



North Dakota State Capitol Capitol Complex Master Plan

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Prepared for	The Capitol Grounds Planning Commission
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North Dakota State Capitol Capitol Complex Master Plan

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INTRODUCTION

This Master Plan represents a renewal and extension of earlier master plans for the North Dakota Capitol Grounds. Since the last plan was prepared in 1965, there have been dramatic changes in technology, societal needs, governmental services and organization, and transportation, among others. New buildings have been constructed on the Capitol Grounds for the Department of Transportation, Judicial Branch, Heritage Center, and Maintenance. An Arboretum Trail has been established, and parking lots, roadways, and landscaping have been added.

It is appropriate to newly examine the beauty, amenities, and major influences of the Capitol Grounds, to refresh the logic of its organization with appreciation for its heritage, and to decide how best to make future decisions about growth and enhancement.

The components of this Plan, Section One and Section Two, aim to confirm present-day planning goals for the Capitol Complex. It identifies logical locations for future growth as that may become desirable. It identifies an optimal long-range balance of buildings, parking, and amenities that will fulfill the potential of the 130-acre campus.

The Plan also examines space utilization for the effects of overcrowding, opportunities for the efficient consolidation of departments, a brief consideration of leased space returning to the Capitol Complex, and growth projections for the next twenty years.

The Master Plan synthesizes the physical planning potential (Section One) with the projected space needs (Section Two), envisioning the Grounds ten and twenty years from the present. While the Physical Master Plan is likely to remain effective and highly useful over its intended twenty year life, the Space Master Plan will, necessarily, have a shorter useful life due to the phenomenon of change. It is likely the space analysis will require updating within five years.

Planning priorities were established to guide the development of the Master Plan:

- Establish the Capitol Complex as a destination for governance, education, and recreation.
- Strengthen the Capitol Complex image to the public.
- Showcase the rich heritage of the State.
- Enhance the visual beauty.
- Enhance accessibility and wayfinding.
- Enhance security and safety.
- Optimize building expansion opportunities.
- Develop parking strategies that support the Capitol Complex.
- Reinforce the sustainability of the Capitol Complex.

The Master Plan offers a guide for decision-making about the location and quality of future buildings, roadways, parking, trails, monuments, signage, furnishings, and landscaping. It is expected to be useful for the next 20 years.

An Interim Master Plan is included to illustrate the effect of the initial recommendations, while the final Master Plan illustrates the effect at the conclusion of all implementation strategies (see Phasing and Implementation Strategies). In either case and with any master plan of this kind, the documents and their contents remain flexible to accommodate demand for change in the future.

Section One Physical Master Plan

Section Two Space Master Plan

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN



- | | |
|--|--|
| <p><u>Existing Buildings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Legislative Wing ② Capitol Tower ③ Judicial Wing ④ DOT Building ⑤ Liberty Memorial Library ⑥ Heritage Center ⑦ Governor's Residence | <p><u>Site Features/Amenities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑫ Capitol Mall ⑬ Capitol Plaza ⑭ Legislative Mall ⑮ Amphitheater ⑯ Myron Atkinson Park ⑰ Judicial Grove |
| <p><u>Proposed Buildings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑧ Maintenance / Motor Pool ⑨ Proposed Building ⑩ Heritage Center Expansion ⑪ Historic Gardens / Pavilion | |

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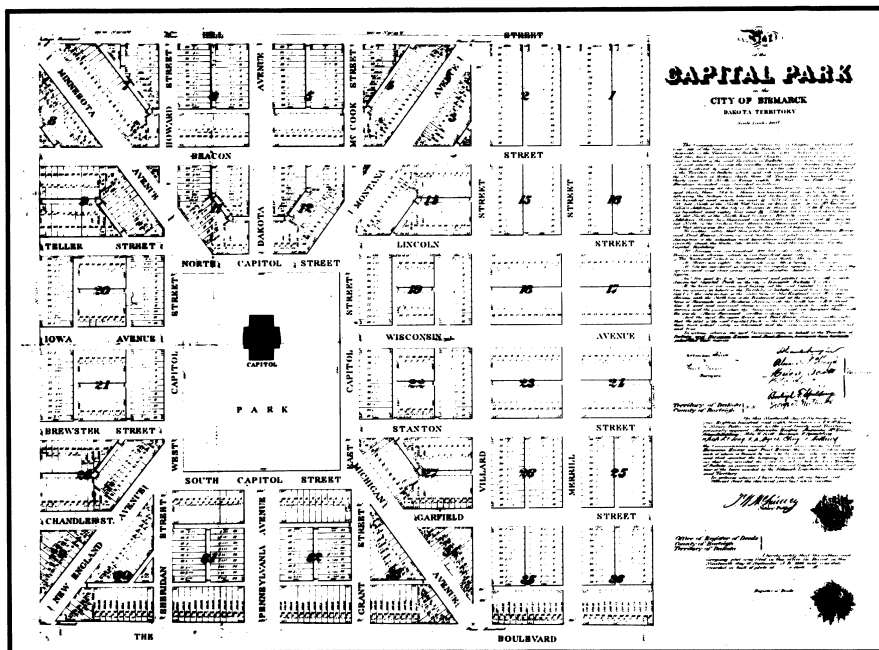
Native Prairie

