

A close-up photograph of several yellow Black-eyed Susan flowers with dark brown centers. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a clear blue sky with some blurred greenery and buildings in the distance. The overall tone is bright and sunny.

2023

CON

Annual Report | Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission



Chief Standing Bear
Justice Administration



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

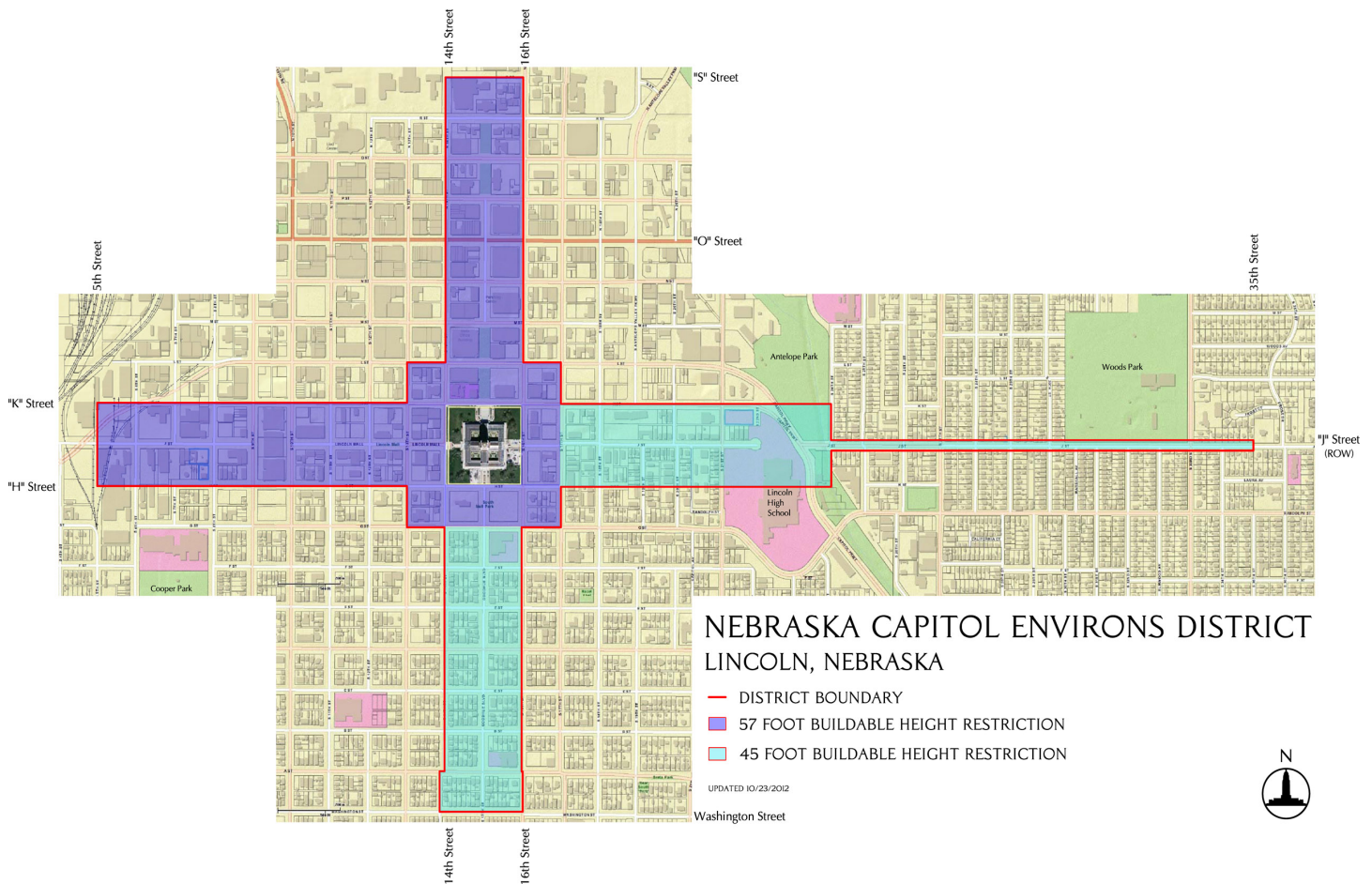
David Cary, Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department
Maggie Stuckey-Ross, Lincoln Parks and Recreation
Brent Flachsbart, State Building Division, Nebraska Department of Administrative Services
Brett Daugherty, Acting Capitol Administrator

PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF

Collin Christopher
Teresa McKinstry
Paul Barnes

APPROVED

The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission approved this report on February 23, 2024.



