



**Phalen China Garden
Community Advisory Committee Meeting #8**

MEETING DATE: November 22, 2022

LOCATION: Microsoft Teams

ATTENDING: Dona Yang, Sue Klevan, Gaoly Yang, Bill Zajicek, Romi Slowiak, Regina Rippel, Stuart Knapmiller, Carol Brash, Dr. Cha Yang, Linda Mealey-Lohmann

CITY OF SAINT PAUL: Brett Hussong, Ellen Stewart, Moua Xiong, Jeff Lor, Karin Misiewicz

COUNCIL: None Present

NOTES BY: Brett Hussong & Ellen Stewart, December 2, 2022

PROJECT WEBSITE: www.stpaul.gov/phalenchinagarden

AGENDA:

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

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

Review the Hmong Plaza Process since June 2022 & Final DAC Update on Plaza Design

PRESENTATION:

Brett Hussong opened the meeting with introductions and contributing Parks and Rec System considerations for design. Project is balancing system needs, context, budget, funding requirements, O&M Regulatory requirements – watershed district, health safety and welfare, and Community

Design Advisory Committee (DAC) is assembled by City – leaders of community to gain input on ideas and decisions. DAC includes Ward 1 & Ward 6, Hmong 18 Clan Representative, MCFGS Board, Residents, Artists, Design Professionals, St. Paul Youth and Parks and Rec Commission.



Funding

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

Phase 2 includes design of Hmong Plaza, Donor Wall, pavilion landscape, chess table, moon bridge and Moongate.

State bonding cannot be used for design services and only for construction of Hmong Plaza and surrounding landscape.

Project Timeline

Jan '21 – Nov '22 Schematic Design/Community Engagement

Dec – Feb '23 Phase II construction documents/ bidding

March – June '23 Construction of Hmong Plaza

Spring 2023 substantial completion

June 2023 funding expires.

Process:

2017 Master Plan incorporated Hmong Plaza

2021 – 2022 DAC established plaza size, location, and design principles (See below)

Summer 2022 DAC subcommittee developed plaza character and cultural details

DAC #8: Final DAC update (this meeting)

Design Principles:

Plaza to be located inside of the Garden: Promote Friendship and previous site dedication & blessing

Uses landform and built into hillside

Includes retaining wall to support future of Hmong migration story

Terraced to reflect rice paddies and elephant foot – retaining wall configuration

Balances intimacy/harmony of Chinese garden principles

Design Layout:

Plaza features designed by the Design subcommittee include significant symbols that give people the ability to recognize that this is a Hmong plaza. Overall create simple, iconic, understandable place for Hmong residents of all ages.

- Two views: plan view and view from front looking at plaza from 15' level
- Cultural features: Instrument (qeej) and woman's necklace and pendant. Features will likely be stainless steel and will be artists creation based on the inspirational images shown. Final design will depend on the durability and the fabricators ability to construct.
- Triangular pattern around plaza edge reflective of embroidery work
- Paj Ntaub (Elephant foot) embroidery pattern installed in concrete plaza by sandblasting pattern or stamped concrete



- Plaza is raised two steps to show hierarchy at the walkway and creates prominence.
- Vertical walls (wavy) that reflect the mountains made out of concrete with white stucco finish similar to Hmong Heritage wall behind pavilion, future Donor Wall and future Moon Gate.
- Wall will be constructed to allow for a future Hmong Migration Story to be applied in a future phase and community engagement process.
- Necklace also can be viewed as a woman's head and shoulders
- Seat wall against the vertical walls also have a curving form
- Natural boulder walls surrounding plaza are terraced to reflect rice paddies.

Planting and Views:

The planting layout was designed based upon principles of intimacy and harmony throughout the garden. As people walk through the garden, the planting layout strategically directs views to experience series of intimate spaces or rooms. These principles are also used as people enter the garden on the east side near Pavilion.

View 1: Looking from gateway NE toward the plaza.

- Framed by 3 art stones that will be shifted to these locations because of circulation routes. Placement in close to the same location and in the same order.
- Terraced retaining walls made of natural boulders with grasses that reflect rice paddies.
- Lower wall can serve as informal seating.
- Areas behind the walls would be planted to prevent access
- Flowering trees

View 2: Standing in overflow space across the plaza toward the pavilion

- Scale of the features are clearer in this image
- Notice 2 stairs, railings and accessibility ramps
- Plantings surrounding plaza create a sense of space

Plaza Event Layout:

- DAC helped with determination of the layout of the plaza and the level of flexibility
- North South axis 124 seats with overflow of 96 spaces (220 total)
- East West axis 172 seats with overflow of 106 seats (278 total)

Comments:

Comments on graphics and presentation:

Chair layout images helpful to understand space.

Schedule:

How much can be done in 2023? Response: Plaza & wall is the base bid and expected to be built in 2023. Project can use remaining Legacy funds for construction. Cultural features, natural boulder wall and landscaping could be added later if funding doesn't allow.



Layout and design specifics:

How far above ground are the features like the instrument? Response: High enough to prevent people from climbing on them or hitting their heads on. The instrument is designed to be 5'-0" off the ground and clearance of 7'-0" when walking underneath.

The railing and ADA accessible ramps seem to change the shape of the plaza. Is it possible to design ADA on lawn to eliminate the two long pieces of concrete and railing? Response: Project is designing for a diverse group of users – strollers, walkers, wheelchairs. Grass at a 2% slope may be considered ADA accessible, but it is not getting at the intention of ADA access and grass is difficult to traverse with wheels. DSI would not likely allow soft surface for ADA access. Railing itself can be an element that works it into the design. Parks and Recreation does plow walkways that go around the lake, but not within the plaza area or stairs and ramps at pavilion or plaza

What are the dimensions of the pedestal of the instrument? Can the base be sized for seating? Response: Pedestal as shown is 4' with a 1' base. Could consider raising pedestal by 1'-0". Raising base around pedestal would be an invitation to climb.

Construction:

What if there isn't enough \$? Response: Project team will design project with a base bid and alternates as way to award construction contract. There may be the ability to seek out funding for other elements once bids come in.

Other future elements of Phase II such as Moongate and Donor Wall will be brought to the DAC for comment in future.

Emailed Comments:

I like the design. I understand that the shape is determined by an Asian jewelry. I like pattern on the floor and that the back wall is two tiered. I think it will be a good place display the Hmong history. I agree that the guard rails are pretty ugly, as drawn now. But will be better when they use a Chinese/Asian design. That may actually add to it

I think the whole plaza should blend in well and accommodate celebrations as well as private visitors I am not so sure how this center neckless and the instruments will be incorporated. They seem a little "artificial" in this park setting

Next Steps

- Thank you for your dedication in getting this project to this point. Many decisions have been made and many meetings have happened to get us here.
- Will reach out to the Parks and Recreation Commission in December
- Hmong 18 Clan leaders in December



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- Community Engagement – broader outreach – considering an open house as location such as Hmong Community School of Excellence and Hmong Village to introduce plans and have a short presentation at a specific time. Would anticipate a professional interpreter on site. Commissioner Jun Yang has shown interest in helping with community updates.
 - Consider Arlington Community Library and District 5 planning council as another site
 - Hmong New Year events? Could those be places to table and have some images?
Response: It is better to hold off until Hmong 18 and Parks Commission have review design since Hmong New Year events are happening this week.
 - i. The project team wants to strategically release of the information and images.
 - January: Advance to construction Documents and provide DAC email updates. Anticipate subcommittee refinement in January if significant changes are proposed.