



**Phalen China Garden
Community Advisory Committee Meeting #7**

MEETING DATE: June 13, 2022

LOCATION: Phalen Picnic Pavilion, Phalen Regional Park

ATTENDING: Mary Warpeha, Donna Yang, Francis Thao, Sue Klevan, Moua Xiong, Gaoly Yang, Phong Yang, Dona Yang, Francis Thao, Kao Lee Thao, Ash Kubesh, Bill Zajicek, Romi Slowiak, Ying Chu-Yang-Heu

CITY OF SAINT PAUL: Brett Hussong, Ellen Stewart

COUNCIL: None Present

NOTES BY: Brett Hussong & Ellen Stewart, March 17, 2022

PROJECT WEBSITE: www.stpaul.gov/phalenchinagarden

AGENDA:

6:30	WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS
6:35	DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLE PROJECT BACKGROUND HMONG PLAZA SIZE AND LOCATION
6:45	DISCUSSION
7:45	NEXT STEPS & SITE VISIT

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

2,400 square foot plaza with 1,600 grass overflow is final and Parks & Recreation is moving forward with the design of the plaza cultural features.

City has released a statement about the art stones. We will not be discussing 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.



City's system plan vision

Project is balancing system needs, context, budget, funding requirements, O&M Regulatory requirements – watershed district, health safety and welfare, and Community

Phase 2 includes design of Hmong Plaza, Donor Wal, pavilion landscape, chess table, moon bridge and Moongate. Only the Hmong Plaza and surrounding landscape would be constructed

Funding

Funding is from State Art and Cultural Heritage Legacy Fund (\$388,000) and State Bonding (\$500,000). Deadline for funding is June 2023.

Garden Society has \$100,000 earmarked from donor for the pavilion landscape which includes benches, rocks and plants. Not to be used for design services. With that funding source cannot pay for that.

Project Timeline

Timeline Oct-June we have gone through 6 meetings – 7th today

June-September Phase II construction documents/ bidding

Oct-Nov Construction of Hmong Plaza and Pavilion landscape to channel – Could design and fabricate the plaza details over the winter for installation during spring 2023.

Spring 2023 substantial completion

June 2023 funding expires. Full 800K for the plaza including design and materials.

Recap of Hmong Plaza discussion:

- Master Plan completed in 2017 with a Hmong plaza space incorporated into that with consideration of China Garden Principles
- Desire of some to have space for 200 people
- A 2,800 square foot (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
- Need to balance use and a rental permit required. Possibly available 8-10 weekends a year during spring/summer/fall.
- Grass overflow space would be irrigated.

Compromise:

Plaza to be 2,400 square feet which maximizes available footprint while keeping Chinese Garden principles (Harmony/Intimate). Includes flexible grass space as overflow for larger groups.

Plaza will be built into a slope (similar to pavilion) and look like it is part of the site (harmony).



Retaining walls needed to create an accessible flat space. The shape of the retaining walls (2 tiers) reflects terraces (rice paddies) and also resembles shape of the Hmong elephant foot pattern.

Comments:

Regine: Why does the plaza jog out – the shape of the design at the wall connections? Looks weird to have round and square against each other. Answer: Reflects the stepped nature of historic terraced rice paddies. Romi: Shape is reflective of a traditional Hmong necklace. It is evocative of a shape that is cultural

View of the plaza from the west looking east – at the gateway to the pavilion. Plantings create hide and reveal which is a Chinese garden principle. The view of the site with plantings, shows a less overpowering plaza onsite. It will be softened and there will not be direct views into the plaza from the gateway.

View of plaza east looking west – at the pavilion to the gateway. Shows how it is inset into the hill which is less overpowering onsite. Curved walkway and plantings help to emphasize the hide and reveal.

Chinese designers did not have strong feelings about the materials being used. Not about the form or the notches in the plaza. They are deferring to the community.

2,400 square foot plaza with 1,600 grass overflow is final and Parks & Recreation is moving forward with the plaza design.

Mary: Who will be making the final decisions on controversial items? Response: The project will rely on design professionals and work through the community but ultimately parks and recreation will need to decide on a direction balancing.

Gaoly: Knowing this is already the 7th meeting, how has the community been involved through the process given controversy? Response: Brett answered that there has been an effort to get more voices involved.

Regina: This is the Hmong Plaza – this is where to show the Hmong story. Yes, we are on the design committee, but this piece should be designed by the Hmong community. I personally do not want to say it should be this way or that way. But it is not my place to provide that input.

Susan: I understand that you will have a design subcommittee moving this forward. Design subcommittee needs to have the right representation. Challenge as I understand is getting the right people to participate in that. Response: Brett will rely on design professionals that are knowledgeable with the Hmong culture to advance design for review by the larger design advisory committee and community.

Dona: None of the Hmong proposed designs are shown. It seems like we have no say at all. I have been sharing all these ideas – most people say we cannot do anything with the tiny space. Seems like the



park has ideas already. And it is all done. Our design ideas are not in there. Doesn't seem like the wall we want. Doesn't seem it is the step we want to see. Most people say forget it. It is too small of a space. Response: We have not started design of cultural components. We've only decided on the plaza size which is a compromise at 2,400 square feet with grass overflow. The graphics are only showing a footprint.

Moua: Many people want the input heard, but that means we have 70,00 ideas. If we want to avoid the conflict with the dialect, if we can have the Hmong Advisory Committee ask for input – go to Hmong Village – get into the community and be transparent.

Consider presenting at Hmong Freedom Festival. Can get input from all over the country.

Would be good to have three different options for design to take that out to the community and get input.

Next Step

Subcommittee made up of artists/design professionals and city to begin design of the Hmong Plaza for community review.