redevelopment projects in the early planning stages that could make their way to the Commission in 2024. Beyond that, the Commission will continue to work with staff to look for ways to improve upon relevant design standards to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the Capitol Environs District.





# NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



## NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission will hold a meeting on **Tuesday, November 28, 2023**. The meeting will convene at **11:00 a.m.** in Hearing Room 1510 on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor of the **Nebraska State Capitol**, 1445 K Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. For more information, please contact the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department at 402-441-7491.

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### AGENDA

November 28, 2023

1. Approval of meeting record from [September 21, 2023](#)

#### Public Hearing and Action

2. [LES site work](#) at 1501 M Street and 332 Centennial Mall S ([LES](#), [UDR23128](#))

#### Discuss & Advise

3. Staff report & miscellaneous

***ACCOMMODATION NOTICE:** The City of Lincoln complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guidelines. Ensuring the public's access to and participating in public meetings is a priority for the City of Lincoln. In the event you are in need of a reasonable accommodation in order to attend or participate in a public meeting conducted by the City of Lincoln, please contact the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights at 402-441-7624, or the City Ombudsman at 402-441-7511, as soon as possible before the scheduled meeting date in order to make your request.*

<https://linclanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-Boards/Shared Documents/Boards/NCEC/Agendas/2023/112823.docx>



## MEETING RECORD

*Advanced public notice of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission meeting was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website.*

**NAME OF GROUP:** NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Friday, September 22, 2023, 8:30 a.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Heidi Cuca, Andrea Gebhart, Delonte Johnson, Kile Johnson and Karen Nalow; (Ann Post and David Quade absent).

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Collin Christopher, David Cary and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; J.J. Yost with Parks and Recreation; Matt Hansen with the Nebraska Capitol Commission; Bob Ripley; Michael Weskamp with Lincoln Electric System; and other interested citizens.

**STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:** Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Meeting

Chair K. Johnson called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

K. Johnson then called for a motion approving the minutes of the regular meeting held August 25, 2023. Motion for approval made by Nalow, seconded by Cuca and carried 5-0: Cuca, Gebhart, D. Johnson, K. Johnson and Nalow voting 'yes'; Post and Quade absent.

### **LES WORK AT 332 CENTENNIAL MALL:**

**August 25, 2023**

Collin Christopher stated this review is for some additional utility equipment in the corridor adjacent to Centennial Mall, between the State parking garage and Scottish Rite. He noted this application came in a few days past the legal deadline for advertising. If this group thinks this project is a candidate for no material effect, that can be done. If the commission feels that more needs to be done to screen the equipment, it can come back for a public hearing in the coming months. He showed some images of the general area. He provided some imagery where he thinks it would be largely not visible, due to the existing screening associated with the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte sculpture. There is one view from Centennial Mall where the equipment would be visible and could be addressed with additional screening. If additional screening is preferred, one thing to consider is the large number of utilities running through the corridor. Karen Nalow was involved with the sculpture project and may know more specifics regarding the utilities.

Michael Weskamp appeared. They are looking at installing an additional piece of equipment. This is driven in part by the redevelopment of the Pershing site. They are also looking at how they can address their regional system. This will require a larger piece of equipment. They believe this is the most efficient area.

D. Johnson inquired about the size of the existing cabinet as compared to the cabinet that LES (Lincoln Electric System) wants to install. Weskamp stated the proposed cabinet is identical to a piece that already exists there. He pointed it out on an image of the site.

K. Johnson wondered if the current box was in place before the statue was placed. Weskamp believes they may have gone in at the same time. Nalow believes the existing box shown was there before the statue.

Bob Ripley questioned what the box serves. Weskamp stated it effectively provides a breaker for a larger area.

K. Johnson inquired about the timing of the project. Weskamp stated they are ahead of schedule. The equipment needs to be online before the Pershing project. They are hoping to be completed next year, or the year after. They hope to get it done in advance of that project. K. Johnson asked if any screening is being suggested. Weskamp noted they are looking to stakeholders first. K. Johnson asked if screening were involved, if it would present a future maintenance issue. Weskamp doesn't believe so. Even if there were some screening, he believes they could get their machines back there. K. Johnson believes there needs to be screening for pre-existing and proposed structures. He realizes that the statue presents some screening, but pointed out that the stone work below the statue doesn't give much screening. He would prefer to see some screening and believes it would be consistent with the guidelines.

Nalow believes we should be open to what screening is placed there. There are a lot of utility lines there. Part of what made this area particularly difficult is there are north/south, east/west and angled utilities running through the corridor. She inquired if there has been any discussion with Parks and Recreation. Weskamp replied no. This is on State of Nebraska property. They recommended we appear before this body. Screening would most likely be on State property.

Ripley asked why this is not being located on the Pershing block since this piece is being added for the Pershing block. Weskamp responded this is an artery that runs from the Scottish Rite Temple to the parking garage. This steps down to a cable that can be fed down to a distribution loop. It is the result of a number of redevelopment projects being proposed and the added demand they will create. It is much more expensive to extend an artery, as opposed to a distribution loop. The zoning allows the Pershing block to build to the property line. We look at the surrounding area in situations like this. Ripley asked if this is an installment to the Pershing block. He wondered if LES will be adding more boxes like this as the block is developed. He further wondered if there will be a series of these. Weskamp stated this is the beginning of a switch loop. Ultimately, they will loop the underground cable to another piece blocks away. This will serve the entire area. This isn't geared specifically toward the Pershing development, so much as geared toward the added development in the area. Ripley see this as adding more to the very thing we are trying to screen. It seems contrary to what we are trying to do in the Environs. He believes accommodations would be made by LES in some way. If this ends up being the outdoor equipment closet for this block, he

has concerns. This is an area we are already trying to screen. He believes there might be blocks that could be screened better and not visible to Centennial Mall.

K. Johnson asked if there were more locations planned on Centennial Mall. Weskamp is not aware of any. This sets LES up for two additional distribution loops. He doesn't have any reason to believe they will need more on top of that. K Johnson asked if there are any more plans to place additional equipment in this area between the two buildings. It is a narrow area. Weskamp replied no.

J.J. Yost wanted to add a few thoughts. He believes it is important to note that the back of the vertical wall is the backdrop to the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte statue. There are both north/south and east/west utilities. Parks and Recreation had looked at landscaping as part of the statue. Taylor junipers were planted on the back side of the retaining wall. Anything further down the alley, the space is unavailable for planting due to utilities that run there. This was the most challenging spot for a statue. There is not any more opportunity for more plantings. There is also a storm drain behind the wall. He wanted to emphasize that anything to the east of the bollard is State property. Centennial Mall is in the forefront and there is State property to the east. They had to coordinate with the State to get access to this property for the statue installation. He doesn't think that another box will have a negative impact. From a Parks and Recreation standpoint, the department is not opposed to this.

K. Johnson asked for Yost's opinion on any suggested screening, if there were to be any. Yost believes since there isn't a planting opportunity, perhaps there could be some kind of fence panel to block the view. It would have to be in coordination with the State. He noted that this area couldn't be blocked off so much that equipment couldn't be reached if needed.

Cuca remembers when this group first saw drawings of the statue. The proposed trees behind the statue were depicted as much larger. She asked if the trees will grow to any extent. Yost noted they were not able to go back with as large of trees as they wanted. He pointed out the Taylor junipers. Those will get eight to ten feet tall. Due to the soil, they might not get to their full growth potential. There is one particular angle that is difficult to screen off.

Cuca asked if this is the only spot where new equipment can be placed. Weskamp stated they considered a few other locations. This is the best location from an efficiency standpoint.

K. Johnson inquired about the color of the proposed cabinet. Weskamp stated it would be the standard green color.

D. Johnson agrees with what was said. He doesn't know that the view would be any worse with one more box. Screening would be ideal. Consolidating this equipment to one area seems better, as opposed to being spread out in multiple locations.

Gebhart would echo those comments. She would like the applicant to investigate what kind of screening could go there.

**STAFF REPORT AND MISCELLANEOUS:**

- Christopher noted that the joint meeting with the Nebraska Capitol Commission is scheduled for November 28, 2023.
- Gebhart asked if there has been any progress on the YMCA site. It is starting to look a little unkempt. Christopher will look into it.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

<https://linclanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-Boards/Shared Documents/Boards/NCEC/Minutes/2023/092223.docx>

## NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER	Urban Design Record #23128
APPLICATION TYPE	Certificate of Appropriateness
ADDRESS/LOCATION	332 Centennial Mall S/1501 M Street
HEARING DATE	November 28, 2023
ADDITIONAL MEETINGS	September 22, 2034 (discussion only)
APPLICANT	Michael Weskamp, 402-473-3274, <a href="mailto:mweskamp@les.com">mweskamp@les.com</a>
STAFF CONTACT	Collin Christopher, 402-441-6370, <a href="mailto:cchristopher@lincoln.ne.gov">cchristopher@lincoln.ne.gov</a>

### RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

#### Summary of Request

In an effort to serve added load demands in the area, such as the redevelopment of the Pershing block, LES is planning to complete utility work in the vacated alley corridor between the Scottish Rite building (332 Centennial Mall S) and the State parking garage (1501 M Street). As it relates to the purview of the Capitol Environs Commission, this work would include the addition of a new utility cabinet that would be located just east of the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte sculpture.

