



**MEETING DATE:** November 17, 2021

**LOCATION:** Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams

**ATTENDING:** Linda Mealey-Lohmann, Ali, Van, Romi Slowiak, Bill Zajicek, Ping Wang, Kao Lee Thao, Caroline Van, Regina Rippel, Susan Klevan, Jack Byers, Bill Pesek, Jijun He, Carol Brash, Meichun Jia, Jeff Vang, Haoyu Zhao, Thangying Chuyangheu, Vallen Herr, Brian Hammer, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Choua Khang.

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL:** Brett Hussong, Ellen Stewart

**COUNCIL:** Ward 1 Council Member Dai Thao, Chris Xiong Ward 6 Legislative Aide

**NOTES BY:** Brett Hussong & Ellen Stewart, November 19, 2021

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**PROJECT WEBSITE:** [www.stpaul.gov/phalenchinagarden](http://www.stpaul.gov/phalenchinagarden)

**AGENDA:**

6:30	INTRODUCTIONS
6:35	DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE
	CITY DESIGN PROCESS
	PROJECT BACKGROUND/ DAC #2 RECAP
	EXISTING LOCATION
	SITE ANALYSIS
	DESIGN EXAMPLES
	PROGRAMMING QUESTIONS
6:45	DISCUSSION
7:45	NEXT STEPS: PAVILION LANDSCAPE

**PURPOSE OF MEETING:**

To review the location, size and design elements of the Donor Wall and Moon Bridge. Design

**PRESENTATION:**

Brett Hussong opened the meeting with introductions, the role of the Design Advisory Committee (DAC), process, project background and recap of DAC meeting #2. Brett then provided analysis of the existing site conditions for the proposed donor wall and moon bridge locations. See DAC #3 presentation on project website for map.

**Recap of DAC #2:**



The purpose of the Hmong plaza:

Celebration, education, meditation, recreation (tai chi, qui gong, yoga)

A cultural bridge and strengthen friendships

Display Hmong arts and heritage

Hmong contribution to St. Paul

Peace and tranquility

What we heard:

It is too late to move the plaza because of the feng shui blessing and site dedication

An alternate location would be outside of garden - would not promote friendship

Current location would not support 200-person plaza - alternate site is recommended.

200-person plaza would not be in harmony with an intimate garden

Next Steps:

No decision has been made.

Parks and recreation is guiding the discussion and promoting a transparent process.

Parks and recreation will reach out to design team (city, artists, Changsha China designers)

A meeting will be scheduled soon to continue discussion

#### **Donor Wall Discussion:**

What is the purpose and design for the donor wall?

A permanent donor list and secondary gate into garden from east

Tile like pavilion roof tile

Features a solid boundary that defines the garden space and creates hide/reveal concept

Moon gate that frames bridge

Stucco walls with names engraved in white on black granite donor panels

Design Questions?

Prefer continuous wall, transparent or combination?

How can we incorporate Hmong symbols?

Contain interpretive garden information?

Linda: Breaking wall is not typically Chinese. B was an option to build immediately at a lower cost.

Chinese gardens typically have a hide and reveal and the wall is designed to embrace that perspective.

Dai Thao: Location: Could the wall be on the east side of the path so that it does not disturb the view of the lake? Is it possible to relocate it within the same area but not in that exact spot? May interfere with movement. Could be out of order for aesthetic elements of a china garden. Jennifer said that it is not



consistent with the concept. Carol responded: Usually, a wall would enclose a four-sided space. And there would be multiple miniature gardens with these walls. In this case, we only have one of the four sides. Moon gate to pass from one outside world into a different world and there is symbolic meaning to that passing through the gate and a consciousness of moving from one side to the other. Also, there is importance with the play of shadow on the wall – plants that move in front of the white wall help to provide different scenes/paintings through the day. Needs to be a wall with the gate or the gate loses its purpose.

Romi likes the idea of a classical Chinese wall that is white. Could it be undulating vertically? It seems very rigid.

Black Granite for donors seems heavy. Perhaps use white with red writing

Landscape around it has not been discussed. Provide plantings to help provide enclosure but give illusion to continuation of the wall.

