

**City of Lincoln
Planning**

Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission
Agenda

The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission will hold a scheduled public meeting on Thursday, March 26, 2009. The meeting will convene at **8:00 a.m.** in **Room 206, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street**, Lincoln, Nebraska, to consider the following agenda. For more information, please contact the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department at 441-7491.

Agenda of March 26, 2009

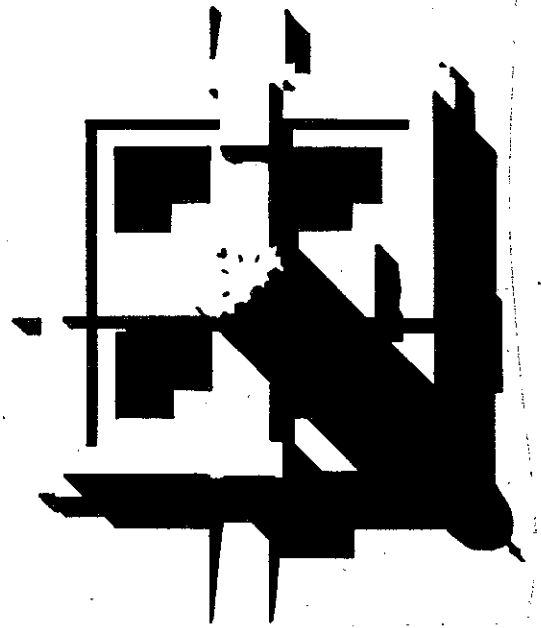
1. Approval of meeting notes of [February 26, 2009](#).

Hearing and Recommendation

2. Amendment to Lincoln Center Redevelopment Plan/ Lincoln Mall Redevelopment Project (Urban Development Department)

Discussion

3. Review of [1986 South and East Malls](#) plans
 4. Staff report: LB450, LES Open House on transmission line siting process, etc.
 5. Miscellaneous
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Nebraska Capitol Environs

East and South Mall Plan

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I) Introduction

This plan for improvement of the Nebraska State Capitol Environs, especially of the east and south axes, is an outgrowth of the East and South Mall Proposal of 1984 issued following a "charrette" by the Univ. of Nebraska College of Architecture. In 1985 the Lincoln Foundation commissioned Alfieri Sinclair and Hille, Architects (ASH), and Kim Todd, landscape architect, to develop further the "charrette" design. The ASH/Todd designs are the basis for the public improvements described in this plan for "J" Street from 16th Street to the Capitol Parkway ("East Mall") and for South 15th Street from "H" to "A" Streets ("South Mall"). The implementation concepts and broader goals also incorporated into this plan are drawn from The Nebraska Capital and Environs Plan of 1975 (UN-L, College of Architecture), the Urban Design Plan for the Nebraska Capitol Environs of 1977 (Nebr. Capitol Environs Advisory Planning Committee), the 1984 East and South Mall Proposal, and from recent discussions of the ASH/Todd design among concerned citizens, neighborhood representatives, and private, city, and state agencies.

II) Brief History of the Capitol Environs

In 1921, with the selection of Bertram G. Goodhue's tower-dominated design for the new State Capitol, it became evident that something would need to be done to protect and enhance the visual dominance of the Capitol tower within the city. The City took the lead that year by enacting building height restrictions within the vicinity of the Capitol, and among other items, adopted a comprehensive city zoning ordinance which called for opening wide boulevards on axis with the Capitol as recommended by Goodhue.

By 1927, with the new Capitol well underway, City, State and University leaders formed the first official planning body for the Capitol environs. This Capitol Environs Committee spearheaded the effort to open 15th Street between "K" and "R" Streets to form a mall 120 feet wide. At this time 15th Street was terminated north of "O" Street by commercial and residential structures. Among eight other specific proposals by this body were the following:

Open "J" Street east of the Capitol to a width of 120 feet to the city limits as soon as practical, and

Locate the future Governor's Mansion on the centerline of 15th Street between "A" and Washington Streets.

Since "J" Street west of the Capitol was already 120 feet wide on axis with the Capitol and since the series of avenue medians on 15th Street south of the building to "A" Street were already in place by 1913, no specific recommendations were made at this time for the west and south axes of the Capitol.

The State's Centennial in 1967 saw the implementation of the first phase of a formal mall from the Capitol north seven blocks on "R" Street at the university campus ("Centennial Mall"). In 1983, the City, in association with business and civic leaders, completed the Lincoln Mall from the Capitol west four blocks, terminating at the County-City Building. To date, nothing has been attempted for the East and South Malls, while the surrounding neighborhood areas have fallen into a state of dormancy, waiting for direction and new life.

III) The East Mall and South Mall Plans

THE EAST MALL PLAN

The concept of a mall on "J" Street east of the Capitol was initially proposed by the first Capitol Environs Committee in 1927. Although this joint City-State body managed to create the needed right of way for a mall north from the Capitol seven blocks to "R" Street, nothing has been done to realize a similar goal to the east. The major jogs in the alignment of the street centerline and the varying widths of street rights of way east of the building have proven to date to be formidable obstacles. However, such a goal might well have been achieved over the past fifty years had a long-range plan been in effect to guide this improvement.

As a result, the proposed East Mall works within the existing physical limits of this site which accommodates a pair of axes; one on line with the building tower and a second on the center of "J" Street east of 18th Street to Capitol Parkway. The formal development of this Mall begins at the intersection of Capitol Parkway where a crescent of evergreen trees on the east side of the Parkway embraces the entrance of Antelope Park/Lewis Recreation Area and the bicycle path. The west side of the intersection is highlighted by a focal point of a planting/seating area on axis with the Capitol tower and located in the park space in front of Lincoln High School. (See drawing E5.)

From this focal planting/seating area near Lincoln High, a six foot wide sidewalk extends westward on the centerline of the Capitol through the Lincoln High School Park to form a wide pedestrian sidewalk on the south side of