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.

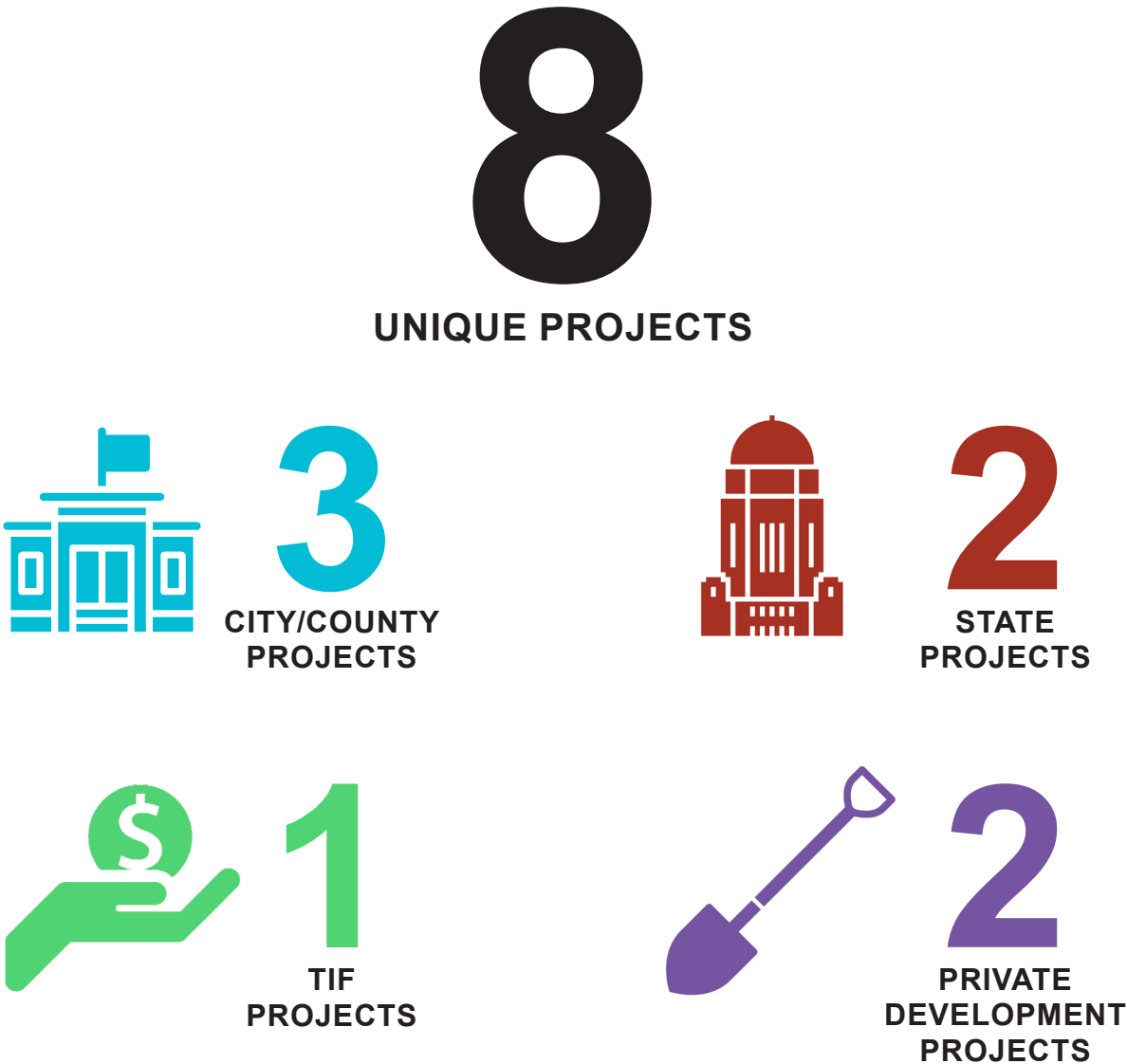
In late October, Karen Nalow announced that she would be stepping down from the Commission to take a position with the City Parks and Recreation Department. Ms. Nalow was first appointed as a commissioner in March of 2011, making her one of the longest serving members in the history of the NCEC. Beyond 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.

