



MEETING DATE: January 18, 2022

LOCATION: Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams

ATTENDING: Linda Mealey-Lohmann, Ali, Van, Romi Slowiak, Bill Zajcick, 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, January 18, 2022

PROJECT WEBSITE: www.stpaul.gov/phalenchinagarden

AGENDA:

6:30	INTRODUCTIONS/ONLINE BIOS
6:35	DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE
	CITY DESIGN PROCESS
	PROJECT BACKGROUND/ DAC #4 RECAP
	PAVILION LANDSCAPE
	PAVILION WALKWAY/CHESS AREA
	DONOR WALL/MOON GATE REVISED LAYOUT
	MOON BRIDGE REVISED LAYOUT
6:45	DISCUSSION
7:45	NEXT STEPS

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

To review the location, size and design elements of the Pavilion Landscape, Chess Table, Donor Wall, and Moon Bridge - redesigns

PRESENTATION:

Brett Hussong opened the meeting with introductions, the role of the Design Advisory Committee (DAC), process, project background and recap of DAC meeting #4 Keymap of Phalen Regional Park and the location of the China Garden on north side of the channel. Design work for Phase 2.



There will be more discussion of the Hmong Plaza but what we did discuss was use of the space, sizing it for 40 people and having overflow.

Will have a separate discussion about how to resolve the text and dialects on the rocks.

Recap DAC#4:

Redesign of Hmong Plaza shown with similar capacity as initial design.

- More of an open layout with multiple axes – n/s and e/w

- Relocates Hmong stones to allow flexibility

- Include Hmong cultural elements

- Requested feedback on the idea of the plaza with overflow space.

What we heard:

Need to continued discussion regarding appropriate size of the plaza.

Next Steps:

A meeting will be scheduled soon to continue discussion

Pavilion Landscape

Intention is to cascade the garden across the path down to the channel

What are the typical planting combinations we want to see – important but first want to identify ho the space or “room” be used. Bounded by Moon gate, water’s edge, and Pavilion and bridge.

Pavilion landscape characteristics. What is there now. How to move forward?

Dry streambed or Recirculating water? – factors like maintaining and operating recirculation mechanicals. River rock, grey slate, uniform rounded stones, or vertical stones? (Need to consider movement/migration or removal of stones.)

Romi: looks lovely. Partner with MN Water Garden Society where stones meet with water – extend the garden into the lake.

What materials do we want for the walkway and stairs – existing pavilion uses natural stone steps with concrete walks.

Mary: Prefers dry streambed with vertical stones to reduce issues with vandalism.

Haoyu Zhao: Preferred dry stream bed.



Christina: Consider allow for a water feature in the future. Dry stream bed requires blowing off leaves regularly. Could water feature be incorporated but not necessarily flow through the "river".

Bill Z: Consider reducing the amount of rock. Better defined as a dry stream bed. Also, China gardens have flowing water...period. Need to consider 4 Chinese garden stones in pavilion landscape. Would like to see small seating areas in the garden? That would be good to see.

Brett: ongoing maintenance fund for operating and replacement of water garden components.

Pavilion Walkway and Chess Table

Currently a go through space which is creating a view of the pavilion rather than a hide/reveal scenario. Need to treat the landscape somehow to reduce the amount of disturbance that is visible now. Idea is to set the outdoor room off to the side of the pavilion that has some privacy. Path doesn't need to be accessible because we have an accessible route on the west side but if we can get that in, it makes sense.

Mary: Concerns about safety and security as it is now. How it is designed is critical. Needs visibility or safety. It gets hot and there needs to be natural shade. Is that tree in good health?

Christina Le: Two chairs is perfect. Carved stone is a perfect material.

Linda: Showing 3 chairs but has seen four chairs. Will want to determine number of chairs. Need to protect existing trees. We want to make sure this is a safe place.

Bill Z: 4 chairs are better than 2. Agrees that we shouldn't introduce a new material and we should use the same pavers.