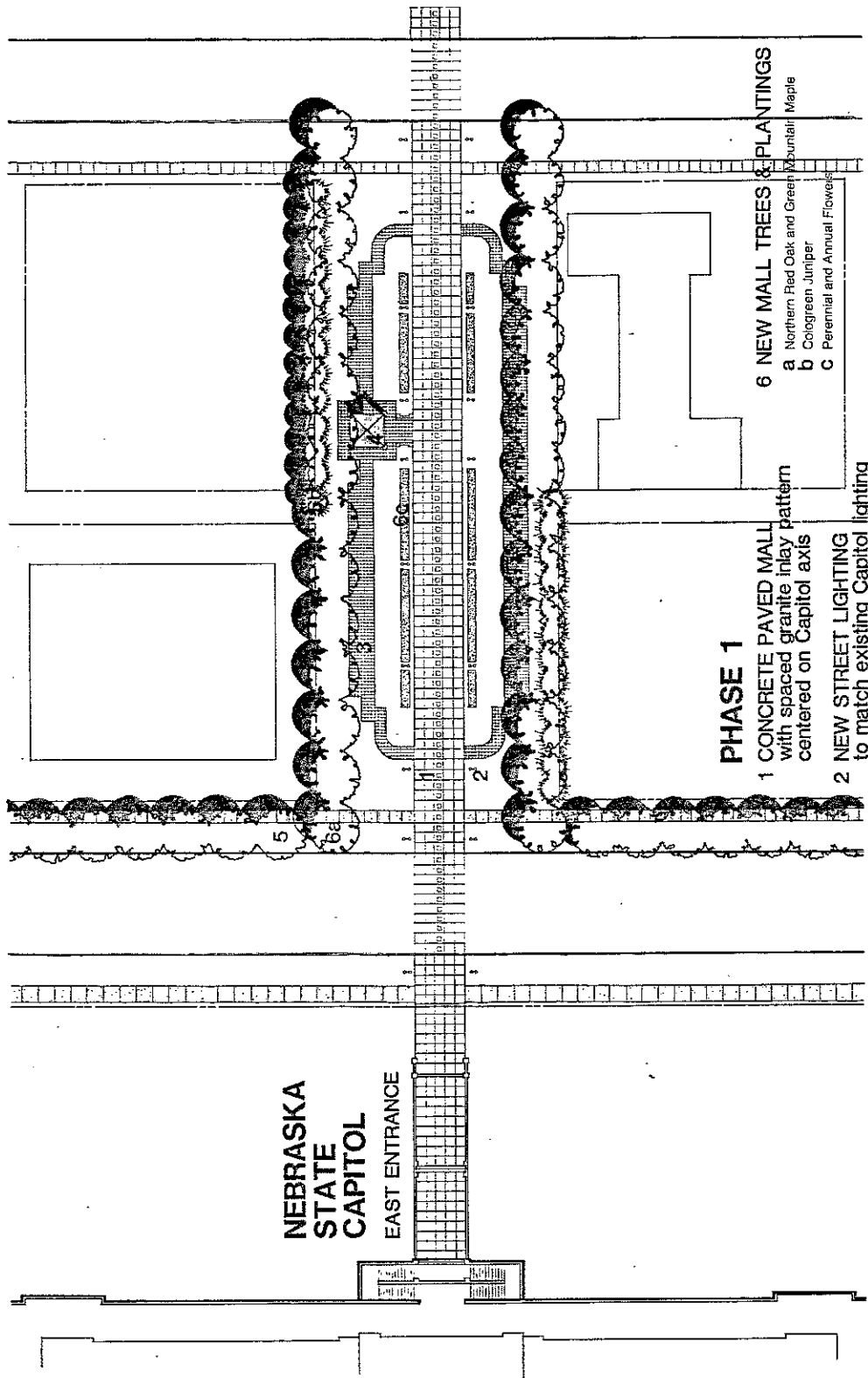
"J" Street to the closure of the street between 17th and 18th Streets. (See drawings E2 to E4.) Along this pedestrian walk from Capitol Parkway to 18th Street, the south side of the walk is lined with smaller under-story trees and the north side of the street is lined with larger over-story trees which address the larger scale of the automobile. Capitol Avenue, which is on axis with First Plymouth Church to the south, is acknowledged by a nodal development with a plaza and marker along the south side of the mall.

The shift in street alignment at 18th Street is accommodated by the closure of "J" Street to create a mini-park from 17th Street to the middle of the block toward 18th. This mini-park not only provides green space for this neighborhood but also a transition for the shift in street alignment which occurs in the block. This tree canopied mini-park temporarily blocks visibility of the Capitol tower and upon exiting toward 17th Street a person is guided to the centerline of the formal pedestrian mall created by the closure of "J" Street between 16th and 17th Streets. (See drawing E1.) This formal block-long pedestrian approach is centered on a 25 foot wide walk which mirrors the existing east exit walk from the Capitol. This primary walk is flanked by parallel secondary walks which access seating areas at the edge of the mall under rows of large over-story trees. The islands of green space which separate these three walks create planting beds for flowers and accommodate the start of an ornamental pedestrian-scale street lighting program which would initially terminate to the east at Capitol Parkway. The long-range goal is to extend this street lighting program, along with street tree trimming and planting, as far as 33rd Street at Woods Park, where the Capitol Tower initially comes into prominent view.

CAPITOL "J" STREET ENVIRONS EAST MALL 1

"16"

"17"

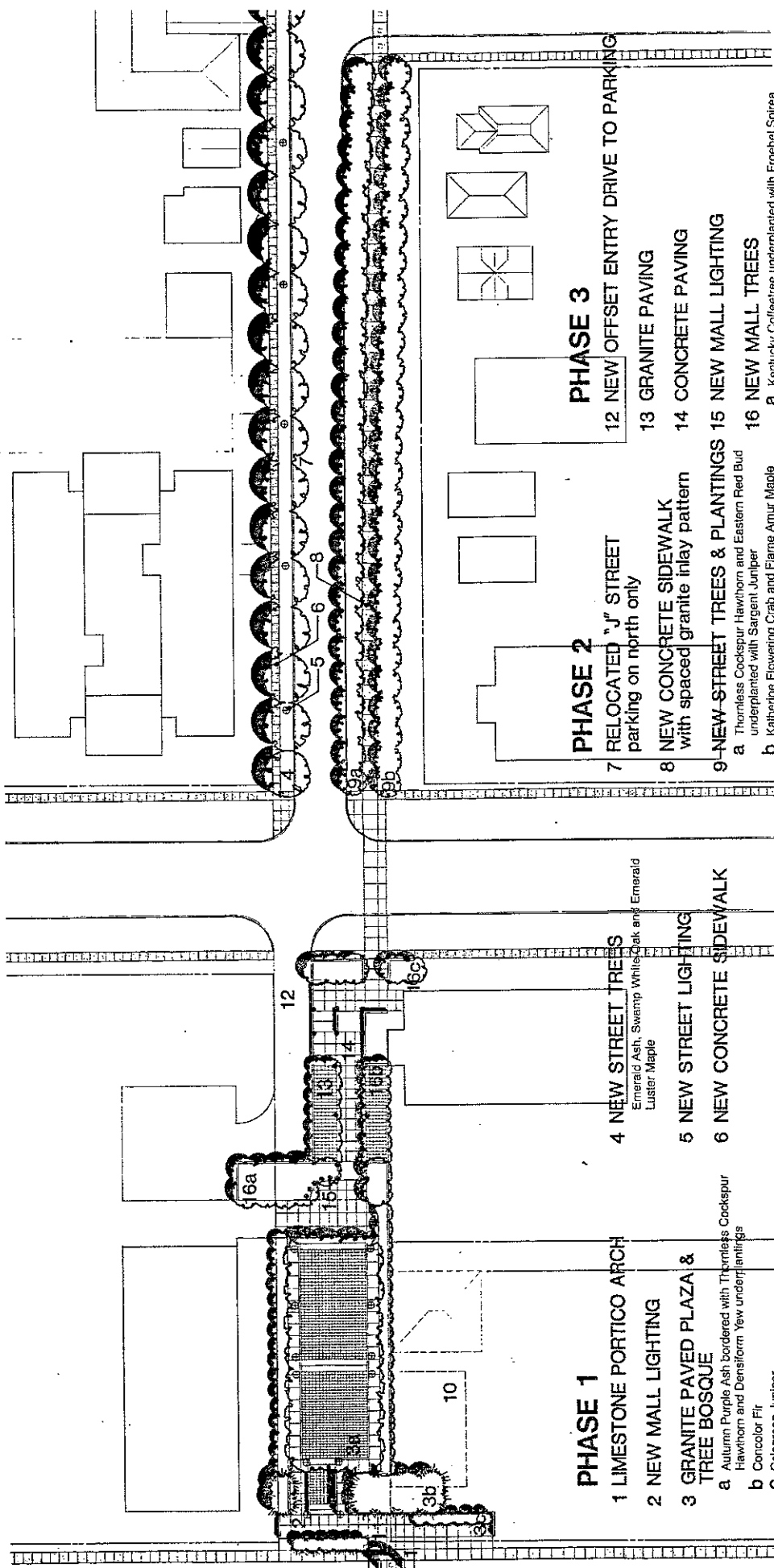


PHASE 1

- 1 CONCRETE PAVED MALL
with spaced granite inlay pattern
centered on Capitol axis
- 2 NEW STREET LIGHTING
to match existing Capitol lighting
- 3 GRANITE PAVING
- 4 GEORGE W. NORRIS MEMORIAL
- 5 NEW STREET TREES
Northern Red Oak
- 6 NEW MALL TREES & PLANTINGS
 - a Northern Red Oak and Green Mountain Maple
 - b Cologreen Juniper
 - c Perennial and Annual Flowers