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

IN THE BEGINNING

The Dakota Territory was established by Congress in 1861 with its territorial capital at Yankton, then central to the settlements. In 1873, changes in technology (in this case, the Northern Pacific Railroad reaching Bismarck) established new settlement patterns. This led, in 1883, to Bismarck being named the new home for the capital.

160 acres of land were initially planned as the Capital Park Addition, with the layout modeled after the Wisconsin capitol grounds at Madison and another 160 acres platted for 1,000 homesites. But this forward looking idea, hoping to fund the new Capitol building with homesite sales, failed to find economic success and a less ambitious development plan saw the first State Capitol building constructed in 1884.



Approximately half of Bismarck's 320 acre land grant was platted as "Capital Park." Commissioners hoped that the sale of the nearly 1000 commercial and residential lots would raise the \$300,000 needed to construct the capitol building.

State Historical Society of North Dakota Collections

The red brick, Romanesque design for the first State Capitol building was the result of a design competition won by Minneapolis Architect Leroy Buffington, who had previously supervised the Minnesota State Capitol construction. However, due to limited funds, the winning design could only be partially implemented as the center section, without its dome, tower, and flanking wings.

In 1889, North Dakota became a state with Bismarck as its capital. Growth pressures required additions to the Capitol building in 1893, when an awkward south wing, limited by scarce funds, was added by the Hancock Brothers of Fargo.

Another addition added to the architectural chaos in 1903 when a north wing was designed by Milton Beebe of Fargo. Again, unable to afford to match the original structure, the three-part result was a curious mixture of diverse Romanesque and Classical character and materials.

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

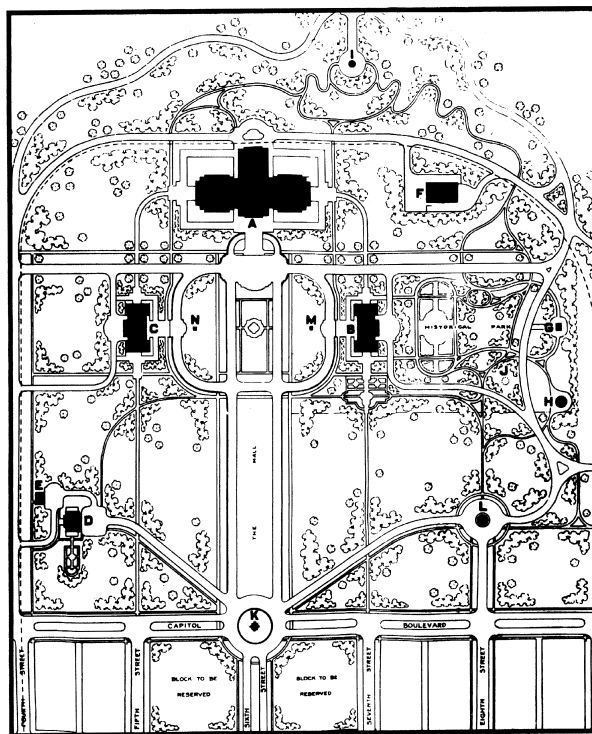
In 1910, the still-prominent statue of Sakakawea, by Leonard Crunelle, was added to the grounds, signifying a continuing interest in developing a place of delight that reflects its heritage.

In 1919, state government was significantly reformed, resulting in new agencies and a larger bureaucracy. This strained the capacity of the Capitol which was, by then, 35 years old. This resulted in the Legislature authorizing the construction of the Liberty Memorial building. This same legislation provided for the preparation of a landscaping plan, including the siting for a much-discussed, new State Capitol building, due to the poor condition of the first Capitol.

The overall theme set during these early years was one of a frontier area struggling with austere funding and grand ideas.

1920 MASTER PLAN

In 1920, in response to the 1919 legislation, the firm of Morrell and Nichols, Landscape Architects from Minneapolis, developed a master plan. The resulting "General Plan for Arrangement of Capitol Grounds and Historical Park" merged two important landscape themes, the Classical (symmetrical and geometric) and the Picturesque (organic, random).



General Plan for Arrangement of Capitol Grounds and Historical Park

Bismarck
North Dakota

MORELL & NICHOLS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Legend

- A-Proposed State Capitol
- B-Historical Building
- C-Temple of Justice
- D-Governor's Mansion
- E-Garage
- F-Central Power Plant
- G-Roosevelt Cabin
- H-Indian Lodge
- I-Water Tower
- J-Turtle Effigy
- K-Monument
- L-Pavilion
- M-Statue of Sakakawea
- N-Statue of Justice

The Minneapolis architectural firm of Morell and Nichols developed the Capitol grounds plan in 1920.

State Historical Society of North Dakota Collections

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

The Plan retained the north-south orientation of the original avenue, turning it into the tree-lined mall of today. It placed the Capitol at the north end of the mall, with a symmetrical placement of the new Liberty Memorial Building and a future Temple of Justice facing each other on the sides of the Mall. Further south, a proposed Governor's residence and pavilion similarly faced each other. These five major design elements formed a "heroic triangle", a classical framework of symmetry for development.

Asymmetrical and east of the Mall, the "picturesque" Historical Park was introduced. This rich blend of symmetrical and asymmetrical elements would continue importantly into future plans.

In 1924, the Liberty Memorial Building was an early implementation of the 1920 Master Plan. Designed by architects F. W. Keith and W. F. Kurke of Fargo, the new building exhibited an attractive civic Classical character. But, cost overruns drained state resources, setting a long-remembered lesson on concern for adherence to construction budgets. Due to the overruns, the desired landscaping was eliminated and this set a precedent for tough-minded cost oversight of future buildings.

On December 30, 1930, a devastating fire destroyed the first State Capitol building before its much-discussed replacement could be planned.



Capitol Mall Construction



Capitol Fire of 1930

CAPITOL BUILDING RECONSTRUCTION

After the fire, the planning for a new State Capitol proceeded quickly. Goals for the new building were to be efficient and modern, monumental, and impressive, but within a strict construction budget. The austere budget would not allow the kind of embellished Classical monument that many other states had built. In the depths of the Great Depression, during the period of 1932 to 1934, and stung by previous cost overruns, the Legislature determined that the new building must be efficient and within budget.

Architects Joseph Bell DeRemer of Grand Forks and W. F. Kurke of Fargo joined with the famous Chicago architectural firm of Holabird & Root for the new design. Inspired by recent state capitols in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, an unusual high-rise office tower was developed to meet the goal of efficiency.

The popular new public style of Art Deco was adopted as a design expression. The 19 story, elegant tower was skillfully joined to a 3 story Legislative wing by a handsome main entrance. While the overall arrangement of the building parts was decidedly asymmetrical and a substantial departure from the 1920 Morrell and Nichols Master Plan, a "rich blend" with symmetry was achieved by carefully placing the main entrance on axis with the Mall. As well, its rooms, laid out along axes, and classical ideas of proportions and ornament owed much to the Classical tradition.

Building materials of gray Indiana limestone, black Wisconsin granite, Belgium black marble, Montana Yellowstone travertine, and Tennessee marble floors established a strong precedent for quality. Woods of mahogany, rosewood, laurel, oak, teak, walnut, prima vera, maple, and chestnut brought similar quality to the interior.

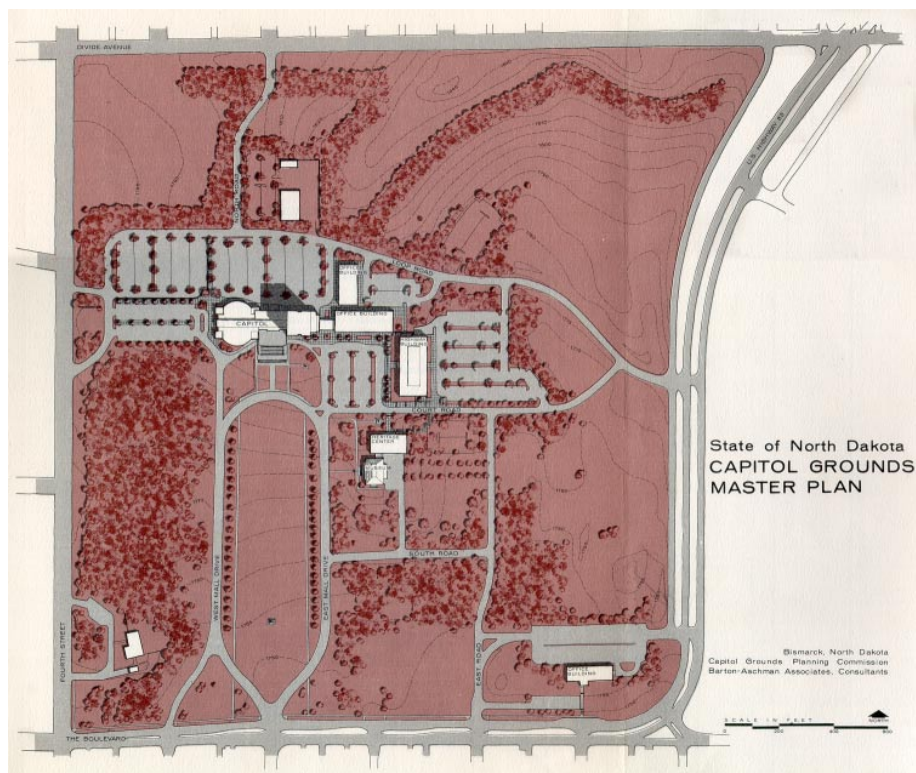
However, the budget was strictly observed and some features were severely modified from the original elegant design. Much of the intended exterior ornament was eliminated to save costs, such as the thirty foot high central statue intended for the front steps, the decorative etching on the Legislative wing cornice, and tower metal spandrels and stone sculpture never completed. The result is a much more spartan exterior than designed.