Carol: Desire to teach younger generation so need for four chairs. Agrees with using similar chairs. Balance privacy with safety.

Christina: nice to have 4 chairs and some people like other games. Agrees with similar materials.

Donor Wall and Moon Gate

We heard that donor wall should be separated from the Moon Gate. Consideration of lighter colored granite with red letters. View through moon gate wall of Moon Bridge. Consider patterns of vegetation against the moon gate wall. Donor wall separated from the Moon Gate and wall by a walk creating a space as it serves also as a retaining wall. Wall would wrap all the way around from one path to the other.

Examples of windows shown to create more transparency of the Moon Gate wall.



Romi: Did Carol Hyder look at the Feng Shui? Does it make sense? (Carol has not according to Linda but she should be consulted on that.)

Christina: We wouldn't want white background with red letter for feng shui but if the background is not white – if it is grayer, it may be ok. Gray/Red letter.

Mary: Would you see this in a Chinese garden? No. But it looks attractive. Wonderful area for parade or procession by highlighting donors. Integration with nature on the donor wall instead of a monument. Grass will get trampled and we should consider pavers.

Haoyu: I won't suggest red letters. Please don't. Not sure I have example of large wall standing along in a traditional garden, but I'm sure we can keep the sense of the feeling of garden by deploying the design language, I think the conceptual rendering is on the right track. Landscaping should soften the free-standing wall.

Carol: agrees with Haoyu about visual continuation. Doesn't like the red lettering in such a large block of text. More trees to cast shadow and ink play on wall. Consider another name about the moon gate.

Bill Z: grass should be pavers. Put planting up against the wall. Moon gate looks like it is made for children and should be bigger. We should look at other materials other than concrete for donor wall. Consider trees/vegetation on wall.

BH: Would it be possible to incorporate less grass and instead include plantings that would add depth and dynamism to this space? In addition to being more friendly to the environment/animal/pollinators

Carol: would also like to see something other than grass on top of the donor wall. Consider herbs? Ends of the wall – can they curve

Christina: curve ends of roof so it is curved upwards for a better terminus such as dragons which would complement the Changsha. We see a lot of these pillars in China. Perhaps artist can create some interest. Spirits to go up and out.

Mary: Having something compliment the pavilion roof – curving up Changsha style would be good.

Christina M: Donor walls are not typical element, and it is American culture but very important to have. So many have contributed so much at the beginning of this. But donor walls need to demonstrate gratitude and in harmony with garden. Such as incorporated into pavers. If we want a donor wall, we need to make sure it is designed properly. Could there be issues with water flow in the future and diminish the names over time. Demonstrate gratitude. And have donor wall in harmony.



Mary: How would it be engraved? How is the lettering done? And is there an issue with water running off the adjacent area and the materials, maintenance? Will freeze and thaw create an issue with the slanted wall?

Brett: would likely be prefabricated. We will need to look at this more carefully as we go through the design process.

Linda: Currently have 400 donors and will need to incorporate more for Phase II donors. Having the donor wall on the outside of the garden is good rather than inside the garden.

Romi: understood the lettering to be etched metal. Consider undulating the top of donor wall

BH: For a next step for the Moon Gate and Donor wall areas, is there a rendering of the view from outside the Moon Gate looking toward the donor wall? It would be interesting to see that view if such a rendering exists.

Moon Bridge

Iconic feature with secondary purpose of people moving over it. Stairs preferred. Make sure drawn to scale. One archway before. Now showing three. Stairs down the center and ramps on the side for strollers or bikes being brought along. Could be stone or concrete with stone veneer.

Carol: Top arch looks a little high. Reflection should form a complete circle so largest arch needs to be a half circle. (may be a function of the angle)

Mary: We should talk to Carol Hyder about the moon bridge and Feng Shui in addition to talking about the donor wall. Regarding the location and structure, itself.

Linda: are there any other watercraft aside from canoes?

Brett: Will need to talk with DNR about limitations there may be.

Christina: ice skating would be great to have out there.