CAPITOL ENVIRONS "J" STREET EAST MALL 2

"18"

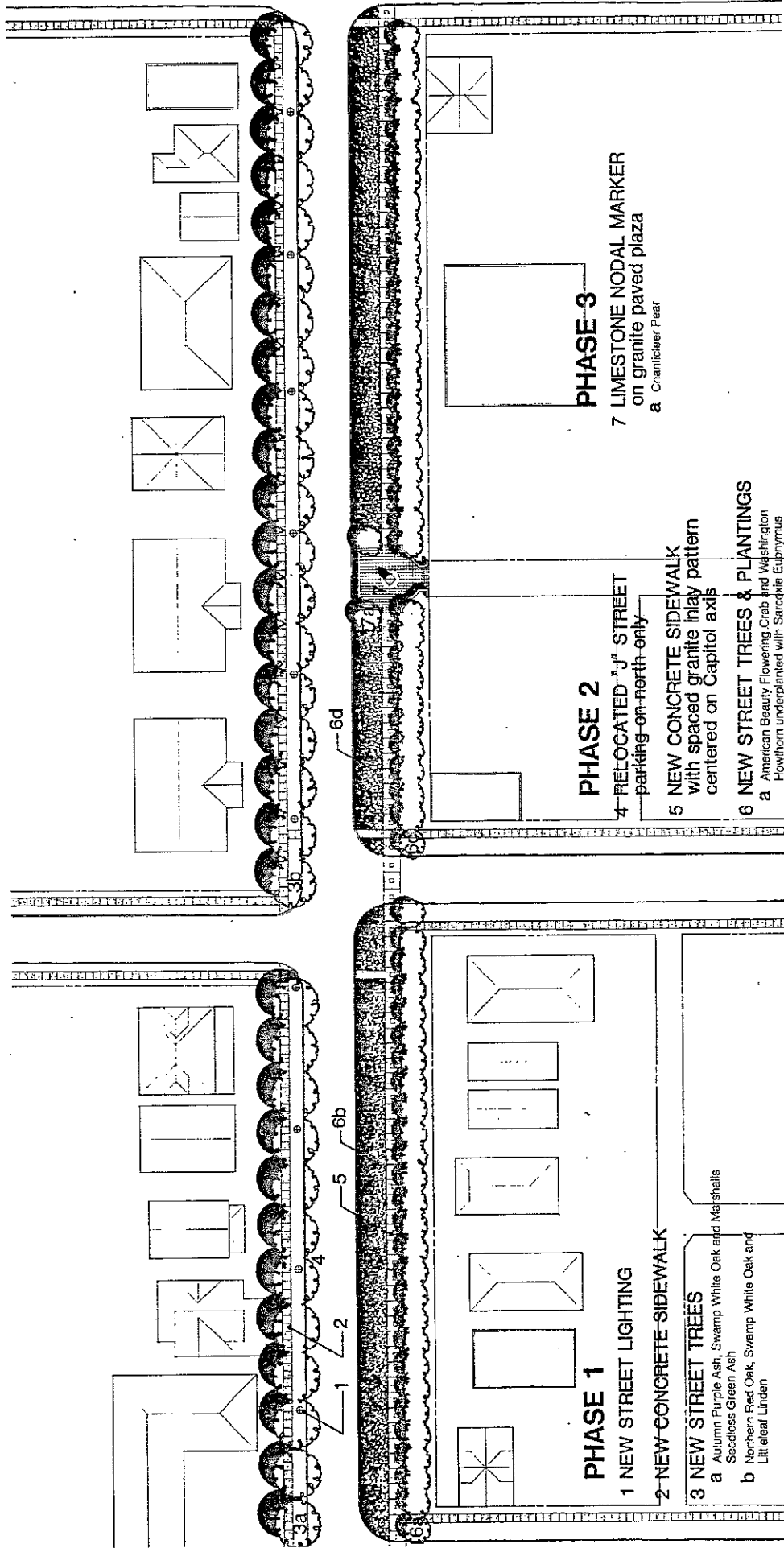


10 REMOVE EXISTING HOUSES

11 AXIS SHIFT TRANSITION WALK

"J" STREET CAPITOL ENVIRONS EAST MALL 3

"20"

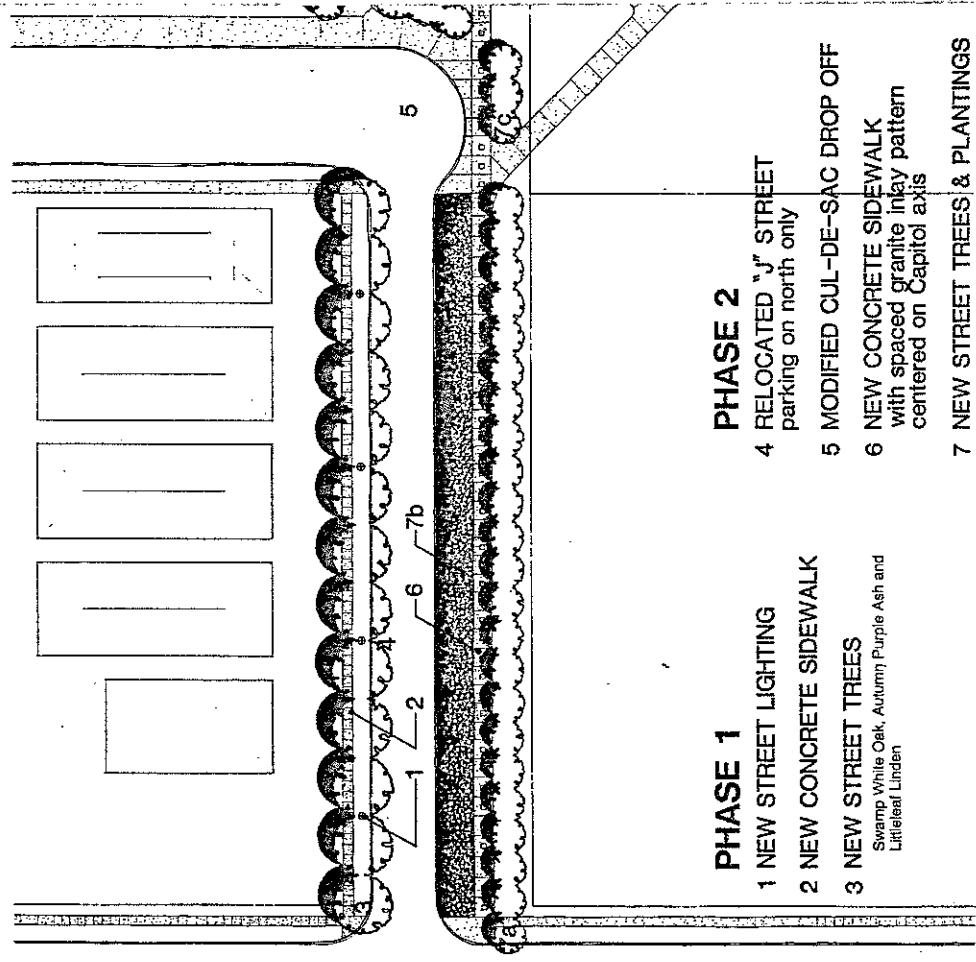


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"J" STREET
EAST MALL

"21"