Carol: Donor walls are not typically part of Chinese gardens, but they are part of Chinese American gardens. Separate wall is more typical where there are donor walls. Would like to at least have shadow play on one side.

Caroline: since there is usually a more enclosed area do you think there needs to be more of a space that one feels on one side or is one wall ok? Considering the most important desire for harmony and beauty for this garden, use QR codes instead of having the long list of donors. Don't dominate with wall to list names.

Ying: Can donor wall just be large piece of granite with writing on both sides? Donor wall location is a good location because it is most trafficked.

- How will the donors be listed? Degree of donation?
- Smaller wall with Elected officials that support the China Friendship Garden

Bill: Keep interpretive info separate from donor wall. Some way to change out information. Include QR codes to make info accessible. Moon gate was in the design for the donor wall because we didn't think we would necessarily get to Phase 3 and that is where there is an appropriate application

Regina: sounds like you want donor wall to blend into the garden rather than being a monumental wall.

Linda: Moon gate is to enter a separate courtyard rather than an entrance into the park. Is this an opportunity to create a space that is more meaningful behind the wall?

Bill Z: Moon gate and wall are an extension of the garden off of the pavilion and use it for a different purpose.



CM Thao: Does it seem like we are not humble? We could have a smaller wall and use vegetation for an extension of the wall.

Brian: concerns about the impact about the wall but understands why it is important also. Is there a place for ornamental windows in the longer wall? Is that appropriate?

Carol: often those windows have designs in them. Not normally a Hmong design but could be. Idea to have “teaser” views to frame elements. Images in the presentation from earlier – that is on the

Bill: likes idea of “leaky windows” as does Romi. Can add interest and beauty to the wall

Commissioner Khang: likes concept of the wall creating outdoor space – whether to separate intimate quiet time away from activities. Likes concept B.

Brett: Do we want to provide interpretive garden information? Answer: Unobtrusive. Separate from wall. Use QR codes

Brett: How can we incorporate Hmong Symbols. Answer: Kao Lee has ideas about incorporating Hmong Patterns and making the donor wall more fluid and less obstructive to the view.

### **Moon Bridge Discussion:**

What is the purpose & design for the donor wall?

Poetic landscape element providing connection to picnic island

Frame view toward meditation sculpture through the circle of the bridge. Circle opening as the moon flows through it provides a perfect circle. So, as you change the shape of it the shape will not be circular. It is important to the design.

### Design Questions

Should it be ADA accessible?

What are the symbolic features and how to incorporate Hmong symbols on bridge?

What are the colors and materials? should it stand out or blend in with landscape?

Brett: Arch that has steep slope with ramped approach that boats could get under  
Could also have stairs instead but that would limit who could cross there.

ADA accessible bridge

Option also with white stone that may relate to the materials in the surrounding area

Brett: What are the symbolic features and how to incorporate them on the bridge?



Carol: Usually not symbols on the bridge other than on the end where the railing starts. Or on the ground a lotus flower.

Brett: Should it be accessible?

Jack: ADA: Is it legal to put in a bridge that is not accessible? Yes, if there is another way to access the island in this situation.

Regina: If it can be done without steps it would be much better

Carol: is there a way to keep the idea of the bridge but take it out onto the land further to create ADA? It would lose Chinese aesthetics in terms of the shape but it could be a compromise.

Romi: would be useful to have Jennifer make more detailed drawings to provide better perspective of the bridge. The one drawing looks way too steep. Understanding what that slope really would be and consider it from there would be helpful. Elongating to reduce slope is a good idea.

Jijun: want to make sure there is a feeling of balance of the weight. Maybe could do three arches?

Linda: Is there engineering information available for the base of the bridge? assurance? There is donor a supporter of bridge to connect island to china garden.

Bill: this will be a place for people to make movies. Not the primary access point. The main function is aesthetic.

JiJun: Concern with snow fall and it can be icy on bridge. Stairs might be safer.