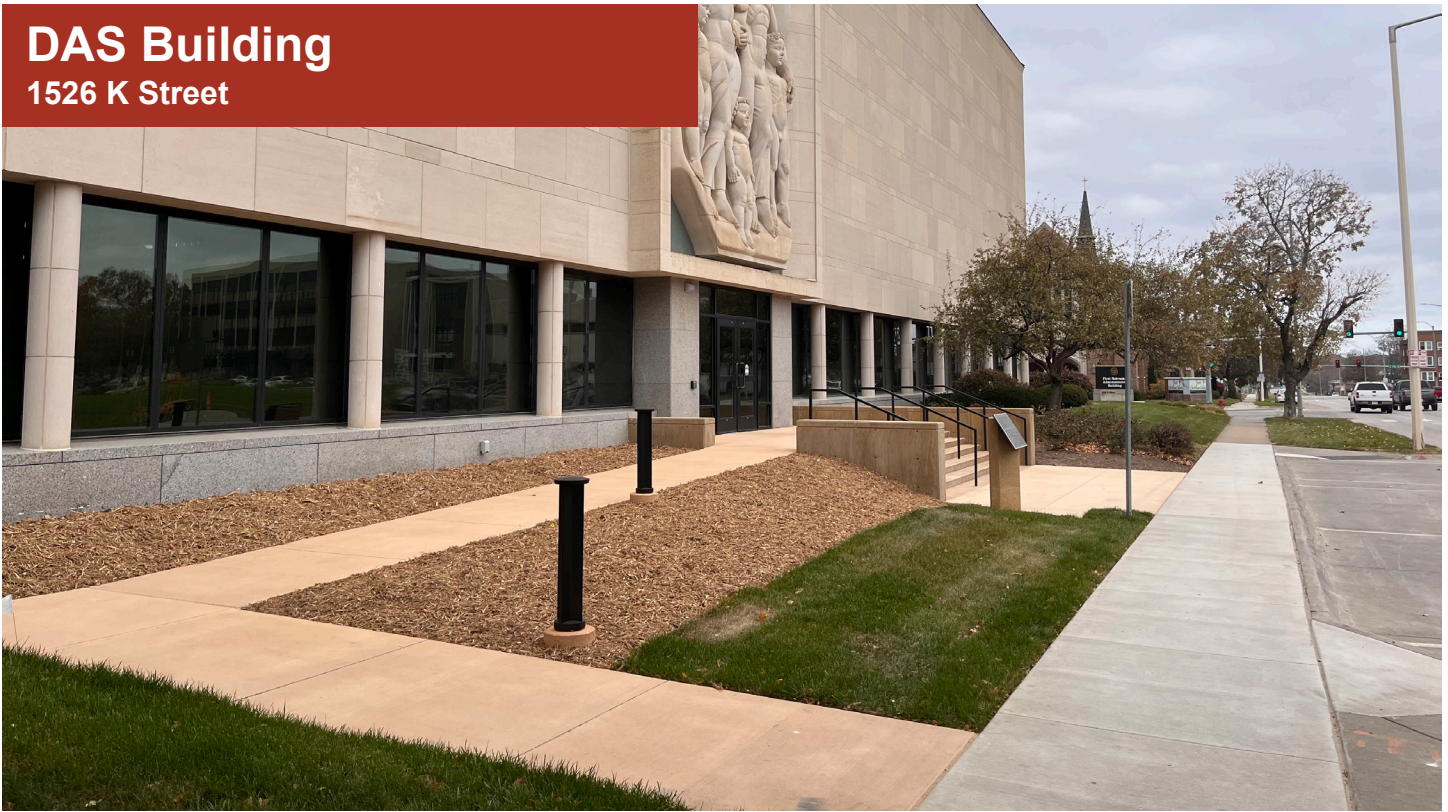
Project Review Summary

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.



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 – dark brick below and light brick above. Beyond that, the widow 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.

LES Switchgear Equipment

332 Centennial Mall S & 1501 M Street



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. That new proposal was approved by the Commission.

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.



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