"22"



PHASE 1

- 1 NEW STREET LIGHTING
- 2 NEW CONCRETE SIDEWALK
- 3 NEW STREET TREES
 - Swamp White Oak, Autumn Purple Ash and Littleleaf Linden

PHASE 2

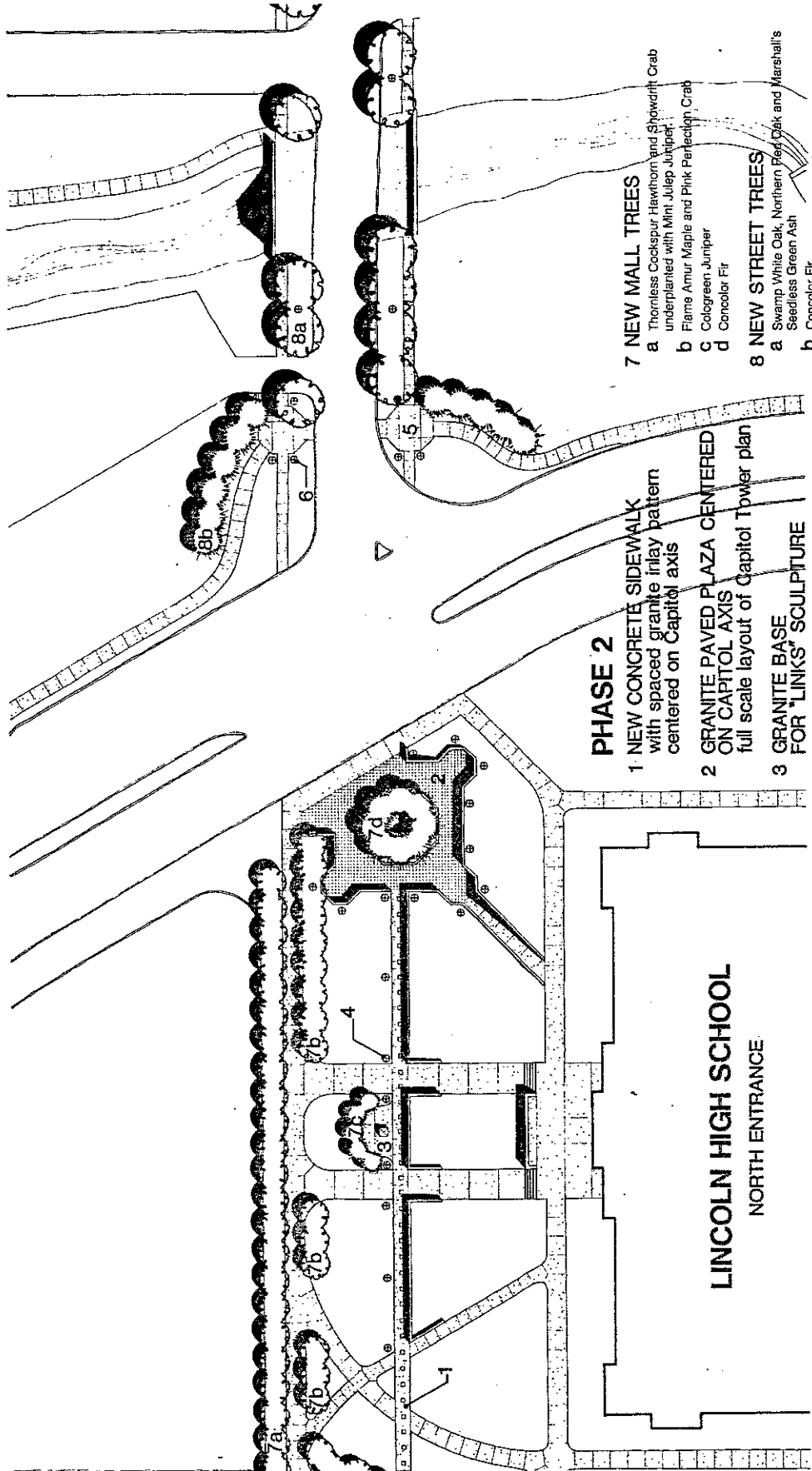
- 4 RELOCATED "J" STREET parking on north only
- 5 MODIFIED CUL-DE-SAC DROP OFF
- 6 NEW CONCRETE SIDEWALK with spaced granite inlay pattern centered on Capitol axis
- 7 NEW STREET TREES & PLANTINGS
 - a. Kalmine Flowering Crab and Flame Amur Maple
 - b. Sargent Juniper and Kelsey Dogwood
 - c. Washington Hawthorn

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CAPITOL ENVIRONS "J" STREET EAST MALL 5

PARKWAY

"24"



PHASE 2

- 1 NEW CONCRETE SIDEWALK
with spaced granite inlay pattern
centered on Capitol axis
- 2 GRANITE PAVED PLAZA CENTERED
ON CAPITOL AXIS
full scale layout of Capitol Tower plan
- 3 GRANITE BASE
FOR "LINKS" SCULPTURE
- 4 NEW MALL LIGHTING
- 5 NEW BIKEPATH NODES
- 6 NEW STREET LIGHTING

7 NEW MALL TREES

- a Thornless Cockspur Hawthorn and Showdrift Crab
underplanted with Mini Julep Juniper
- b Flame Amur Maple and Pink Perfection Crab
- c Cologreen Juniper
- d Concolor Fir

8 NEW STREET TREES

- a Swamp White Oak, Northern Red Oak and Marshall's
Seedless Green Ash
- b Concolor Fir

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL
NORTH ENTRANCE

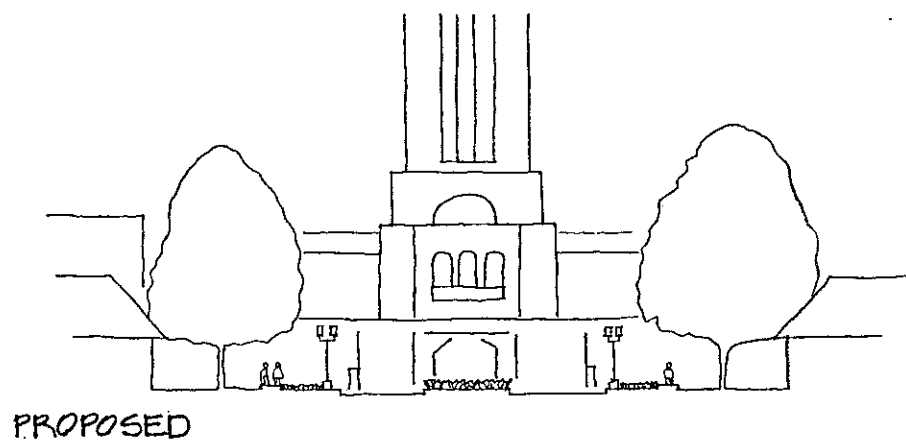
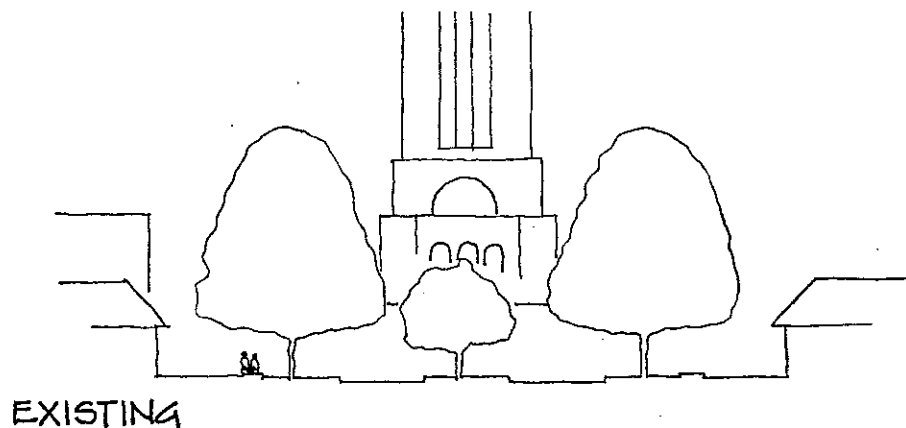
THE SOUTH MALL PLAN