#### Next Steps

Next meeting DAC #4– November 30

Begin to talk about what is happening landscape between pavilion, channel, and moon gate

Review Hmong Plaza with Changsha Designer and how to advance concepts for more discussion

#### **Emailed Comments:**

**From:** Stuart Knappmiller <stuartknappmiller49@hotmail.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021 10:49 AM

Simply looking at images, I like the enclosure of the A example for the donor wall. A quieting of foot and bike traffic on the shore would be best accomplished by this solid wall.

I love A for the moon bridge. Reminds me of an exciting snowy drive in Wales where I had to find the right speed to reach the top of the bridge with not too much momentum on the slide



down, as the roads take a 90\* turn once over the stream. I got the rental car sideways and stopped a foot or so from the stone fence once we made it over the top. The next drive I drove to town and crossed the newer bridge, designed for auto traffic.

A would be dangerous in winter. Steps would have to be cleared of ice and snow. Remember the CCC steps on the hill above the boathouse? So, I guess the only real option is the modified slope bottom right ADA bridge.

Sorry to miss other's comments tonight.

Stuart

**From:** mcfigs@mnchinagarden.org <mcfigs@mnchinagarden.org>

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021 11:20 AM

### **Donor Wall/East Gate**

Primary Function to be:

a permanent Donor list, a Gate into the garden from the East, or are they two separate functions.

Donor recognition space needs to be expandable.

Moon gate is a desirable feature in the garden but would not make a good East Gate (What is general use of moon gates? Seems to open to intimate court yards, not a garden entrance).

Separate Moon Gate from Garden Entrance.

Where would the interpretative garden information go? Maintain Stanchions for this information?  
Replace with QR Codes or hand outs or both.

### **Moon Bridge**

The upside: A beautiful addition connecting the Channel Island with the China Garden Island, framing Meditation in a "Moon" shaped view. Connecting pathways on the island itself. Providing a shared view across to the Picnic Pavilion. It would undoubtedly be the site of endless photo opportunities, small events, movies, processions, and who knows what.

Possible downsides: ADA accessibility; this really shouldn't be an issue as there are 2 other bridges that connect to the Channel Island.

Construction on Channel Island; there is no obvious way to get construction equipment or cement to Channel Island though it has been done in the past a least 2 different times. Once to lay a piled footing



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for the Ice Castle and another time to construct the picnic shelter on Channel Island (a not insubstantial concrete structure on Channel Island). How were they done?

**From:** Christina Morrison <cdengmorri@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021 3:22 PM

### **Donor Wall:**

I prefer Master Plan A. I think a permanent donor wall and secondary gate into the Garden from the East would balance the white arch from the West. The Moon Gate separate from East Garden Entrance is also a great idea. The roof tile matching that of the Pavilion roof is very nice. The wall material of stucco is also fine with me. I just hope there will be a proper distance between the Moon Gate and the donor walls.

Donor walls are not typical elements of Chinese gardens, so I think the donor wall in the Garden should really be a natural blended in piece that provides a serene and respectful look to reflect its purposes.

I am not in agreement with the idea of a black granite piece with the donor names being engraved in white. These two colors are quite heavy, giving the impression of a Memorial Wall rather than a Donor Wall. I prefer engraving the donor names in red text on white granite on both sides of the wall.

I think that somewhere on the wall we could have a small area briefly introducing the history of the Garden, but not the elements of the Garden. I also think no Hmong symbols or forms should be incorporated into the wall, as we will already have the Hmong plaza.

As it is hard to predetermine the number of donors, could we possibly consider building a couple of same or similar donor walls in different parts of the Garden for future expansion purposes?

### **Moon Bridge**

The purpose and function of the 2017 Master Plan seems fine to me. However, I would prefer using The Bridge with Steps plan. With the harsh and long Minnesota winter in mind, it makes sense for us to have steps on a bridge to provide safe walking conditions for everyone.

I strongly prefer seeing a brick stone bridge to be pre-constructed and shipped from China, so that we can obtain the maximum authenticity and the quality. In my opinion, a Chinese Moon Bridge is a Chinese Moon Bridge. I do not believe Hmong symbols should be incorporated into the Moon Gate as the Hmong Plaza can provide all the relevant elements.

If ADA access is required, then we would have to provide it in a way to be determined.



**SAINT PAUL**  
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I hope you all have a great meeting tonight!

Thanks!

Christina