THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME SEVENTEEN | NUMBER TWO | JUNE 2025

HVAC Update

The Nebraska State Capitol Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning and Window Repair Project has moved to the tower of the Capitol in Phase Five. Contractors will again install protection as needed, and repeat the process of removing all existing HVAC equipment and installing the new refrigerant lines and fan coil units. The tower presents numerous challenges for contractors, including the removal of demolition debris and bringing in new equipment via the very small tower elevators. Larger equipment will be carried up or down the fire stairs. The tower a steel superstructure encased in concrete and brick masonry, varies slightly from other areas of the Capitol and presents additional new challenges. The HVAC system will be routed vertically through narrow chases which rise 150 - 200 feet into the tower.

Window repair will continue to be part of the project. Several issues will de addressed during Phase Five, most significantly water and air infiltration during high wind events. OCC staff and the window contractors will review different techniques for weather stripping.

As contractors move into the tower, Office of the Capitol Commission Maintenance staff have taken over maintenance and operation of the completed system in the base of the Capitol. Maintenance staff change filters in the new system and grease motors on a regular schedule to keep the equipment in proper operation. The OCC maintenance team continues to work with Capitol staff to fine tune the system to meet staff expectations for comfort. The ability of Capitol staff to control the temperature in individual offices via a personal thermostat is a new experience for long-time Capitol staff. Understanding the system and proper operation of the thermostats requires training. New staff entering the Capitol need training on proper operation of the system as well.



Above, the ribbon windows in the tower as they appeared before the 1960's HVAC upgrade. The current project will replace the 1960's units which block the windows and reopen them to full height.





Left, tower steam lines being replaced with the new system enter at each floor level and rise up 19' through a small chase to an opening in the ceiling/floor above.

The 14th floor observation decks and Memorial Chamber will be closed during Phase Five because the Fire Stairs for safe egress are in the construction area.

Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

Jim Pillen
Governor, Chairman

John Arch
Speaker of the Legislature
Vice-Chairman

Jeffrey Funke
Chief Justice Supreme Court

Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg
Dean
College of Architecture, UNL

Daryl Bohac
CEO
Nebraska State Historical Society

Doug Carey
Congressional District 1

Jack Wightman, Jr.
Congressional District 2

Katie Spohn
Congressional District 3

Brett Daugherty
Acting Capitol Administrator
Secretary

EQUALITY BE FORE THE LAW

The People of the
OCC
Office of the Capitol Commission

ADMINISTRATION
Brett Daugherty,
Acting Administrator
Matt Hansen, Preservation Architect
Vacant, Preservation Architect
Brett Daugherty, Capitol Manager
Tammy Honnor, Facilities
Construction Coordinator
Sarah Lacey,
Administrative Assistant

ARCHIVE
Karen Wagner, Archivist

CARPENTRY
Vacant, Shop Supervisor
Lana Gabel,
Furniture Conservator
Dawn Snider,
Furniture Conservator
Hunter vonHolt, Carpenter
Dan Kratky, Mason
John MacKichan,
Hardware Conservator
Mike Marshall, Cabinet Maker

CUSTODIAL
David Hoelscher,
Capitol Conservation Supervisor
Richard Mallam, Custodial Leader
Dennis Roy, Custodial Leader

GROUNDS
Heather Dinslage,
Groundskeeper Leader
Aud Koch, Maintenance Technician
Lexis Funk,
Maintenance Technician

MAINTENANCE
Chris Lahmon, Shop Supervisor
Jeff Gillett, Plumber
Tahir Karimi, Electrician
Bret Pinkelman,
Maintenance Technician
Vacant,
Maintenance Technician

TOURS
Roxanne Smith,
Public Information Officer/
Tourism Supervisor/
Special Events Coordinator
Allison Monzu, Tourism Aide
Susan Myers, Tourism Aide
Kirk Woita, Tourism Aide

OCC AT WORK

Experience and Service

Capitol Staff Changes

The Office of the Capitol Commission saw several staffing changes this spring. Clark DeVries, Project Manager of the current Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning Project retired. Chris Lahmon, an OCC Facility Maintenance Specialist was promoted to fill the vacant Maintenance Supervisor position. Bret Pickleman has been hired to fill the vacant Facility Maintenance position. Harry Holcome, a Facility Maintenance Specialist has retired; OCC hopes to quickly hire his replacement.





