

*I shall always fight good and hard  
even if I have to fight alone.*

*Ansam La Fleche Pratt, M.*

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# 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  
Michelle Potts, State Building Division, Nebraska Department of Administrative Services  
Bob Ripley, Office of the Nebraska Capitol Commission

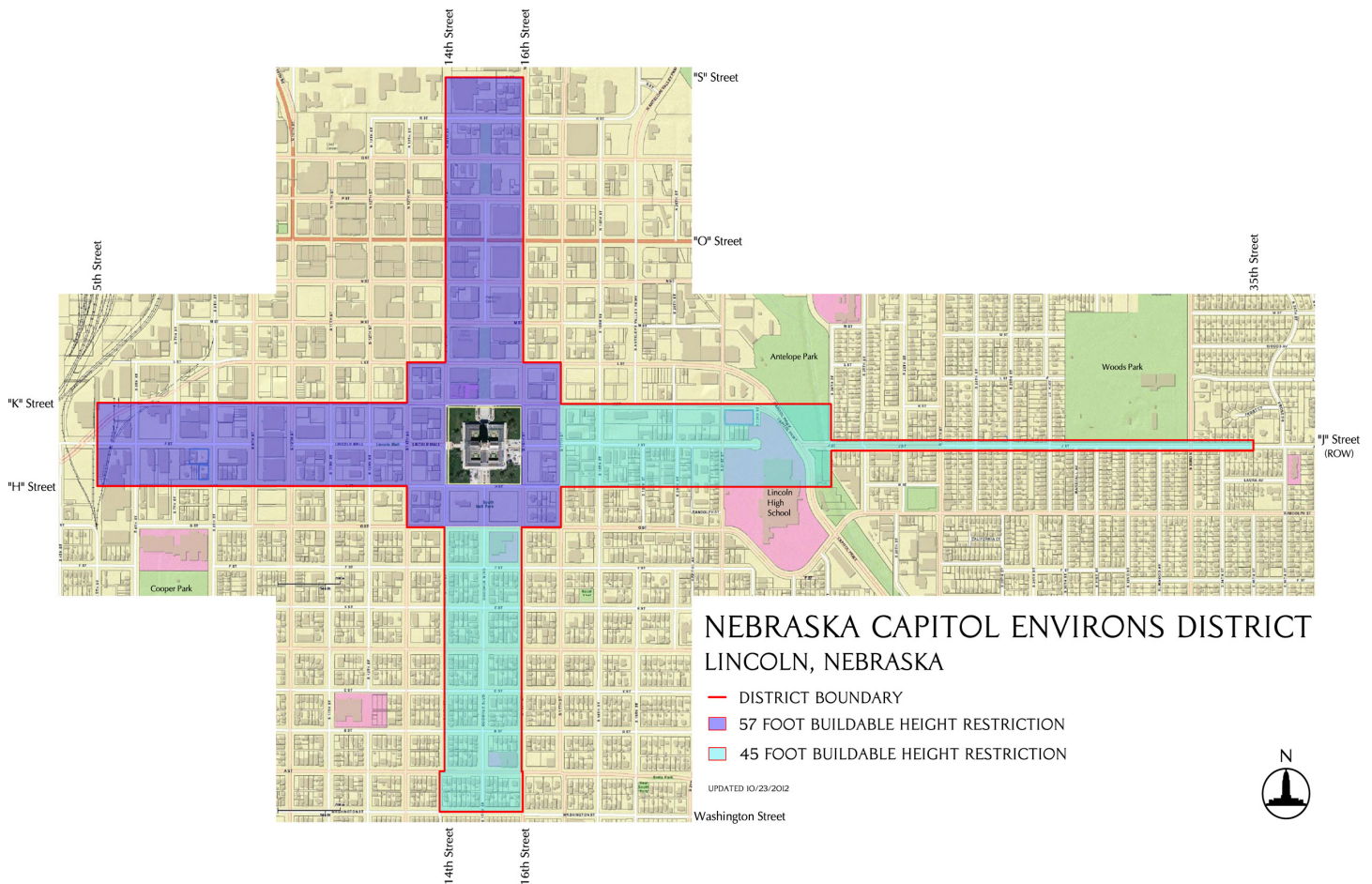
## PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF

Collin Christopher  
Teresa McKinstry  
Paul Barnes

## APPROVED

The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission approved this Annual Report on January 27, 2023.





*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 2022, Andrea Gebhart joined the Commission following the expiration of Mary Campbell’s term in January. Kile Johnson served as chair, Karen Nalow replaced Mary as vice-chair, and Heidi Cuca, Delonte Johnson, Ann Post and David Quade 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 (Michelle Potts - State Building Division Director), and the Office of the Nebraska Capitol Commission’s Capitol Administrator or their designee (Bob Ripley). Staffing was provided by the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department, including Collin Christopher, Teresa McKinstry and Paul Barnes.

The Commission is required by Section 27.56.060 of the Lincoln Municipal Code to meet at least once per quarter. The Commission met six times in 2022.



# Project Reviews

The Commission reviewed a number of interesting projects in the Capitol Environs District in 2022:

**Pershing Block Redevelopment, Phase I** - In February, the Commission reviewed and approved the first phase of redevelopment for the Pershing block. This phase includes the construction of a new building consisting of approximately 90 affordable housing units and some ground floor commercial fronting S 16th Street. Future phases may include a wellness center, a new downtown library, and

additional retail and office space. While demolition and first phase construction for the site have now been approved, funding hurdles will likely push that work to 2023.

In the meantime, a group of local public art advocates organized a successful fundraising campaign to remove, restore and relocate the mural on the west façade of the building. The mural was removed from the building in the summer of 2022 and is being stored in a safe location as advocates fundraise for its relocation to Wyuka Cemetery.