Initially constructed in 1912 by the City to embellish the south axis of the previous Capitol, this avenue was re-landscaped in 1935 at the request of the City Parks Department by Lincoln landscape architect Ernst Herminghaus. Having just completed the landscape design for the Capitol grounds a year earlier, Herminghaus developed a plan for 15th Street south of the building to "A" Street which echoed his treatment of the south entrance of the Capitol. The center islands were planted with formal hedge borders eighteen inches high while evergreen shrubs were placed along the center of the medians at quarter points, trimmed in a globe shape to a maximum height of five feet. The height of these median plants was limited to provide a view of the Capitol along the entire eight block length of this avenue, starting at "A" Street. The street was to be lined at each side with a total of 250 maple trees, eight to ten feet tall when initially planted. The center islands were planted as designed, but the uniform rows of street trees were never realized.

Virtually nothing exists of the 1935 landscape plan today. Although Herminghaus' design concept of a broad tree-lined avenue for viewing the Capitol is still valid and needed, improved plant materials can provide a better long-term solution to his maintenance-intensive design.

Starting with Herminghaus' concept, the new design for this South Mall starts by utilizing the earlier low planting scheme for the center islands flanked by trees lining the eight block avenue, but goes further. The existing street tree line and sidewalk location are proposed to be reversed. The sidewalk is moved closer to the street (twelve feet back from curb) and the tree line is relocated between the sidewalk and the adjacent buildings. In addition to

creating a larger front lawn space between the sidewalk and buildings, this relocation also widens the mall "corridor" created by the trees lining each side of the street and accommodates the full spread of the mature trees without excessive branching over the street proper (see drawing below).



The street trees and center island evergreen shrubs and perennials are designed to provide a gradation of summer and winter color from "A" Street to the Capitol at "H" Street. This change in plant variety not only allows for a pleasant visual transition along the mall but also will help prevent disease problems (e.g., Dutch Elm Disease) from spreading the entire length of the landscaped mall.

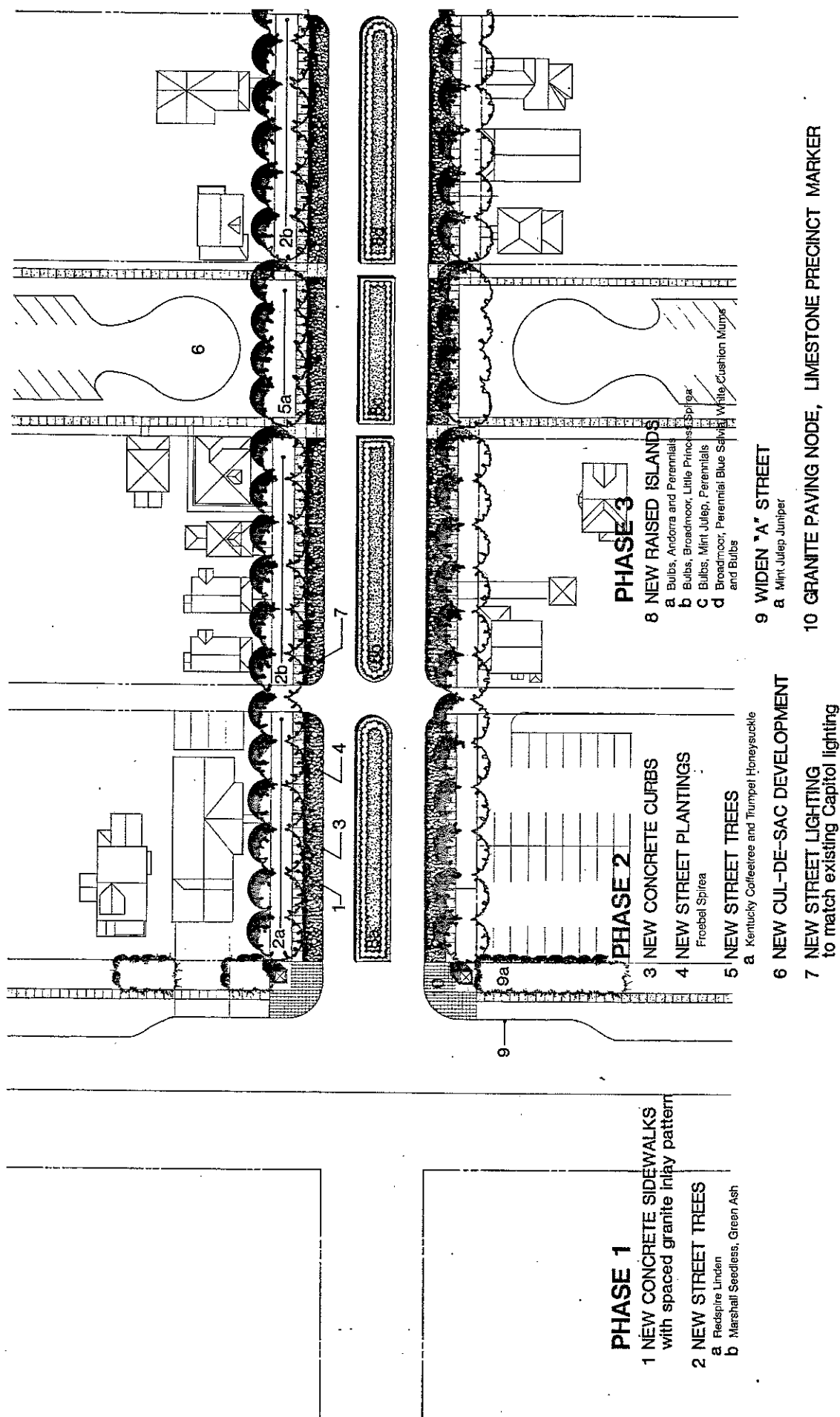
Beginning at "A" Street, the approach to the South Mall is acknowledged by the widening of "A" Street, the flair in the line of the 15th Street trees and evergreens as they approach that intersection, and precinct markers at the paved corner areas. (See drawing S1.) Along the South Mall's length, two prominent changes in grade elevation at "C" and "E" Streets are highlighted by nodes where commissioned sculpture would provide the focal point. (See drawings S2 and S3.) Street closure is proposed at "C" and "E" Streets and perhaps at "B" and "F" Streets (as a lower priority) to allow a safer and less interrupted journey along the mall for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic. The nodal points at "C" and "E" Streets are further developed into tree-canopied seating areas with flower beds to provide "mini-parks" for a neighborhood in need of public park space. (See drawings S2 and S3.) Evergreen trees are planned at the future cul-de-sac developments along the mall, and at the north and south ends of the plan, along with evergreen shrubs on the center island to insure year-round color and form.

An ornamental street lighting scheme is designed to line both sides of 15th Street and match the original lamps surrounding the Capitol grounds.

It should be noted that street closures as proposed are a long range improvement and would follow the City's established policy for neighborhood input. Further, the success of the overall mall plans is not dependent upon approval of all or any one specific element proposed. These documents are intended to be conceptual in nature and therefore individual design elements are subject to change.

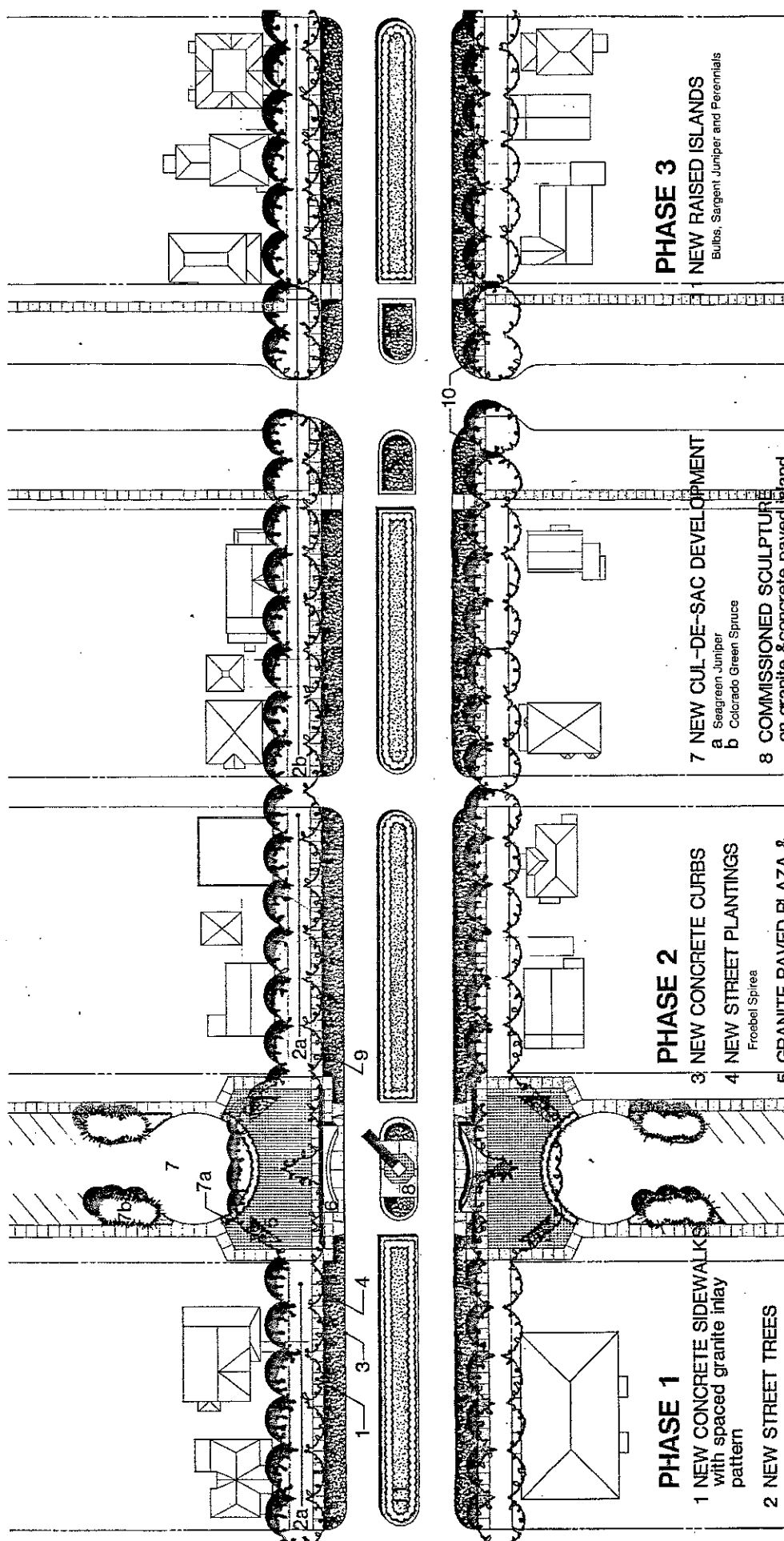
"A"

"B"



"C"

"D"



PHASE 1

- 1 NEW CONCRETE SIDEWALKS with spaced granite inlay pattern
- 2 NEW STREET TREES
 - a Emerald Ash
 - b Emerald Luster

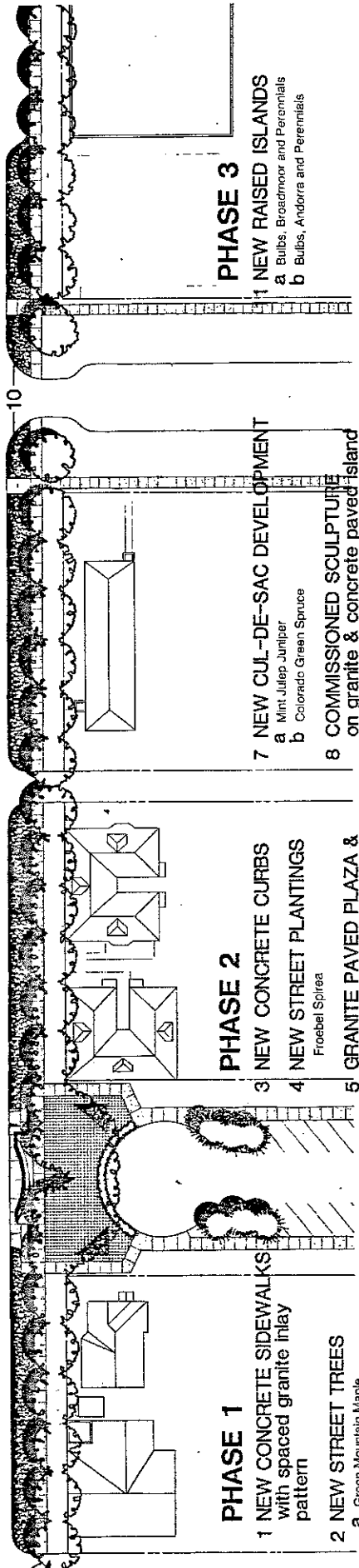
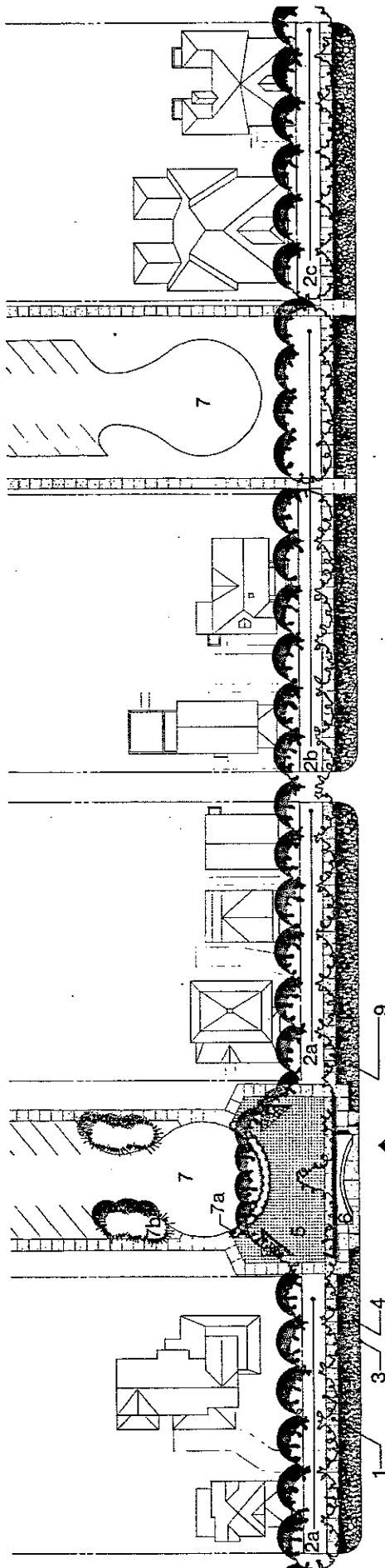
PHASE 2

- 3 NEW CONCRETE CURBS
- 4 NEW STREET PLANTINGS
 - Froebel Spirea
- 5 GRANITE PAVED PLAZA & TREE BOSQUE
 - Littleleaf Linden and Perennial Bulbs
- 6 GRANITE SEATING

PHASE 3

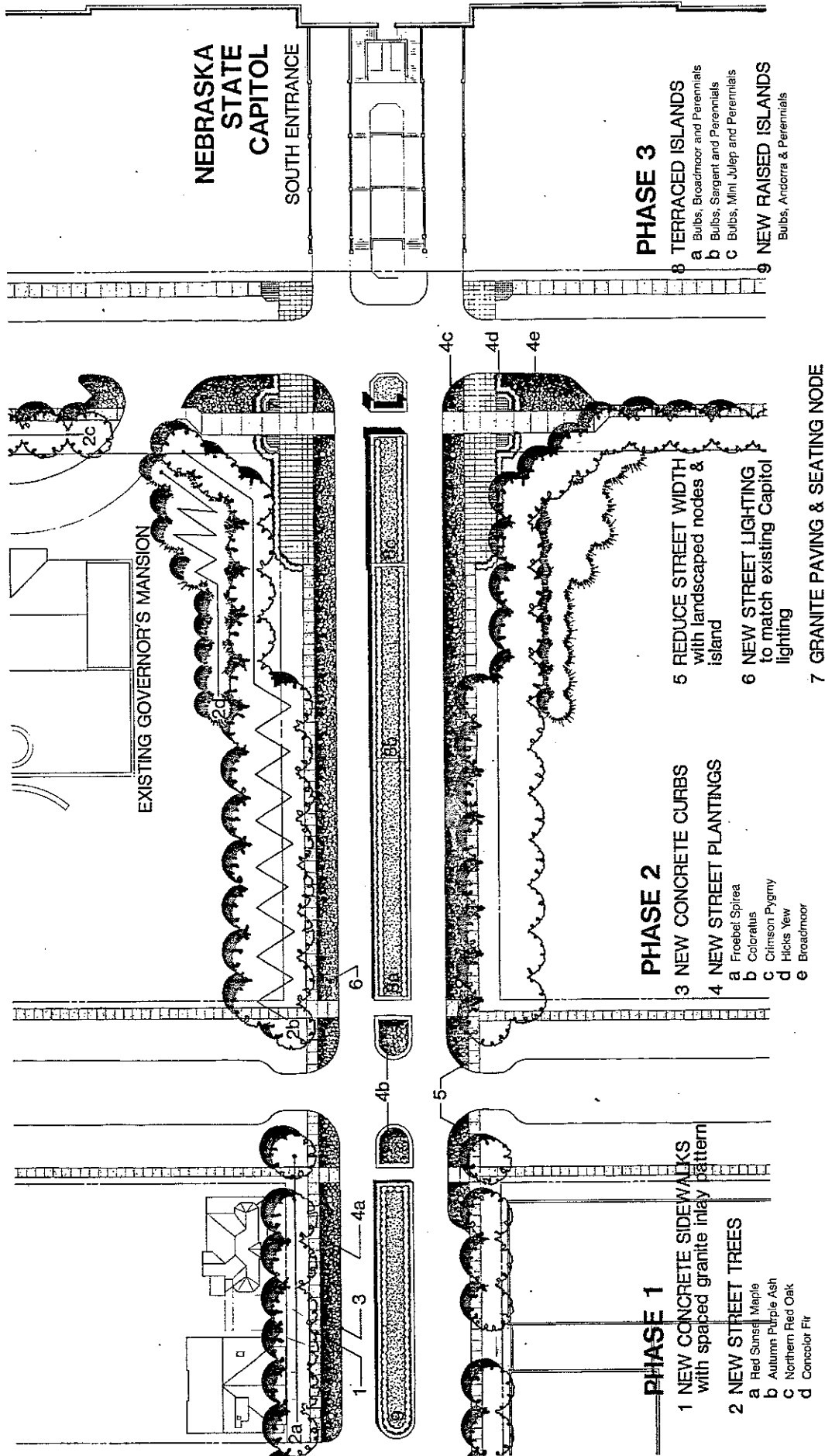
- 7 NEW CUL-DE-SAC DEVELOPMENT
 - a Seagreen Juniper
 - b Colorado Green Spruce
- 8 COMMISSIONED SCULPTURE on granite & concrete paved island
- 9 NEW STREET LIGHTING to match existing Capitol lighting
- 10 REDUCE STREET WIDTH with landscaped nodes & island
 - Broadmoor

"E"



"G"

"H"



IV) Implementation of the Plan:

(A) Right Of Way Issues

Phasing and Plant Inventory

The optimal phasing for this plan, assuming full funding, is indicated on the Alfieri Sinclair and Hille/Todd drawings. (See Drawings E1 through E5 and S1 through S4.) A more incremental approach will probably be necessary and may even be preferable to minimize adverse impacts of the landscape changes.

Initial priorities which can be implemented with available resources or with limited fund-raising include the following:

- * In the fall of 1986, the State of Nebraska should replant the street trees according to the South Mall Plan on both sides of 15th Street from "G" to "H" Street and construct new sidewalks. The State, which owns the land on both sides of 15th Street in this first block south of the Capitol, reportedly has funds available to complete this work in connection with its south parking lot improvements. City approval of this Plan for the East and South Malls is authorization to carry out the replanting of this block as soon as possible.
- * Clean up the 15th Street medians from "A" to "H" Streets and trim existing street trees to improve the South Mall vistas to the Capitol, where such pruning does not harm the trees.
- * In the East Mall, close "J" Street between 16th and 17th Streets and the half-block east of 17th, remove paving and curbs, and plant grass (assuming that funds are not available for immediate construction of proposed improvements). Specific authorization for this street closing is not assumed to be included in approval of the East Mall Plan.

- * Create a Capitol Environs Commission, a joint State-City body described below in IV(B).

Subsequent steps in the implementation of this plan will be coordinated by the Capitol Environs Commission, which will make specific proposals to the State and the City for approval. For instance, this Plan envisions the eventual replacement of all street trees on both the South Mall and the East Mall as funds become available. But the Plan also seeks to minimize the impact of wholesale removal of existing trees. Among the Commission's early undertakings should be to conduct an inventory of existing plant materials along "J" and 15th Streets, focusing on the health of and prognosis for existing street trees. The inventory should then be evaluated to identify

- + those trees which are dead or diseased and warrant immediate removal;
- + those trees which contribute little to the area or have limited life expectancy, and can be removed when funds are available for replacement;
- + and those trees which contribute substantially to the streetscape, which warrant aggressive maintenance, and which should not be removed while they are healthy.

