



**MEETING DATE:** March 17, 2022

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

**ATTENDING:** Carol Brash, Brian Hammer, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Chuo Khang, Donna Yang, Francis Thao, Haoyu Zhao, Jeffrey Lor, Jijun He, Kao Lee Thao, Linda Mealey-Lohmann, CM Nelsie Yang, Ping Wan, Stuart Knappmiller, Bill Zajicek, Romi Slowiak, Christina Deng Morrison, Ying

**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, March 17, 2022

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

**AGENDA:**

6:30	WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS
6:35	DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE
	PROJECT BACKGROUND
	CHINESE GARDEN PHILOSOPHY AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES
	PLAZA SIZE AND LOCATION
6:45	DISCUSSION
7:45	NEXT STEPS

**PURPOSE OF MEETING:**

Review roles and responsibilities for DAC, hear summary of Chinese Garden philosophy and design to understand the next steps in the design of the Hmong Garden

City has released a statement about the art stones. We will not be covering the art stones during this meeting.

**PRESENTATION:**

Brett Hussong opened the meeting with introductions, contributing considerations for design. Design Advisory Committee (DAC) is assembled by City – leaders of community to gain input on ideas and decisions. Hmong Advisory Committee, MCFGS Board, Chinese Advisory Committee, Residents, Artists, Design professionals, St. Paul Youth and Parks and Rec Commission.



Overview of funding and schedule and interdependence.  
Description of Phases. Overview of the layout from master plan.

**Professor Carol Brash, guest speaker**

Presentation Liu Ming Yuan: Introduction to Chinese Gardens

Professor of Art History specializing in Chinese Art, and Chinese Gardens

How did classical Chinese Gardens Develop?

Being built for thousands of years

Shifted from parks and productive gardens to primarily aesthetic focused

What are the key elements?

Mountains, Rocks, Water, Architecture, plants, views, arts (poetry, Painting, Calligraphy), poetic site names

What are the primary principles?

- A garden should not merely imitate nature but work in harmony with it
- Use the gifts of the site
- Balance the static and dynamic
- Create interest AND maintain harmony
- A garden happens by design, not by accident
- A garden is a living painting
- Creating Views/expanding space

Consider the changes to the space that is already there and how borrowed and framed views will be affected or how they can contribute.

**Recap of Hmong Plaza discussion:**

- Master Plan completed in 2017 with a Hmong plaza space incorporated into that with consideration of China Garden Principles
- After that, discussions have continued regarding the size of Hmong plaza
- Desire of some to have space for 200 people
- A 200-person plaza would not be in harmony with intimate Chinese garden
- Alternate site considered outside of garden but would not promote friendship
- In September 2021 Feng Shui blessing and site dedication for the Hmong Plaza

Solution:

Maximize available footprint (increased by 250 SF) and include flexible grass space as overflow for larger groups

Considerations:

- Proposed Plaza increased from 2600 to 2800+ SF by adjusting layout



- Proposed overflow is irrigated turf grass
- Retaining wall required for a flat, ADA accessible grass overflow space
- Permitting and typical fees would be required for large groups. Likely to have 8-10 rentals per year. Tradeoffs for use of spaces for other events in Phalen Regional Park due to limited amenities like parking, for example.

#### **Plaza layout adjusted**

- Expand it from 2600 to 2850SF
- Provide 1600SF overflow space with irrigated grass, retaining walls to keep the area flat, barriers to define the space and retain hide/reveal concept
- Consider redirecting some bike traffic north around the garden instead of through the China Garden
- Use borrowed landscape
- Maintain access
- Provides balance and harmony with other elements
- Promotes friendship by keeping it in this location
- Allows the project to advance into design development

#### **Next Step**

- Subcommittee made up of artists/design professionals and city to design the spaces including Hmong Plaza, Donor Wall, Moon Gate and Moon Bridge.
- Determine symbols, patterns, materials

#### **Comments:**

Romi concerned about “turf” and does not want it to feel like a golf course. Something more lyrical or flowing that works with design principles

Dona Can we request 50 x 56 feet to the hillside so that would be a total of 2800 sf?

Brett: layout will be dependent on some of the site characteristics and make sure that it fits well and allows for breathing room, limits cutting into the hill, etc.

Ying Would like the floor to be something similar to what he has seen in another friendship garden. Ceremonial space, special design with rock on the floor. Prefer 3000SF space.

Brett: we will work through some of those details in the next steps. Possibilities for materials and patterns related to use and climate.

Dona first Hmong plaza in the US – should make it more visible, exciting, impressive to the whole world. Make it more exciting to get more donors to get it going. Then the whole world will come in to see. Want to be able to say “why were people fighting about this? It is beautiful!”

Brett: currently talking about a footprint. And soon we can look more closely at the elements that will make this a beautiful place.



### Hmong Plaza Details:

Review of iterations of the plaza – 2017 Master Plan, 2022 redesign, 2022 Hmong Advisory Group Model

- 60x50
- Wall 12'H and 20' Long
- 2 levels
- Woman's headdress on top of wall
- Hmong Necklace
- Migration Wall
- Grinding Stone Sculpture
- Symbols Hmong Design, Phoenix, butterfly
- Considerations Scale, orientation, symbols, maintenance

Linda: Are these the only symbols that the Hmong Advisory Group wants there, or will there be additional symbols and patterns that can be used. The ones shown on the HAG design are already used in the garden.

Brett: will be redesigning so any additional ideas for symbols and patterns should be provided so that they can be incorporated.

Dona: 16 spaces for Hmong elements but there isn't much space (audio breaking up)

Brett: we will work with you on all of the details to make sure we are getting that in the plaza. Asked Dona to write out and send description.

Dona: we want the space understood so we know what we can do

Brett: we will understand how it is laid out due to constrictions. We can look at that size of footprint to see if that fits on the site.

CM Yang: Responding to Linda – the first reaction is that a lot of symbols are not shown. Elephants foot, snail, heart all in center of design. Agrees that anyone who is interested in providing input to stay in close connection with whoever is on sub-committee. For that subcommittee, will there be advisory board members included?

Brett: subcommittee is intentionally a group of design professionals and artists. Want to be transparent. Trying to make sure that we are focusing efforts for design and then return the information to the Design Advisory Committee for feedback.

Bill: Make sure we have power included in the plans. Can't be an afterthought.

### Next Steps

- Phase II including Hmong Plaza to be designed by subcommittee of design professionals and artists



**SAINT PAUL**  
**MINNESOTA**

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- Present to Design Advisory Committee in April (possibly May) with illustrations for DAC #7
- Subcommittee will refine plans for the Hmong plaza, Moongate, Donor Wall, Moon Bridge, Chess Table
- DAC/Public review in May? TBD
- Details and critical stories can be refined.
- Bidding later this fall for construction.