*The first phase of improvements on the Pershing block, which was approved by the Commission in February, will provide a substantial addition to the city's affordable housing stock. Because of its location within the Environs, special care was taken in the design review process to ensure that the facade of the building met the standards of the district.*





*Redevelopment plans for the old YWCA building will preserve the south facade of the building and build new condos and retail space around it. This thoughtful solution will save an important piece of downtown Lincoln history, while creating a product that could serve to further enhance the Centennial Mall environment.*

**YWCA Building** - In March, a proposal to partially demolish and redevelop the old YWCA building at 1432 N Street was reviewed by the Commission. Though the developer had made efforts over the years to preserve the entire building, the proposal that eventually came in front of the Commission was to preserve and build around the south façade facing N Street. The demolished portions will then be replaced by a four-story building that extends out to and fronts Centennial Mall. The project will consist of 30+ condos, a retail space at the corner of Centennial Mall and N Street, and approximately 50 lower-level parking stalls.

The Commission was very supportive of the project and its potential to further activate Centennial Mall, but had concerns about a part of the proposal that called for four of the units along Centennial Mall to have porches extending out into the right-of-way of the Mall. In April, the developer came back to the Commission with a revised proposal that pulled the porches out of the right-of-way. The Commission was very appreciative of this modification and approved the project accordingly.



**521 S 14th Street** - April also saw the approval of a proposal from the State Building Division to add new signage and a sculpture and plaques along the east side of what was previously known as The Executive Building at 521 S 14th Street. The new signage serves to rename the building the Chief Standing Bear Justice Administration Building. The sculpture is a bust of Chief Standing Bear, which now sits just north of the east entrance on a concrete pad. It is surrounded by decorative paving and two plaques that include the following dedication:

*From his birth on the banks of the Niobrara River in Nebraska until his death in 1908, Chief Standing Bear spent his life in a constant struggle to gain equality and justice for our nation's Native Americans. Chief Standing Bear and the Ponca Tribe were forced in 1877 by federal treaty to leave their homeland in Nebraska for Indian Territory*

*in what is now Oklahoma. The hardship of travel, illness, and the conditions of Indian Territory caused many members of the tribe to perish, including Chief Standing Bear's son. Determined to bury his son in his homeland, Chief Standing Bear led thirty members of his tribe back to their home in Nebraska, where he was arrested by federal authorities. At his trial, Standing Bear advocated for the dignity and personhood of all Native Americans, and won his release. In July of 2022 the State of Nebraska unveiled the Standing Bear sculpture, created by artist Benjamin Victor, to commemorate the dedication of the Chief Standing Bear Justice Administration Building. It was the hope of all present that the sculpture and building will serve as an enduring reminder to future generations of Chief Standing Bear's legacy to the cause of justice.*



*The addition of a Chief Standing Bear bust and the associated name change to the building greatly enhances the streetscape experience along S 14th Street, and much more importantly, appropriately honors an unforgettable figure in Nebraska's history.*





*The renovation work underway at St. Mary's Catholic Church will help to preserve one of the Capitol Environs District's most iconic pieces of architecture.*

**1821 K Street** - In July (and again in December), the Commission approved a certificate of appropriateness for Community Action to locate a traffic barrier system in front of their building at 1821 K Street. There have been a number of accidents in this area in recent years, and the barrier system is intended to prevent vehicles failing to make the turn eastward off of Antelope Valley Parkway from hitting the building.

**St. Mary's Catholic Church** - In August, the Commission reviewed and approved plans to renovate St. Mary's Catholic Church at 1420 K Street. The renovation of this iconic building and its site will include the following improvements to the west façade:

- Existing site walls and landscaping to be removed and replaced. Initial removal will allow the building foundation to be repaired and waterproofed. When constructing the new site wall, it will need to be pulled back to the east so that it can be located entirely on private property.
- The west door, entry walk, and stairs are to be removed. The new site wall will then extend north without interruption, eliminating any direct pedestrian access to the former entry door.

- A statue base will be added in front of the removed entry door.

Interior work is to include new confessionals and improved security.

**Downtown Corridors** - In November, the Commission was asked to provide an advisory review of the Downtown Corridors streetscape project. Downtown Corridors is a city-led streetscape enhancement effort meant to improve the attractiveness, safety, connectivity and overall vibrancy of some of downtown's most important corridors. The November discussion focused primarily on the intersection of O Street and Centennial Mall, and the design team's desire to enhance visual links to the Mall from O Street.

**Capitol View Street Rehab** - In December, NCEC reviewed LTU's plans to rehab G and J Streets as part of their latest residential street rehab project. This project will include the removal of approximately 800 linear feet of original red sandstone curbing, which will be replaced with a more modern concrete curb and gutter. After the curbing is removed, it will be handed over to the State for a future restoration project. They are currently stockpiling the sandstone with the goal of eventually using it to return the four-block Capitol site to this original curb material.



## Completed or In Progress

Many of the projects approved by the Commission over the last couple of years have been completed or are nearing completion. The next few pages offer a sampling of some of the progress being made to enhance the Capitol Environs.

### LINCOLN MALL

Lincoln Mall has seen a significant amount of both public and private reinvestment in the last couple years, solidifying its importance within the Capitol Environs District and the greater downtown area.



Construction Underway at 2 Landmark Centre on Lincoln Mall



Completed rehab of the office building at 1320 Lincoln Mall



New bike lanes on Lincoln Mall



Completed renovation of the Sky Park Manor Apartments









**Renovation underway at St. Mary's Catholic Church (1420 K Street)**



**Chief Standing Bear Justice Administration Building (521 S. 14th St.)**



**Progress on the 4-story, 4-unit apartment building at 1515 F Street**



**Outdoor Classroom at 1821 K Street**





# NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT