



# NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission will hold a meeting on **Friday, July 26, 2024 at 8:30 a.m.** in the County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska, in **City Council Chambers** on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor. For more information, please contact the Lincoln City/Lancaster County Planning Department at 402-441-7491.

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## AGENDA

July 26, 2024

1. Approval of meeting record from July 12, 2024

### Public Hearing & Action

2. *Downtown Corridors Streetscape Project (Planning and Urban Development Departments, UDR24101)*

### 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.*

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## 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.*

<b>NAME OF GROUP:</b>	NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION
<b>DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:</b>	Friday, July 12, 2024, 8:30 a.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 S. 10 <sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.
<b>MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Eileen Bergt, Heidi Cuca, Ann Post, Delonte Johnson and Kile Johnson; (Andrea Gebhart and David Quade absent).
<b>OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Collin Christopher, Paul Barnes, Shelli Reid and Juan Carrasco of the Planning Department; Dan Grasso with BVH; Erin Bright and Keely Grass with Olsson; and other interested citizens were present.
<b>STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:</b>	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 the approval of the minutes of the regular meeting held June 28, 2024.

Motion for approval made by Post; seconded by Bergt.

Minutes approved 5-0: Bergt, Cuca, Post, D. Johnson, and K. Johnson voting 'yes'; Gebhart and Quade absent.

### **PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROJECT PUBLIC HEARING (UDR24087): July 12, 2024**

Members present: Bergt, Cuca, Post, D. Johnson, and K. Johnson voting 'yes'; Gebhart and Quade absent.

**Collin Christopher, Planning Department, 555 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE** came forward and stated this review is for a new building to be located at 802 J Street. Christopher gave a quick summary of what was discussed at the previous hearing. This included the potential setback issue that needed to be addressed. Christopher discussed the Permanent Supportive Housing Project, which is to build a supportive housing facility for the chronically homeless. The two-story, 15,000 square-foot facility

will include 24 single bed apartments with a shared laundry room, secure entry lobby, reception area, secure offices and meeting space for CenterPointe staff, and common spaces for gathering such as a covered front porch, kitchen, yard and garden space. The Capitol Environs Standards state that the building is to come up to the property line where feasible, and that in places where it does not, the property line must be improved in some meaningful way to define that edge. The challenge as a Commission is to weigh the desires of this project versus the long-term vision for this portion of the South Haymarket area. The streetscape plans for South Haymarket envision this portion of J Street mirroring Lincoln Mall with a landscaped median and buildings that hug the property line. Christopher also stated that the design team has worked on a final landscape plan per the direction of the Commission. Finally, he reminded the group that the Aging Partners building to the east is not part of this review and any plans for it will need to come back to the Commission at a later date.

**Dan Grasso, Sinclair Hille Architects, 700 Q Street, Lincoln, NE** approached and stated that they had explored two concepts since the last meeting. In the first, they were able to come up with a plan to move the building forward to within five feet of the property line with a low wall and landscaping providing added definition of the property line. The second concept moves everything up within one foot of the property line. Like the first, the second concept uses a low wall and landscaping to create a buffer between private and public uses.

**Keely Grass, Olsson Studio, 601 P Street, Suite 200, Lincoln, NE** came forward and mentioned that with the five-foot setback option, they will add some perennials with some pops of color. The five-foot setback will allow for a landscape bed up to the property line and turf between the property line and the public sidewalk. Grass stated that the one-foot setback would necessitate eliminating the turf in favor of a landscape bed extending to the edge of the public sidewalk. The landscape strategy will be low maintenance with five to six plants for diversity.

Post questioned whether of the two options, which would be the best option from the project team's perspective. Grasso stated that to meet the intent of Capitol Environs, they believe they need to be within one foot. He is happy with this option.

K. Johnson asked if the building could have been brought south to pick up the additional foot? Grasso stated that the one foot is needed to accommodate the building footing. K. Johnson asked if there will be some type of watering system. Grasso stated that there will be some type of irrigation system installed on the east side, but the west side was not discussed. Grass stated that it will depend upon the funding and what everyone wants. Grass stated that an irrigation system is nice to help the irrigation survive but will only be truly needed in the first season for establishment.

