

Report of the Capitol Preservation Committee to the 2022 Kansas Legislature

CHAIRPERSON: Jennie Chinn

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS: Senator Elaine Bowers; and Representatives Fred Patton and Valdenia Winn

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS: Chase Blasi, Melinda Gaul, Tim Graham, Will Lawrence, Sharon Wenger, and Larry Wolgast

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS: Frank Burnam and Peter Jasso

CHARGE

Review Various Issues Regarding the Capitol

Pursuant to KSA 75-2269, the responsibilities of the Committee are:

- Approving all proposals for renovation of all areas of the Capitol, the Capitol Visitor Center, and the grounds surrounding the Capitol to ensure the historical beauty of the areas are preserved;
- Preserving the proper decor of such areas;
- Assuring any art or artistic displays are historically accurate and have historic significance;
- Overseeing the location and types of temporary displays and revolving displays in the Capitol including the visitor center; and
- Overseeing the reconfiguration or redecoration of committee rooms within the Capitol.

Capitol Preservation Committee

ANNUAL REPORT

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Capitol Preservation Committee:

- Recommends the installation of the Kansas Gold Star Memorial;
- Approves the temporary installation of the Hungry Heartland exhibit in the Capitol, and recommends the Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration, work with the Director of Legislative Administrative Services on installation dates and logistics;
- Recommends the installation of a Commemorative Suffragist Monument with more study through a subcommittee. The subcommittee shall meet and make recommendations to the full Committee before the end of the year. The subcommittee members appointed are: the Committee Chairperson, (to serve as chairperson of the subcommittee); Senator Bowers, Representative Winn; the Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration; and the Director of the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission;
- Recommends legislation be drafted to authorize the installation of the 1st Kansas (Colored) Infantry mural in the Capitol; and
- Recommends a subcommittee be created to further discuss the future of *Ad Astra* Plaza. The subcommittee members appointed are: Senator Bowers (to serve as chairperson of the subcommittee); the Chairperson; the Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration; and Larry Wolgast (Governor's appointee).

Proposed Legislation: None.

BACKGROUND

The Capitol Preservation Committee was created by the Legislature in 2010 to approve renovation proposals in all areas of the Capitol, the Capitol Visitor Center, and the Capitol grounds to ensure the historical beauty of those areas are preserved, preserve the proper decor of those areas, assure any art or artistic displays are historically accurate and have historic significance, approve the location and types of temporary displays, and oversee the reconfiguration of committee rooms within the Capitol. As provided by KSA 75-2269, the Division of Legislative Administrative Services is responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Committee.

The Committee is composed of 12 members, with the Governor appointing 3, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House each appointing 2, and the Minority Leaders of the House and Senate each appointing 1.

The Committee's three ex officio members are the Statehouse Architect, the Executive Director of the Kansas State Historical Society, and the Director of the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission. The Governor has the authority to appoint the chairperson from the Committee's membership.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Committee met on October 12, 2021, at the Capitol. During the meeting, the Committee heard proposals for the permanent installment of a Kansas Gold Star Memorial, a temporary exhibition of *Hungry in the Heartland*, and the permanent installation of a Commemorative Suffragist Monument. The Committee received follow-up information on previously proposed projects on the 1st Kansas (Colored) Infantry, *Ad Astra* Plaza, and conservation of the Overmyer murals, and an update on Capitol signage.

Proposed Projects

Kansas Gold Star Memorial

The Executive Director of the Governor's Military Council provided an overview of a proposed permanent installation of a memorial to Kansas Gold Star families to be placed on the grounds of the Capitol along the Veterans' Walk. Kansas is one of the only states that does not have a Gold Star family memorial. The Executive Director provided a drawing and a picture showing examples of existing memorials in other states and stated the goal was to have a memorial that is simple and tasteful, with a plaque on a granite base, which would reflect the tone and theme of the Veterans' Walk.

The Executive Director stated the goal for installation is no later than late summer 2022. Recognizing this is an aggressive timeline, it was explained to the Committee that a Gold Star Memorial Fundraising Committee has been formed and is in the process of soliciting donations for the entire cost of the memorial. The Executive Director listed four legislators that are serving on the Fundraising Committee, and he stated he is working with them to have the proper legislation drafted and introduced to authorize the placement of the memorial.