Clark DeVries, left, managed the first four phases of the current HVAC Project before retiring. After years working as a project manager for the University of Nebraska and the Office of the Capitol Comission, DeVries plans to work on personal projects and travel. Harry Holcomb, right, retired after over 30 years working for various state agencies. In retirement Holcomb will volunteer at his church and travel. The Office of the Capitol Commission thanks both retiring staff for their service.



Bret Pinkelman, left, hired to join OCC's Maintenance Team, was raised in Yankton, South Dakota, and has lived in Lincoln for over 10 years. He has worked in the construction trades since graduating from high school. He is skilled in all aspects of construction, but especially plumbing and welding. These skills will serve him well as he works in the Maintenance Shop and with other OCC team members. Pinkelman uses his time away from work to restore an old truck, and he enjoys fishing with his family. Bret is happy to join the team and hopes to contribute to the ongoing preservation and maintenance of the Landmark Nebraska State Capitol



Visit Nebraska recognized Tourism Supervisor Roxanne Smith as one of seven employees from across the state with a Frontline Employee Award in celebration of National Travel and Tourism Week. Her work in the Nebraska State Capitol has ensured that countless travelers have a deeper and fuller understanding of one of the state's most unique landmarks.

The Nebraska Capitol Commission holds their quarterly meetings in Hearing Room #1507 on the ground floor of the Capitol. These meetings are open to the public. For a schedule of meetings please go to:

https://capitol.nebraska.gov/about/nebraska-capitol-commission/

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Opening Another Door

The Nebraska Capitol Commission, responsible for overseeing the construction of the third, and in their minds no doubt, last Nebraska State Capitol, made decisions based on very long-term needs and goals. With the knowledge and understanding of the world's great monuments they realized the building and its furnishings could be in use a thousand years. American walnut, a most durable and decay resistant wood was chosen for use. The high quality walnut office furniture, desks, chairs, and tables, and finish carpentry, doors and trim, when cared for properly, will serve their purpose well.

As the Capitol's functions have changed over time, the original furnishings have adapted and continue to be in use. When modern building codes required, the walnut wood doors in the tower that opened onto the fire stairs were replaced with steel fire resistant doors. Those original tower office doors, much too valuable to discard, were removed and placed in storage in anticipation of future use. With the creation of new office space on the ground floor, see page 5, those long-saved doors are being repaired, restored and returned to service. While Office of the Capitol Commission staff has the skill to create new doors for the new offices, reusing original doors assures their long term survival and reinforces the wisdom of the Nebraska Capitol Commission's choice to invest in the finest materials for the long-term function of the Nebraska State Capitol.







Code updates in the 1960's required new metal fire doors, above and right, be installed on the fire stairs providing egress from tower offices. The original walnut doors were removed and placed in storage, right, for future use. Reuse of the doors in other locations in the Capitol saves taxpayers from the expense of recreating solid walnut custom doors.





Once the decision to reuse was made, the doors were moved into the finish shop and hardware removed, above right. With the kick plate removed the original finish and color are evident. Doors were placed on carts and staff went to work removing the old damaged finish. The doors were stripped, repaired, stained, and refinished, to await hardware and installation below right. The number on the door, 702, indicates it once was on 7th floor.