Bergt asked what they were talking about when referring to one foot – if this is referring to the distance between the porch and sidewalk. It was explained that the one foot was the dimension from the porch to the property line, and that the edge of

the sidewalk doesn't match the property line. Bergt questioned how the plants would interact with the wall. Grass stated that there would be an eighteen inch maximum height for the plants in front of the wall.

Bergt stated that skateboard deterrents should be considered in the wall design to avoid having to address the issue later. Grasso agreed.

Bergt stated that Artic Fire Dogwood is a better alternative than the Isanti Dogwood being proposed. Grass took note of this recommendation.

Bergt also mentioned that the landscape plan had limited color. Grass stated that they wanted to focus most of the color on the entry along the south side. There is not much public traffic in the back area, so they wanted to keep that at a lower level of maintenance.

Post likes the design and appreciates the modifications.

K. Johnson likes the redesign that was presented.

Motion for approval of the one-foot setback made by Post, seconded by D. Johnson.

Motion approved 5-0: Bergt, Cuca, Post, D. Johnson, and K. Johnson voting 'yes'; Cuca, Gebhart and Quade absent.

**Paul Barnes, Planning Department, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE** approached and introduced Juan Carrasco with the Planning Department. Carrasco is replacing Teresa McKinstry who recently retired.

Christopher came forward and wanted to thank the members for their great attendance and contributions to making the Permanent Supportive Housing project a better proposal.

K. Johnson asked if there is anything planned for the next meeting in July. Christopher stated that the only potential item would be the Downtown Corridors project, and it will be decided in the next few days if this can be postponed until August or not. Christopher stated that the next scheduled meeting would be on July 26, 2024. The group indicated that they would be interested in meeting again in two weeks.

Motion for adjournment made by Post, seconded by D. Johnson.

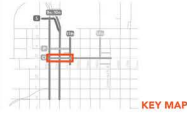
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:54 a.m.



OPEN HOUSE #3

# O STREET

9<sup>th</sup> St. to 11<sup>th</sup> St.



VIEW A



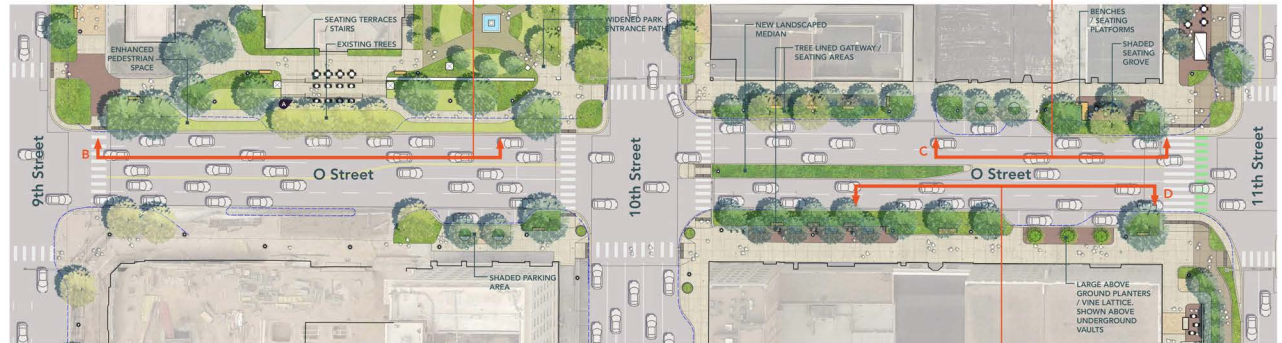
Business and property owners within these areas are invited to complete a survey online to share important information with the project team about their business or property to consider during the construction phase.



VIEW B



VIEW C



PROPOSED PLAN

## PLAN IMPROVEMENTS

### O STREET AS A GATEWAY

The O Street Corridor serves as the primary entry point for many visitors into downtown and is recognized as a "gateway" into downtown. At 10th Street an un-utilized traffic space has been reallocated to provide a central median to emphasize the western limits of downtown, mirroring a similar median at 17th Street.

Moving through the corridor, each block features a unique but similarly composed language of pedestrian improvements. Street trees arranged into groves provide shade and a quality of place not currently found in the corridor. Enhanced pedestrian paving and dynamic street furniture are used to reinforce these spaces as places for people to be, and not just move through. Large planting beds and rain gardens help create a green buffer between pedestrians and cars to promote a sense of wander, café usage, and corridor activity.

### PROPOSED STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS

- Transition to dynamic parking to prioritize short-term parking, servicing, pick-up, drop-off, and food take-out
- Creation of dynamic sidewalk café environments
- Expanded pedestrian realm
- Expanded buffer and green space between the pedestrian realm and roadway
- Enlarged pedestrian nodes
- Expanded tree canopy and landscape enhancements to replace ash trees



VIEW D

## FEEDBACK

### CELEBRATING AN ARCHITECTURAL AND CULTURAL TREASURE

The old City Hall building has the potential to act as a natural welcome sign into downtown. However many of the existing conditions don't celebrate the architectural and cultural significance of this building. The design proposes tidying up the streetscape of this block, expanding the green space around the building to frame views of the building, embrace the garden within the streetscape, and provide accessible paths to the front facade.

The existing retaining stone walls are deteriorating. Analysis is being conducted to explore opportunities to restore or re-purpose the existing stone. The following options are being considered:

### 1 WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED OPTION FOR THE HISTORIC RETAINING WALLS AT OLD CITY HALL?



OPTION 1



OPTION 3



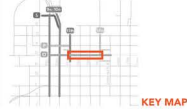
OPTION 2



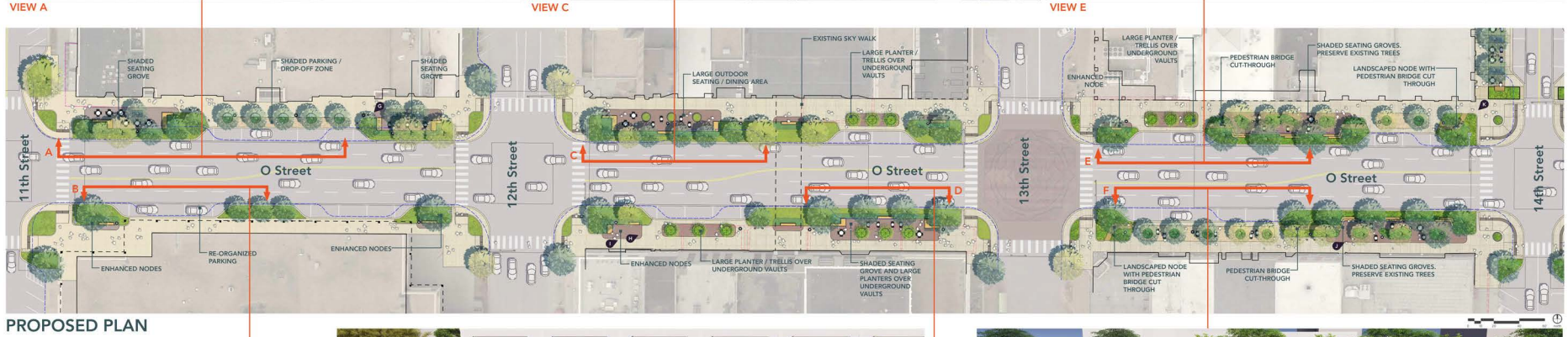
OPTION 4



OPTION 5



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**PLAN IMPROVEMENTS**

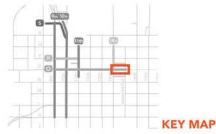
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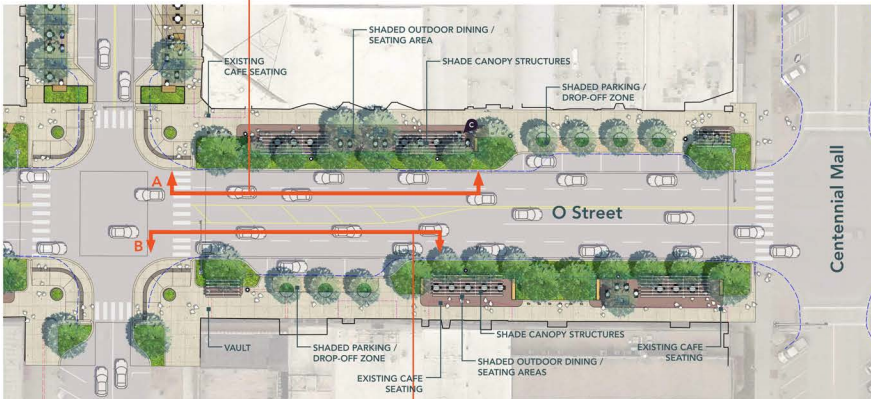
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VIEW A