At the September meeting, this item was discussed, and it was suggested by the Commission that LES explore options to screen the equipment from Centennial Mall, beyond what would already be screened by the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte sculpture. Following that meeting, City Planning and Parks and Recreation staff met with Karen Nalow and representatives from LES and the State of Nebraska on-site to discuss alternatives.

After discussing the underground utility issues and typical snow removal operations, city staff made the recommendation to LES to pursue a landscape screen with the use of ornamental grasses already present along Centennial Mall. While this approach does not fully screen the new utility box, it does provide additional screening for some of the existing equipment in this corridor. The opinion of staff is that a more substantial, permanent screen might just draw more attention to the equipment in this area and distract from the beauty of Centennial Mall. Karen Nalow agreed with this assessment and offered some suggestions for plant species.

From there, Planning staff worked with LES to develop a planting plan that reflected the agreed upon solution from the on-site meeting.

#### Compatibility with the Design Standards

Guideline 18.12 provides clear direction on how utilities should be treated in relation to the malls. While the work completed as part of the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte sculpture installation provides some screening of this equipment from Centennial Mall, the question in front of the Commission is whether additional screening should be required and what form that screening should take.

**Guideline 18.12:**

Utilities, dumpsters, service areas, and the like should be located as inconspicuously as possible, and screened from Capitol Square and the Malls with permanent materials which are compatible with the adjacent buildings.

**Recommendations**

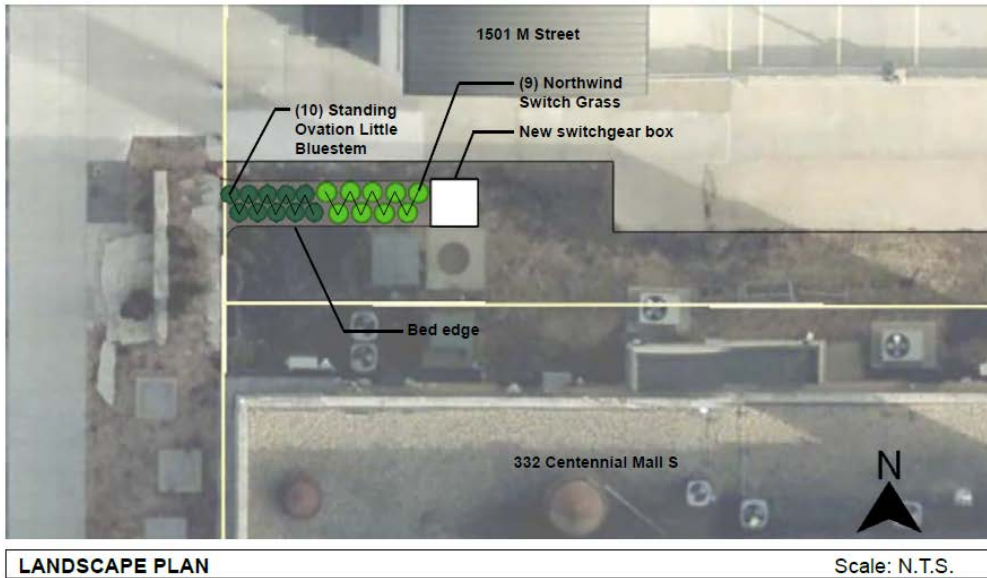
Having been involved in the on-site discussions, planning staff is supportive of the proposed screening solution and recommends approval. While a more permanent wall or fence might be more effective at fully screening the utility equipment in this area, it may also draw more attention to said equipment and distract from the Mall. One of the most successful aspects of the redesign of Centennial Mall is the use of native perennials throughout, and the proposed solution just continues that concept into this corridor.

ATTACHMENT A – Location Map





# ATTACHMENT B – Landscape Plan



**Northwind Switch Grass**  
 Height: 4' - 5'  
 Spread: 2' - 3'



**Standing Ovation Little Bluestem**  
 Height: 3' - 4'  
 Spread: 2' - 3'

**Plan Notes**

- Plants to be offset 2' from the concrete pathway to allow for snow removal operations without damaging the plant material.
- The landscape beds shall have a natural, spade edge along it's north and south perimeters.
- The landscape beds shall be mulched with triple ground, dark hardwood mulch devoid of any dyes.