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

In 1955, a major deviation to the Morrell and Nichols plan occurred when the Bismarck Junior College was built on the southeast corner of the Grounds. This may have been rationalized as appropriate due to the introduction of asymmetry by the 1934 Capitol design or it may simply have been an expedient and economical consideration. In any case, the unfortunate location resulted in a building that bears little relationship to the Capitol Complex and detracts from the natural beauty and sense of arrival that could otherwise have graced that important corner.

In 1960, the site selected for the construction of a new Governor's Residence, designed by the Ritterbush Brothers of Bismarck, generally followed the Morrell and Nichols Master Plan, although its visual relationship to the Mall was much less apparent than originally suggested.

1965 MASTER PLAN



In 1965, Barton & Aschman developed a new Master Plan which added landscaping and provided for buildings that harmonized well with the earlier, magnificent structures. The plan incorporated design elements from the 1920 Master Plan with the realities of the existing buildings and amenities as they had developed over the intervening years. This Master Plan oversaw the transition from a few lone buildings in a parkland of meadow and woods to a major civic complex with urban buildings, roadways, parking, and monuments.

The DOT building was built in 1967 as an early implementation of this plan, which also provided for a future building that was later implemented as the Judicial Wing. The dark metal and light colored stone of the State Capitol building influenced the choice of building materials for the DOT and Heritage Center. The controversial Judicial Wing, built in 1981, also reflected that influence of materials, although the dominant window forms of the "J-Wing" introduced an architectural character decidedly different from its predecessors.



Judicial Wing 1981

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

The Heritage Center was built in 1981 to acknowledge and honor the site of the former Historical Park area, designed by the architectural firm of Anderson, Wade, Barsness, & Walter, located in Bismarck and Minot.

Barton & Aschman master-planned an arboretum south of the former Historical Park as a picturesque contrast to the strong geometry of the Mall. A variation on that idea established the Arboretum Trail in 1985.

All in all, the Capitol Grounds has benefited from an outstanding site with ample area, outstanding views across the Missouri River Valley, a rich historical tradition, good access from all directions, and being surrounded by handsome city neighborhoods, both residential and commercial.

PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM THE PAST

Many planning principals are available from the earlier master plans to carry forward into the 2000 Master Plan.

- Celebrate the richness of the visual contrast between strong asymmetrical building forms and the Classical Liberty Memorial Building; and, between the Classical central Mall and the rolling natural landscape.
- Respect of the history and tradition of the state and of this site.
- Optimize the potential for beauty, dignity, and monumentality.
- The strongest design features of the grounds remain the central symmetrical mall and the dominant asymmetrical office tower.
- Maintain the general landscaping as a woods and meadow character, augmented by the Arboretum Trail.
- Locations for new buildings should respect and avoid areas with high groundwater, significant topographical changes, and sensitivity to protection of handsome views of the Capitol Complex.
- The land area across State Street will continue to serve as an east buffer to residential neighborhoods.
- Strive to return state departmental space that is currently located off of the Capitol Complex.
- Reduce overcrowding of space.
- Accommodate future growth of staff and services.
- Maintain relatively heavy landscaping on the west and east of the Complex.
- Strive to locate parking areas near the desired destination.
- Maintain an internal roadway system so vehicles are not required to travel public streets to move around the Complex.
- Provide alternative means of access so not all traffic uses the Mall roadways.
- Avoid conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Maintain the Mall as the principal organizing element.
- Strive for a compact arrangement of buildings to facilitate movement of staff and visitors and to minimize exposure to the harsh winter climate.
- Strive to link buildings by enclosed walkways, where practical.
- Assure that new buildings, in no way, detract from and, in fact, strengthen, the dominant character of the State Capitol and the Mall.
- Limit new buildings to a height of three to five stories.
- Assure that the architectural character of new buildings is subordinate to the State Capitol in color, scale, and detail.
- Strive for ease of wayfinding by visitors.

"Existing conditions, both natural and man-made, are most important in establishing the location of future buildings, roadways, and other features of the Capitol Grounds".

1965 Master Plan Quote