VIEW C



**PROPOSED PLAN**



VIEW B

**DYNAMIC PARKING**

**PARKING ON O STREET**

The Downtown Corridors Master Plan proposed that on-street parking on O Street should be rethought as pick-up/drop-off zones to better serve the adjacent businesses and their customers along the corridor. Identified as Dynamic Parking because it would result in a higher turnover of on-street parking and provide more frequent functionality to one of Lincoln's most important downtown corridors.

**DYNAMIC PARKING PILOT PROGRAM**

To that end, the City is proposing a pilot program that would begin as soon as this August to evaluate the potential impacts of such a change in parking strategy. The pilot program would start with a three-month evaluation period in which parking, loading, bus, pedestrian and bike activity would be monitored on the two-block stretch of O Street from 13th to Centennial Mall. After the initial evaluation period, temporary signage would be added to the same on-street parking areas to inform users of their change in use from two-hour metered stalls to quick turnover zones. The two-block stretch would then undergo a second three-month evaluation period. At the end of the second evaluation, the City would review all relevant findings and reach out to adjacent business owners and other key stakeholders to determine the success of the pilot program and its viability as a permanent change.

**PLAN IMPROVEMENTS**

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**PILOT PROGRAM STUDY AREA**





## NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER	Urban Design Record #24101
APPLICATION TYPE	Certificate of Appropriateness
ADDRESS/LOCATION	Downtown Corridors Streetscape Project
HEARING DATE	July 26, 2024
ADDITIONAL MEETINGS	-
APPLICANT	Hallie Salem (Urban Development), 402-441-7866, <a href="mailto:hsalem@lincoln.ne.gov">hsalem@lincoln.ne.gov</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

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 street corridors – O Street, 9th, 10th, 11th and 14th. Since January of 2022, city staff have been working with a design consultant to develop and implement a master plan for these improvements. Design for the first phase of improvements is nearing completion, and thus, the project team is seeking feedback and approval of the proposal before proceeding with construction documentation.

While the project team will be providing an overview of the entire project, the focus of NCEC's review at this time is the segment of O Street from 14<sup>th</sup> to Centennial Mall. Commissioners can view plans for the larger project here: <https://www.downtowncorridorslincoln.com/public-meetings>.

#### Compatibility with the Design Standards

The portion of this project intersecting the Capitol Environs District should consider both the general and Centennial Mall specific standards for landscapes. Those standards have been copied below in their full context.

#### Design Standard 18: General Landscape of All Malls

The landscape of the Capitol Malls should enhance the Capitol setting and vistas:

- by providing canopy and definition at the mall edge, but leaving the centers of the malls more open, allowing on-axis views of the Capitol,
- by creating a sense of organization and unity through form, color, texture, and spacing that may be lacking in the adjacent architecture,
- by establishing a rhythm of visual and physical movement leading ultimately to the Capitol,
- by providing seasonal change and interest.

<https://linclanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-Boards/Shared Documents/Boards/NCEC/REPORTS/2024/07-July/Downtown Corridors Streetscape Staff Report Item 2.docx>



There is a delicate balance between a landscape that enhances and one that overwhelms—color and form changes should be in large sweeps and masses to avoid creating small, distracting focal points. The landscape should be bolder and more colorful closest to the Capitol.

Facing Capitol Square and the Malls, front yards shall not contain mechanical equipment, above-ground utilities, docks, or unscreened ramps. Architectural or planted screenings may be offered, with maintenance requirements.

Active use of the Malls should be encouraged by the selection and placement of landscape elements such as seating.