Compatible and Complementary

Included in the Nebraska Capitol Commission's many responsibilities as they oversaw the 1922-1932 construction of the Nebraska State Capitol was furnishing offices in the new building. The new furnishings in the preservation spaces, Governor's Suite, Legislative Chambers and Lounges, and Supreme Court were quite elaborate and custom designed. In staff offices the Commission reused furniture from the 2nd Capitol that was in good condition and met staff needs. However, the Commission still needed to purchase desks, tables, chairs and bookcases to furnish the additional office space. While not custom made, the new pieces were high quality walnut furniture from top of the line manufacturers, such as Macey, Stowe Davis, Shaw and Leopold. These manufacturers often produced a range of desks in the same design, from a basic stenographers desk to a more ornate executive desk, each with different detail. Desks purchased for the Capitol were of various ranges. As Capitol agencies were shuffled and moved, so was furniture. The upper range Stowe Davis furniture purchased for the Supreme Court has remained in those offices through the years.

In 2024 while browsing Facebook Marketplace, retired Office of the Capitol Commission furniture staff discovered a Stowe Davis executive desk of the same period and design as the desk in the Chief Justice's office. After discussion with the seller, and communicating the significance of the desk for the Capitol Furniture Program, the seller agreed to donate the desk for use in the Capitol. The desk, now part of the furniture collection of the Nebraska Capitol Collections, has been restored by OCC's furniture shop and will soon join its mate in the Chief Justice's Suite.





After construction of the State Office Building, many agencies vacated the building and the furniture. Tom Kaspar, preservation architect, took slides, example above, to document each piece of Capitol original furniture and establish the furniture collection within the Nebraska Capitol Collections. A Stowe Davis stenographer's desk, above right, has simple drawer pulls and corner detail.



The Stowe Davis executive desk, above, donated by a couple in Omaha, was in relatively good condition. The scratches and sun fading are indicative of over 80 years of use. The executive desk features fluted corners with floral carving at the top, and the drawer pulls feature floral design as well, inset detail above.









Once the desk was taken apart, each piece had finish removed, and was inspected for damage, repaired and refinished. Left, above, 80 years of use are plainly visible on a drawer section. Left, below, after refinishing the beauty of the wood used is evident.

Above left, the desk drawers in the shop for any needed repairs prior to refinishing, above right. Below left, the bare walnut desktop after the old finish is removed, and below right, the refinished top shines.







Above, Dawn Snider and Lana Gabel with the desk they carefully restored for use in the Chief Justice's office. Responsible for the care and maintenance of the Capitol original furniture, they are skilled members of the team and dedicated to the preservation goals of the Office of the Capitol Commission.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Adaptive Use Space

There are two kinds of space in the Nebraska State Capitol. Preservation space consists of the formal highly finished chambers where the public functions of state government occur, such as the Governor's Suite, the Legislative Chambers and the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals Chambers. The general office and meeting room space in the Capitol was designed to be adaptable, enabling space to be changed or adapted to meet the needs of modern government. The current Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Project has provided the opportunity to reassess and readjust the office space requirements of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of Nebraska's government. Some support functions of the three branches have been moved out of the Capitol for ease of public access and additional space. For those Legislative and Executive functions remaining in the Capitol, the Office of the Capitol Commission (OCC) has undertaken a project to adapt space for their changing needs.

Originally many of the rooms in the Capitol were large open spaces, in which entire agencies could fit. Legislators did not have private offices, and they shared support staff. There were no Legislative Hearing Rooms. In the 1940's, soon after the Capitol's completion, changes were made by subdividing large open rooms to create private offices for executive functions. In the 1970's following the construction of a separate State Office Building, legislators moved into offices away from their desks in the Legislative Chamber. At first Senators shared some of the larger rooms. Later, these rooms were subdivided following the examples from the 1940's. With the development of new administrative office space in a separate building, and the movement of staff in and out of Capitol office space with the HVAC work, additional space in the Capitol became available to expand legislative offices and eliminate the need for Senators to share office space.





Early in the life of the Capitol large open rooms were divided into smaller private offices. Large expanses of obscuring glass, left, was chosen for privacy and to allow maximum light from courtyard windows to illuminate the interior. By the 1970's flourescent lights reduced the need for natural illumination and later room dividers featured less glass, right.





