

Speech by Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter on the occasion of the July 14, 2018,
St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden Groundbreaking Ceremony at Phalen
Regional Park

Transcribed by Christina Deng Morrison

Dear friends,

It is great to see you all here.

Please give a round of applause to our former mayor George Latimer. And our council members, it is great to see you all as well.

Politics and government work sometimes looks like an individual sport, but it is a team sport. And I want to acknowledge our teammates who are here with us today. I appreciate your work.

I am honored to be here today and excited to join you here in this wonderful celebration to celebrate the long-standing friendship with our sister city of Changsha, China - 30 years of friendship to be exact. I think that is something we can all be very, very proud of. I want to especially thank all of the officials, all of the project leaders, and everyone from the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society who are here today, for their work and support to make this project a success! I know this has been a long time in the making. I would also like to be sure to acknowledge those artisans who are here with us today from China, and will help to assemble that pavilion as soon as we get it here in St. Paul.

You know the connection between the Minnesota Hmong and the Hmong in Hunan is important to our community, so I look forward to continuing to advance our international relationship with China. We have a lot of people in this community, and we have been talking a lot over these last few years about what makes America great, what makes Minnesota great, what makes St. Paul great; and we have to know that what makes our community great is the people who are in it. The fact is that we come from all over the world and we all speak different languages. When I first got elected, someone came into my office. You know we were updating our city's comprehensive plan, and I saw a draft of the document that said, "We strive to be a city where everyone can succeed and thrive despite their racial and cultural background," and I said, "well, that's wrong." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I think we can build a city where everyone can thrive because we are so diverse, and that is our vision for our city." So that is why it is so important for us to celebrate today. Those roots of our city go deep and those roots of our city cross oceans, and those roots of our city plant us in other countries and continents.

Earlier this year, the city of St. Paul sent five of our "Peanuts" statues to the city of Changsha as a symbol of our commitment to continue strengthening the bond between our two cities. Personally, I would love the chance to visit those statues. And we are thrilled to install this incredible pavilion right here in this park, right near that "Meditation" statue by Master Lei Yixin, that continues to serve as a cornerstone of our China Friendship Garden here in Phalen Park. I know when it is complete, it will add yet another layer of unity between our cities, and I look forward to creating this beautiful space where members of our community can visit, reflect, and interact with each other.

Thanks again for being here today. And I hope you can stay to enjoy the festivities going on throughout the day as part of the Dragon Boat Festival. It is truly a great day to celebrate in St. Paul.

Thanks for being here with us.