The Commission should make specific proposals to the City Council for improvements based on this evaluation and additional factors including availability of funding, approval of adjacent landowners, and execution of the plan in an orderly, consistent fashion, preferably dealing simultaneously with both sides of whole or half-blocks. The Commission may recommend that the Plan's proposed new sidewalks be temporarily routed around some key, existing healthy trees.

Maintenance

Maintenance considerations are important aspects of both the East Mall and the South Mall designs. The specific construction design will take into account on-going maintenance requirements through the use of long-lasting, low-maintenance materials.

The maintenance impact of construction on the public right-of-way will also be recognized in the funding of this Plan. A commitment of sufficient funds for maintenance should be made at the same time as commitments from the various public and private sources for the capital construction aspects of the project. Since the implementation of the Plan will have maintenance impact on the City's Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and Transportation Departments, and the Capitol Grounds Maintenance Department, the input of all of these will be sought at both the preliminary and final design phases to assess and to lessen the impact of future maintenance requirements.

Street Closings

The first street closure to be carried out under this plan, and one of the earliest improvements to be implemented overall, is the closing of "J" Street from 16th to 17th Street and the half block east of 17th for the East Mall.

The long-term plan of the South Mall envisions closures and cul-de-sac developments at "B," "C," "E," and "F" Streets, but it also recognizes that prudent traffic and parking analysis and planning will be required before implementing these street modifications. The success of such changes to neighborhood circulation and parking systems will most effectively be accomplished through the City Transportation Department's process of trial closings followed by neighborhood input and recommendations.

The priority list for these trial closings along the South Mall should begin with "E" Street. If this effort proves successful from both the neighborhood and wider traffic points of view, the node development and cul-de-sacs would be constructed, followed by trial closure of "C" Street, followed by "F" and finally "B" Streets. The nodal developments and cul-de-sacs at "C" and "E" Streets are more important than the latter pair, both to the South Mall itself, because of the role they play in reinforcing the pedestrian emphasis, and to the integration of the South Mall into the neighborhood. The "B" and "F" Street closures can be viewed as enhancements to the plan if the "C" and "E" Street modifications prove successful.

IV) Implementation of the Plan:

(B) Broader Aspects

Capitol Environs Commission

To help implement the East Mall and South Mall Plan, an on-going Capitol Environs Commission should be established to carry out the Plan's recommendations. In addition to the East Mall and South Mall areas, the Commission should also be a planning and coordination body for the Centennial and Lincoln Malls and other areas included in the Capitol Environs District as defined in LMC 27.56.

The Capitol Environs Commission should be an intergovernmental body with certain members appointed by the State of Nebraska and others appointed by the City of Lincoln. The Commission members' terms should be six years, with staggered appointments to provide continuity. The Commission could be comprised of the following:

- Mayor of Lincoln or the Mayor's designee
- Governor of Nebraska or the Governor's designee
- Representatives of the Nebraska State Building Advisory Commission, the City's Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission, and Urban Design Committee
- Representatives of the Near South Neighborhood Association, Inc., and of other axial neighborhoods
- An architect, historian, urban designer, and landscape architect
- Other interested citizens at large.

The Capitol Environs Commission should coordinate planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the four Malls, while fostering public awareness and helping to solicit the public and private commitments to finance the improvements of the Malls. The Commission should also monitor and assess the overall environmental quality of the Capitol Environs and make specific recommendations to the City government (Mayor, City Council, and Planning Commission) and to the State government (Governor and Legislature). It is recommended that the Mayor and the Governor appoint an ad-hoc committee to develop specific recommendations for the formation of the Capitol Environs Commission and its membership, procedures, tasks, and duties.

Design Review Districts

This plan focuses on improvements to the public rights-of-way of the East Mall and the South Mall, but it is no less interested in supporting and encouraging maintenance and upgrading of the private property facing these malls. Each of the axes feature some historic buildings worthy of retention, but each also has significant numbers of vacant lots awaiting redevelopment or substandard buildings which warrant replacement in the foreseeable future. The "charrette" proposal of 1984 recommended enactment of design review regulations for the environs. This goal is endorsed as part of the current Plan for the East and South Malls.

There are several ways which such design review could be implemented. As recommended by the "charrette," Chapter 27.56, the Capitol Environs District, could be amended to become a design review district. Alternately, Chapter 27.57, the Historic Preservation District, could be expanded to include urban design districts paralleling the process for identifying, designating, and reviewing historic districts. The latter approach would build upon a locally familiar process and would be consistent with a current proposal to merge the Historic Preservation Commission and Urban Design Committee under 27.57. The Capitol Environs Commission should study the issue of design review districts and make recommendations to City and State government for implementation, keeping in mind that the design review board or commission must have a clearly stated process for timely review and resolution of disputes and clearly stated goals and guidelines. The guidelines should be tailored to each axis and should address both landscaping and buildings, including setback, mass, height, materials, and orientation.

Redevelopment Goals and Incentives

This plan encourages development of new residential structures along both the South Mall and the East Mall, with goals of high quality, high density development and opportunities for owner occupancy, such as townhouses. The Capitol Environs Commission should study and propose standards and incentives to foster such development, including tax incentives and perhaps variances in requirements for parking, yards, and density. These variances could be included as Special Permitted Uses in LMC 27.56.

Future Axial Improvements

The Capitol Environs Commission should also study and encourage completion of the missing blocks of the Centennial Mall, and improvements along "J" Street east of Capitol Parkway, including tree trimming in the near future and utility relocation, coordinated plantings, and decorative street lighting in the longer term.

IV) Implementation of the Plan:

(C) Financing

Based on 1986 dollars, the capital improvement costs of the three phases of the East Mall and South Mall Plan are estimated as follows:

	<u>Phase 1</u>	<u>Phase 2</u>	<u>Phase 3</u>	<u>Total</u>
South Mall	\$ 660,000	\$1,790,000	\$ 500,000	\$2,950,000
East Mall	\$ 770,000	\$1,330,000	\$ 710,000	\$2,810,000
Totals	\$1,430,000	\$3,120,000	\$1,210,000	\$5,760,000

The above figures include architectural and engineering fees but do not reflect annual maintenance costs. Prior to a large expenditure for capital improvements it is recommended that the community establish a maintenance endowment fund to ensure that the East Mall and South Mall are properly and permanently maintained, without becoming an annual drain upon the City's budget.

The funding sources for the estimated expenditures will need to come from a variety of sources. Since the East Mall and the South Mall are critical settings to the Capitol itself, the State of Nebraska should be a major funding source. The State has already recognized this role by agreeing to fund the revegetation and sidewalk improvements along the South Mall between "G" and "H" Streets, pursuant to this Plan. The City of Lincoln and the Lincoln Public School system should also be important funding sources. The City should begin to incorporate street tree planting and street and sidewalk reconstruction into its planning process and capital improvement program.

The East Mall and South Mall improvements will enhance the abutting private property. In turn, it should be studied whether a portion of the capital cost (for instance, part of the sidewalks' cost) should be assessed against private property owners who receive a special benefit from the plan's implementation.

Finally, the private sector and community foundations will need to participate in the funding, since the improvement of the Capitol Environs is a long-term and wide-ranging investment in the entire community.