Once the new HVAC equipment was installed and window repairs were made, contractors laid concrete block dividing walls to enclose new private offices. Right, above, looking from the corridor door into the new space, below, the view from what will become a senator's private office into the interior windowless office space which will have natural light via windows in the wall.

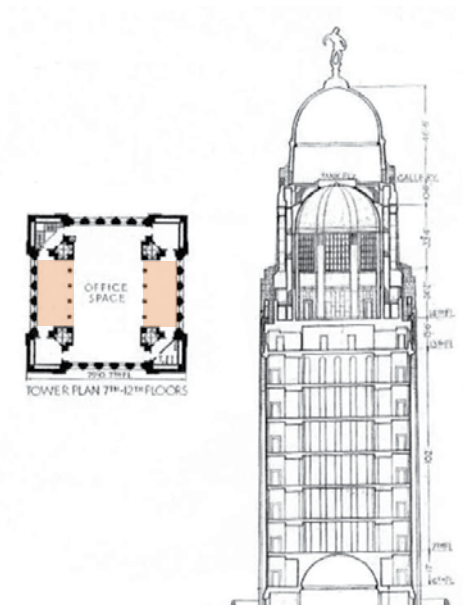


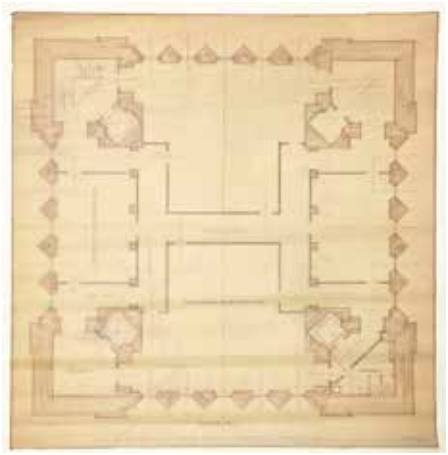


After the walls were completed, plastered and painted, OCC staff installed the custom fit window and door frames they had fabricated, finishing them in place, near right. With the installation of the obscurring glass, far right, all that remains for occupation is carpet and door installation.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

The Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning and Window Repair Project currently underway in the Nebraska State Capitol has now moved into the tower. With this move, the Capitol's Archivist, Karen Wagner, has been studying the evolution of office space in the tower. Capitol architect Bertram Goodhue originally conceived of the tower as an extension of the State Library. Two levels of stacks (bookshelves) were originally planned for all tower floors. The tower office ceilings rise up 19 feet, to accommodate the two levels of book shelves. Following the construction of book stacks on the 7th floor it was determined the Nebraska State Law Library would not require the additional stacks. That provided the opportunity to change the floor plans of the remaining tower floors to accommodate office space. All of the floors, except 8th floor, have maintained the mostly open plan, 8th floor was subdivided into smaller office spaces soon after construction was completed. Once the Capitol Commission and architects decided not to create mezzanine levels on tower floors, discussion began to determine the configuration of the remaining tower floors. The original architectural drawings, left, from late in construction show the open floor plan proposed. In her research, Wagner found a sketch, right, of a divided floor plan. While not exactly the layout of the 8th floor, it demonstrates the architect's concept for additional office space. In the decades after construction, as the needs of agencies grew and changed, private offices, shaded in the drawing above left, were created on the east and west sides of the tower floors.







Above, the 7th floor with the book stacks visible in the background. A stair on the right leads to the second level of the stacks. The floors of the upper level are structural glass to allow light from the ribbon windows to reach the lower level and interior of the floor.

CAPITOL EVENTS

Rural America USPS Rally
August 10, 2025
The Nebraska Rural Letter Carriers Association will rally on the north plaza at 2:00 p.m..