#### **Guideline 18.1:**

To focus attention on the Capitol, phase out trees from center medians and replace them with simple, uniform plantings of low shrubs, grasses, or perennials in large masses. Use of perennials is preferred to annual plantings, but annuals will be considered when their maintenance can be assured. Conversion from turf should be tied directly to maintenance capability and assurances.

#### **Guideline 18.2:**

Provide seating in as many locations as appropriate. Benches should:

- be of high quality, refined materials,
- have backs,
- be readily available commercially or easily repaired in-house,
- be of neutral colors,
- be placed along edges to take advantage of shade and allow pedestrians to be close to circulation but not in it.

To provide seating opportunities for conversation, combine benches, trash cans, ash urns and small tables of similar construction and installation.

#### **Guideline 18.3:**

Encourage the use of wide, seating-height caps on retaining walls or edge definers, including pools and fountains.

#### **Guideline 18.4:**

Along blocks of Malls closed to vehicular traffic, allow subtle, small openings through the edge fence or planting from adjacent properties onto Malls to encourage their use.

#### **Guideline 18.5:**

Use high quality pavement that is durable, neutral or natural color, able to be matched or replaced locally or regionally; nonslip but not too rough for high heels; textured or patterned subtly. Asphalt or asphalt pavers are not acceptable. Design paved areas to allow replacement or repair to occur in sections that maintain the established pavement pattern.

#### **Guideline 18.6:**

Retaining walls, seating walls, planters, and other vertical landscape features should be constructed of durable materials, preferably masonry; neutral or natural colors; horizontal lines; no exposed form lines or form-tie holes.

#### **Guideline 18.7:**

<https://linclanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-Boards/Shared Documents/Boards/NCEC/REPORTS/2024/07-July/Downtown Corridors Streetscape Staff Report Item 2.docx>

Water features can greatly enhance a pedestrian environment but are also expensive and difficult to maintain. In the District, such features should be restricted to Centennial Mall and the first block or two of J Street/East (16<sup>th</sup> St. to 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> Sts.).

**Guideline 18.8:**

Water features should have sculptural quality to their overall design and works, for an attractive appearance whether or not they are operating, or are seasonally out of use. Alternately, water features may be developed as plazas with concealed spouts and drains, to be accessible as pedestrian space when out of use.

**Guideline 18.9:**

Water features in the District should be designed with sound, rather than spray or large vertical movement of water, as the main quality. Fountains should not interfere with vistas to the Capitol.

**Guideline 18.10:**

Color and interest in the center of the malls should be confined to large masses of perennials and grasses 24" or less in height.

**Guideline 18.11:**

Use high quality, permanent landscape materials for edging, containing, and paving in neutral or natural colors. Use of masonry or stone is appropriate where edging or containment is needed. Exercise caution in designing any above-ground planters or planting beds, that they be of sufficient size to support healthy growth of plant materials. Remove undersized planters from existing trees and replace trees as necessary.

**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.

**Design Standard 19: Overstory Trees**

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Overstory trees establish the visual and physical definition of space along the edges of the Malls. On the J Street/East right-of-way east of Capitol Parkway, overstory trees should not be planted as Capitol views along that narrower street are obstructed by the canopy spread of mature overstory trees.

**Guideline 19.1:**

The overstory tree line along the Malls should be on public property, near the property line.

**Guideline 19.2:**

Choose overstory trees of different hardy species with similar growth habits and size to provide visual and physical continuity. Vary the species within each mall according to a specific pattern. Space the trees at regular intervals, but accommodate specific site requirements such as driveways. Overstory trees should be spaced to provide a solid canopy where possible.

**Guideline 19.3:**

Overstory trees used to define the edges of the Malls should be single stem, upright ovals, taller than they are wide. Narrow, columnar overstory trees are discouraged, as are trees with a very broad growth habit. Choose species with good fall color.

#### **Guideline 19.4:**

Restrict underplantings to perennials or shrubs requiring little if any division to minimize future root disturbance.

#### **Design Standard 20: Understory Trees**

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Understory (ornamental) trees should provide seasonal interest and pedestrian scale and are also the appropriate tree-type for J Street/East right-of-way east of Capitol Parkway.