Stuart Knappmiller: Ice skating on the lake and creek rely on early cold and no snow. People Nordic ski through the other channel most winters. This winter the lake has a large amount of slush ice.

BH presuming much of the material would come from China unless there are other sources for similar stone.

Romi: Are those stanchions on top of bridge or will archways be lighted? We should consider outlets surrounding bridge.



Brett: there is electricity out there. Not sure if lighting is included as a feature on a moon bridge.

Christina: Should have some outlets somewhere near the bridge in case the park wants to light it up with Christmas lights.

Mary: Agrees with electrical at donor wall and bridge. Can we use solar lighting at specific areas including donor wall?

Carol: Railings are gray, and we've seen darker colors. Trying to recall where the group landed on colors.

Kao Lee: In the Hmong culture, dragons live in the water and some people are afraid to cross the water. Is there a way to mimic dragon scales subtly in the bridge? It would almost feel like the dragon is carrying you across the bridge. Would that change the Chinese garden feel?

Carol: Not familiar – has not seen that, but similar connections to dragons in Chinese history and folklore too.

Christina Le: Dragon scales idea is super and at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing area: dragon mouths were sticking out at end of pillars. Water spouts out of the mouths when it rains.

Brett:

Please as you go through these, let me know if you can think of certain patterns that would be good for these elements. There are also outstanding items regarding the design of the Hmong Plaza. Need to work with the designers including Kao Lee and others with landscape architecture and architecture background for the Chinese garden to advance some specific details.

What is iconic for the culture? What Hmong patterns relate to Chinese culture that can be included on Moon Gate and in the plaza, etc. Parks and Recreation plans to regroup with Hmong Advisory on the 50+ person plaza. Will work to understand the direction of the Hmong Advisory Group to know if the overflow space can work.

Anyone have questions about their role? Please send information out to those in your networks.

Emailed Comments:

From: Linda.chinagarden <Linda.chinagarden@comcast.net>

Sent: Tuesday, January 18, 2022 9:27 AM

Subject: RE: Phalen China Garden -DAC #5 draft document

I agree with Bill P and Carol's notes too. I especially like Carol's thought of the chess area being a separate "room." In fact, it might be helpful to think about the China Garden in general being composed of "rooms." Actually, this is what I had in mind when I had referred to the area between the Moongate



and the bridge as being a courtyard. The term “courtyard” is not accurate – “room” is better conceptually.

With regard to bamboo, I remember Eric Lempke (Landscape Arboretum) told us that they were replanting willow saplings in a row from nearby willow trees to make it look like a young bamboo grove. I don’t know if that is something we would want to try or not. I also attached some research we had done in 2015 about hardy bamboo in MN.



Hardy Bamboo for
MN.docx

From: Brash, Carol <CBRASH@CSBSJU.EDU>
Sent: Monday, January 17, 2022 10:13 PM
Subject: RE: Phalen China Garden -DAC #5 draft document

Yes. I agree with Bill’s notes on the last meeting. Although there was also a lot of discussion of bamboo (which we have discussed in other meetings, but we may need to revisit why bamboo may not be possible or not possible in the same way as it would be in different climates/ecosystems for the public forum, since the community may not understand that we know how important bamboo is symbolically and aesthetically, but that it isn’t likely we will be able to use it due to our location). Also – the view from the arch should have something screening the benches creating more hide and reveal of the plaza. Concern about the straight lines there, too (perhaps could curve a bit to help with view/screening). I want to emphasize Bill’s note about the benches’ style needing to be in keeping with the garden.

One additional item for the upcoming presentation: were we going to discuss the paving at the chess table area? Matching to pavilion area or pathway?

I don’t know if I said this or only thought it – but in keeping with the hide-and-reveal philosophy and also to provide some privacy and shading for players, I suggest keeping more of the tree cover (pines?) in the chess area. This would be based partly on views of the lake, garden, pavilion. But it is a focused activity so it should feel like it has its own “room”. I wish we could repeat that curved path way for some of our other straight lines – give the idea that there are more spaces and infinite views.