Hungry Heartland Exhibit

The Associate Professor and Photography Area Coordinator, Art Department, Kansas State University (K-State), provided an overview of the proposed temporary photography exhibit in the Capitol. The *Hungry Heartland* exhibit is a multimedia project primarily led by students in

three different K-State departments — art, English, and journalism. These students researched regional experiences of food insecurity and areas known as “food deserts,” which the U.S. Department of Agriculture describes as areas where populations live more than 1 mile from a grocery store in an urban area, or more than 10 miles from a grocery store in a rural area.

The students visited Republic, Cloud, and Jewell counties to document by different methods food insecurity and food deserts. In one instance, they spent time at a small, rural community grocery store that acts as a community hub. The students met with local residents and had discussions about the logistics and challenges of stocking fresh, nutritious food.

The Associate Professor shared several photographs and stated there would be at least 20 to 30 panels that could be displayed and video to play, depending on available technology and display space. The proposed temporary exhibit would be installed for two to four weeks, depending on availability of space in the Capitol.

Commemorative Suffragist Monument

A representative of the League of Women Voters Kansas and American Association of University Women of Kansas provided an overview of the proposed permanent installation of the Commemorative Suffragist Monument in the Capitol or on the Capitol grounds.

The proposed monument would honor the role that Kansas women played in the formation of the state and commemorate Kansas women who had statewide and national impact or importance in achieving women's right to vote. The proposed monument would be a work of art, but no specific artistic medium or design was proposed.

The representative welcomed the Committee's input and asked for the Committee's assistance in appointing a selection panel to choose a Kansas artist and monument design. The budget for the monument is \$35,000. There is no deadline for using the funding, as it was privately donated by an individual in honor of their mother.

Updates on Previously Proposed Projects

1st Kansas (Colored) Infantry Mural

The Chairperson provided an overview of the 1st Kansas (Colored) Infantry mural that was proposed over 25 years ago. The legislation to authorize the mural was not passed by the Legislature, and no legislation has been introduced in many years. The Chairperson said one reason the mural has not moved forward is that no financing partner has been identified, as it is unlikely the Legislature would appropriate funds for the mural.

Ad Astra Plaza Project

The Chairperson and Senator Bowers provided an update on the *Ad Astra* Plaza project. The artist agreed to provide a small copy of *Ad Astra* (the statue that caps the dome of the Capitol) for free; however, the artist has since passed away. The agreement was verbal, and the family wants the State to honor the original contract, which requires payment for the *Ad Astra* copy. The current plaza has bricks from people that donated money toward the *Ad Astra* copy, along with an empty pedestal. The Committee discussed the possibility of funding options.

Conservation of Overmyer Murals

The Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration, discussed upcoming conservation work on the Overmyer murals in the rotunda of the first floor of the Capitol. A conservation service from Colorado has agreed to do conservation work at a cost of \$9,000 – \$12,000 that will take five to seven days of work.

The Overmyer murals are different from the other murals in the Capitol, in that they are painted directly on the plaster. Staff members trained in conservation at the Kansas State Historical Society will oversee the work, and the Department of Administration will help set up scaffolding and any other equipment the conservators will need. The conservation is expected to happen in summer 2022.

Capitol Signage

The Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration,

discussed the new signage that will be placed outside the Capitol that will direct visitors on the Capitol grounds to the entrance of the Capitol Visitor's Center. In addition, there are plans to replace the currently blue signs with bronze-colored signs. The large metal sign next to the entrance of the Capitol parking garage is also scheduled to be replaced with a more appropriate sign.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following discussion, the Committee made the following conclusions and recommendations:

- The Committee recommends the installation of the Kansas Gold Star Memorial;
- The Committee approves the temporary installation of the Hungry Heartland exhibit in the Capitol, and recommends the Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration, work with the Director of Legislative Administrative Services on installation dates and logistics;
- The Committee recommends the installation of a Commemorative Suffragist Monument with more study through a subcommittee. The subcommittee shall meet and make recommendations to the full Committee before the end of the year. The subcommittee members appointed are: the Chairperson, (to serve as chairperson of the subcommittee), Senator Bowers, Representative Winn, the Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration, and the Director of the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission;
- The Committee recommends legislation be drafted to authorize the installation of the 1st Kansas (Colored) Infantry mural in the Capitol; and
- The Committee recommends a subcommittee be created to further discuss the future of *Ad Astra* Plaza.

The subcommittee members appointed are: Senator Bowers (to serve as chairperson of the subcommittee); the Chairperson; the Director of Facilities and Property Management, Department of Administration; and Larry Wolgast (Governor's appointee).