#### **Guideline 20.1:**

Along the interior edges of the Malls, use understory (ornamental) trees where pedestrian scale and seasonal interest (including spring bloom, fall foliage color, and winter fruit and bark interest) is needed. Treat understory trees as a mass rather than as individual specimens, and space them accordingly.

#### **Guideline 20.2:**

On all Malls, recognize the dominance of the edge overstory trees, and choose and locate understory trees to avoid interfering with the growth requirements of the overstory trees.

#### **Design Standard 21: Landscaping Street Frontages**

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The landscape zones between curb and sidewalk ("curb zone"), and between sidewalk and private property, should be used to provide visual continuity, interest, and physical separation between pedestrians and vehicles.

#### **Guideline 21.1:**

Maintain the landscaping of the curb zone in all Mall locations with vehicular traffic, to define the pedestrian area. This zone should contain some vertical element, either tree trunks or low (30" or less) shrubs, perennials, grasses, or groundcovers.

#### **Guideline 21.2:**

The curb zone on each Mall should be treated consistently. Private vegetable gardens, flowers, shrubs, and other diversions should be eliminated.

#### **Guideline 21.3:**

Restrict shrubs to specific zones: at the "build-to" lines defined for each Mall, to reinforce that edge; in the curb zone; or on center medians.

#### **Guideline 21.4:**

Shrub and perennial plantings on the Malls and at their edges should be restricted to 30" or less.

#### **Guideline 21.5:**

Shrubs should be used in large masses, with species variation occurring at obvious breaks in the rhythm of the malls. Two or three species can be used in a single planting area, allowing the combination of deciduous and evergreen material. Choose shrubs for seasonal interest, particularly bloom. Choose shrubs with a natural shape and height that requires little pruning to maintain.

#### **Guideline 21.6:**

Do not shear shrubs in public landscapes. Shearing of shrubs on private property facing the Malls or Capitol Square is also discouraged.

### **Guideline 21.7:**

The primary groundcover on all malls, medians, frontages, and adjacent private property should be turf. Long-range commitment to maintenance may allow conversion of specific turf areas to groundcover shrubs or perennials and grasses for additional interest; however, in the short-term, uniform turf will present the best appearance with the least maintenance. Encourage use of native turf where site conditions allow it.

## **Design Standard 22: Centennial Mall Landscape**

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Centennial Mall is the District's most formal landscaped mall, providing a varied, safe, and attractive pedestrian environment, with opportunities for interaction and enjoyment, within a design framework that offers continuous views of the most prominent facade of the Capitol. The redesign and rebuilding, rededicated as “Nebraska’s Centennial Mall” in 2016, establishes:

- strong, well-defined edges;
- continuous, accessible walkways lined with pedestrian-scale lighting;
- open center accented with plazas and water features.

This overall design should be maintained and any proposed changes should be evaluated against whether they enhance this design.

### **Guideline 22.1:**

Continue the use of red oaks as the major species defining the edges of Centennial Mall, while maintaining a plan that allows introduction of other overstory trees on a systematic basis to eliminate monoculture.

### **Guideline 22.2:**

Maintain continuous paths on either side which further define the edges of the Mall, uninterrupted by any stairs, featuring an inner band of plaque opportunities.

### **Guideline 22.3:**

Within the pathways, maintain turf as the predominant treatment.

### **Guideline 22.4:**

A consistent family of street furniture, such as benches, trash receptacles, bollards, planters, tables, and chairs, has been installed in the 2014-16 rebuilding of the Mall. It should be maintained and any new elements should be within this design program.

### **Guideline 22.5:**

Privately-installed furniture adjacent to the Mall should be reviewed by the Commission for overall compatibility, durability, and high quality.

### **Guideline 22.6:**

Monuments, memorials, markers, plaques, and works of public art proposed for Centennial Mall should fit within the overall design concept, enhancing the pedestrian experience while respecting the dominance of views to the Capitol. As it relates to aboveground, three-dimensional monuments, memorials, markers, plaques, and works of public art, Centennial Mall’s design should be considered largely complete as of 2021, and the proposal of new pieces to be located within the right-of-way shall generally be discouraged. Proposed pieces to be located outside of the right-of-way on property adjacent to Centennial Mall shall continue to be considered, assuming they fit within the overall context of the Centennial Mall landscape.