**ATTACHMENT C – Before and After**



*View from Centennial Mall of the existing equipment*



*View from Centennial Mall of the existing equipment with the proposed utility box and landscape screening added*



ATTACHMENT D – Existing Conditions Photos



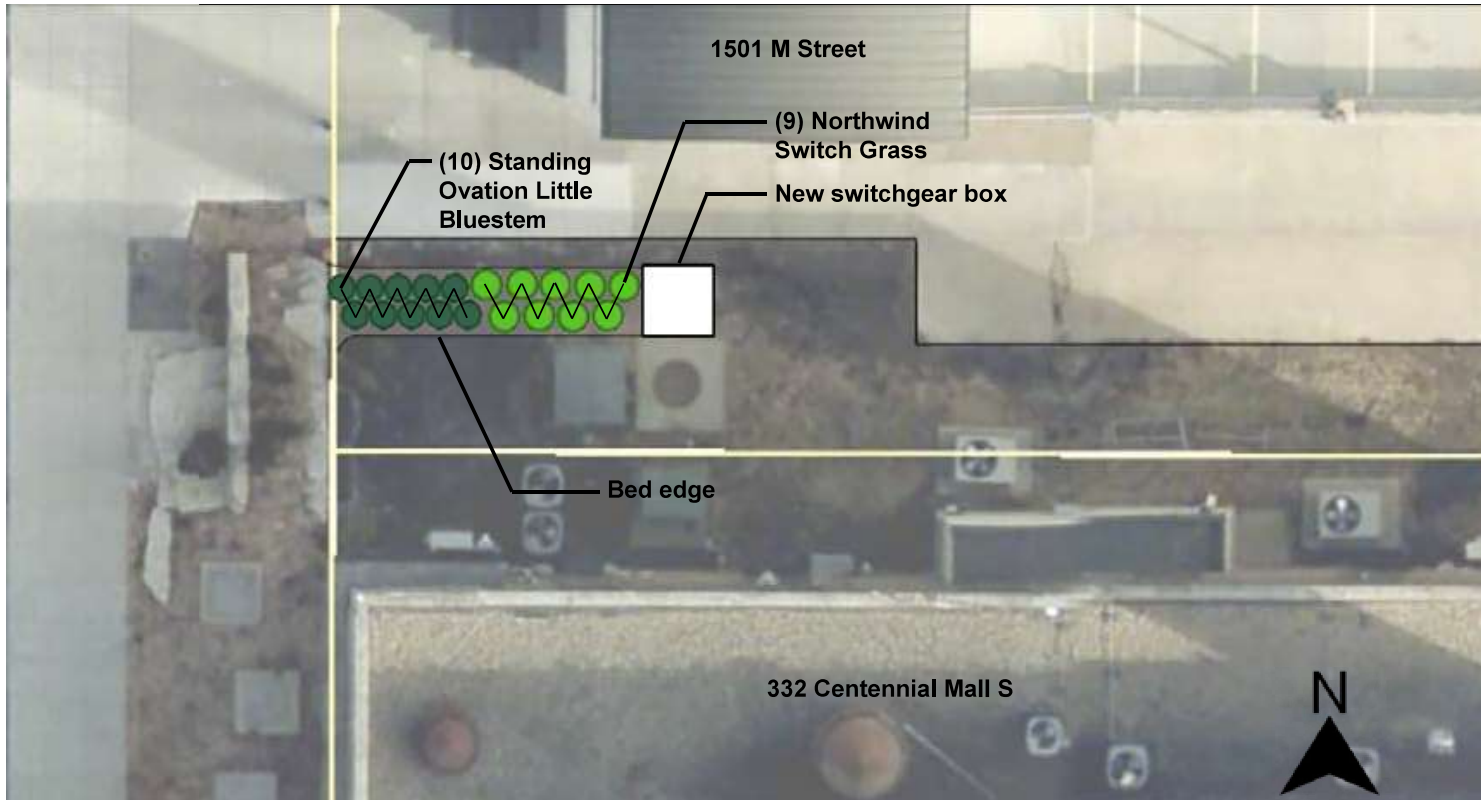












**LANDSCAPE PLAN**

**Scale: N.T.S.**



Northwind Switch Grass

Height: 4' - 5'  
Spread: 2' - 3'



Standing Ovation Little Bluestem

Height: 3' - 4'  
Spread: 2' - 3'

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