Purple Heart Day
August 7, 2025
Nebraska Department of Veteran's Affairs honors those wounded while serving in the Armed Forces

Labor Day Holiday
September 1, 2024
The Nebraska State Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

NU President's Address
September 4, 2025
The President of the University of Nebraska System will deliver his State of the University Address in the 2nd floor rotunda from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

New Attorney Swearing-In Ceremony
September 25, 2025
The Nebraska Supreme Court will swear in new Nebraska attorneys in a 2:00 p.m. ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month
October 3, 2025
The Nebraska Oncology Society will sponsor a rally on the Wesp Plaza of the Capitol at 7:00 p.m. The group will gather and then walk around the Capitol to draw attention to the importance of breast cancer screening.

State Arts Awards
October 10, 2025
The Nebraska Arts Council will hold the State Arts Awards ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda at 12:30 p.m.

Indigenous Peoples/Columbus Day
October 13, 2025
The Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Legacy of Light
October 20, 2025
The Teluga Samiti of Nebraska will hold a Diwali Cultural Showcase in the 2nd floor rotunda from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

New Probation Officer Swearing-In
October 23, 2025
The Administrative Offices of the Courts and Probation will swear in new probation officers at 1:30 p.m. in the 2nd floor rotunda program.

Drug Prevention Month
October 24. 2025
The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services will sponsor an evening lighting to raise awareness for drug resistance education.

Courts and Probation Awards
October 28. 2025
The Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation will recognize staff years of service in an awarads ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda at 10:00 a.m.

NBEA Capitol Ceremony
November 7, 2025
The Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects will license new engineers and architects at a 3:00 p.m. ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda Capitol.

Veterans Day Holiday
November 11, 2025
The Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and the tower illuminated in green at dusk in recognition of Nebraska's veterans.

Commissioner's Recogniton
November 24, 2025
The Center for Student Leadership and Expanded Learning will host a program to honor students at a 2:30 p.m. ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda.

Thanksgiving Holiday
November 27 - 28, 2025
The Capitol will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday and Friday. The building will reopen for tours on Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

Capitol Tree Lighting
December 7, 2025
The official state Christmas tree will be lit during a 1:30 p.m. ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda. Following the ceremony guests are invited to the Governor's Residence for a family Christmas party.

Wreaths Across America
December 8, 2025
Wyuka Historical Cemetery will host an 11:00 a.m. ceremony to present Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen a wreath as part of a nationwide event to place wreaths of he graves of veterans.

Camp 72 Graduation
December 19, 2025
The Nebraska State Patrol will celebrate the swearing-in of new recruits in the 2nd floor rotunda at 10:00 a.m. .

Christmas Day
December 25, 2025
The Capitol will be closed.

New Year's Day
January 1, 2026
The Capitol will be closed.

All events at the Nebraska State Capitol are free and open to the public.

Guided Tours are offered Monday-Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, except at noon; Saturday and Holidays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, except at noon; Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Please call 402.471.0448 or visit www.capitol.org for more information.

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Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924

In this issue:

DOORS 3
DESK RESTORATION . . 4
NEW OFFICE SPACE . . 5
TOWER FLOORS 6
EVENTS 7

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The Capitol Sower, published by the Office of the Capitol Commission, is available online at www.capitol.nebraska.gov. Contact the Tourism Supervisor at <roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov> for more information.

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments about the content.

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Military Matters

During the Spring of 2025, the Nebraska State Capitol hosted two two special programs featuring current and past members of the United States Military. On April 4 the United States Navy Band Northwest performed in the second floor rotunda. The woodwind quintet usually provides musical support for U.S. government ceremonies and was in Nebraska to conduct musical outreach in local schools. Their concert featured classical and traditional American music. The concert was a special treat for staff and visitors



Then on May 8, 2025, the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, Governor Jim Pillen and the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs honored a group of Nebraska World War II veterans in a rotunda ceremony.During the ceremony the veterans were awaded special recognition medals. There are currently about 250 World War II veterans living in Nebraska and the Governor hopes to be able to recognize them all for their service and sacrifice. The 13 honored in the Capitol program bring the number honored to 117.



Above, the Navy Quintet in the rotunda following their concert. Left, WWII veterans in a position of honor flanking the podium at the front of a ceremony recognizing their service to America.