Horizontal and vertical surface treatments, such as engraved markers or plaques being inset within pavement or seat wall, shall continue to be allowed and encouraged when appropriate within the design of Centennial Mall.

#### **Guideline 22.7:**

When modified or replaced, traffic signal poles and mast arms should be designed to minimize disruption of views to the Capitol, keeping the signals as close to the edges of the right-of-way as their safety functions permit.

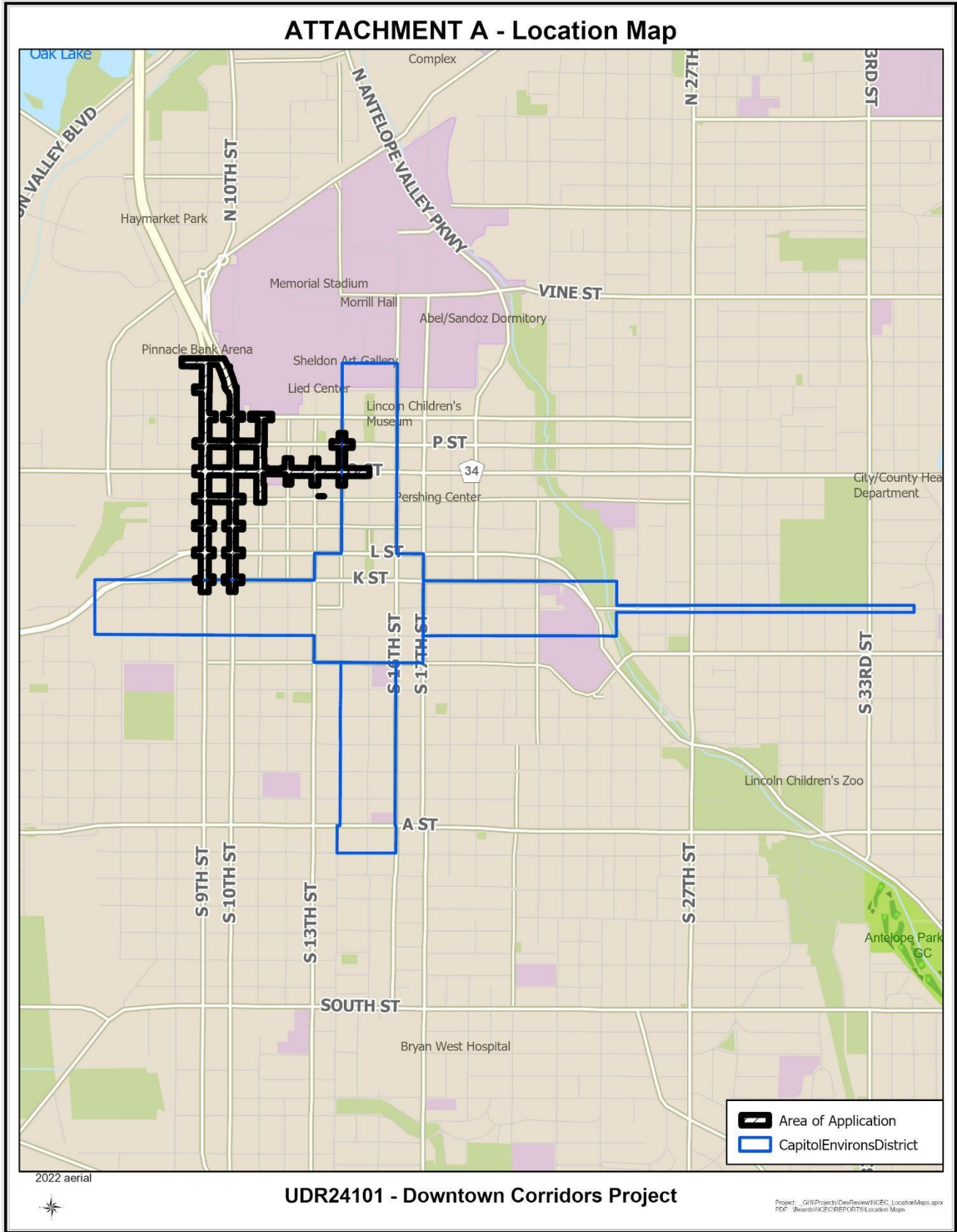
### **Recommendations**

Staff is of the opinion that the proposed Downtown Corridors streetscape improvements project will provide much needed reinvestment in downtown's public realm, including a portion of the Capitol Environs District.

**Recommended finding:** The planned Downtown Corridors streetscape improvements within the Capitol Environs District (O Street between 14<sup>th</sup> and Centennial Mall) generally comply with the Capitol Environs Design Standards.

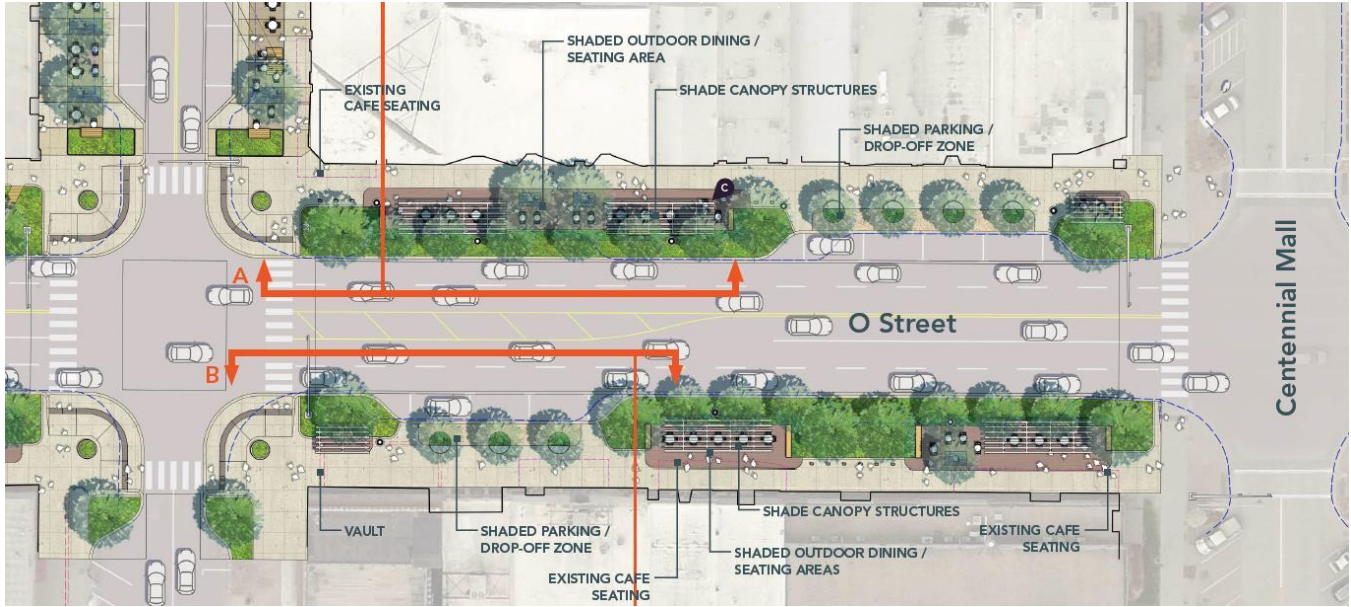
**Recommended action:** Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the planned Downtown Corridors streetscape improvements within the Capitol Environs District (O Street between 14<sup>th</sup> and Centennial Mall).

# ATTACHMENT A - Location Map



<https://linlanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-Boards/Shared Documents/Boards/NCEC/REPORTS/2024/07-July/Downtown Corridors Streetscape Staff Report Item 2.docx>

## ATTACHMENT B – Site Plan



*Planned improvements for O Street between 14<sup>th</sup> and Centennial Mall*

## ATTACHMENT C – Renderings



*North side of O Street between 14<sup>th</sup> and Centennial Mall*



*South side of O Street between 14<sup>th</sup> and Centennial Mall*



*View of streetscape along north side of O Street between 14<sup>th</sup> and Centennial Mall*

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