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MN China Friendship Garden Society unveils designs for St. Paul – Changsha China Garden at Phalen Park

By Linda Mealey-Lohmann (with acknowledgement to Ivy Chang)

As previously reported in the January China Insight, Minnesota China Friendship China Garden Society has been working with two architects from St. Paul's sister-city Changsha on the St. Paul-Changsha Sister-City China Friendship Garden at Phalen Park. The Changsha architects, Jennifer Junfang Fan and Jon Youhua Wen from Hunan Jianke Landscape Company, Ltd., visited Minnesota in November, and have been working with senior landscape architect Alice Messer from St. Paul Parks & Rec.

The garden design concept includes an open-air pavilion and stone garden, a lakeside pavilion with a waterside patio and veranda, a Hmong Cultural Plaza, an

entrance arch, and an arched bridge. The main pavilion will be of Changsha-style architecture and modeled after the famous Aiwan pavilion in Changsha. A stone garden will lead from this pavilion down to the water channel and feature Minnesota stone. These structures and elements will reflect Chinese culture and the long-history of Chinese garden aesthetics. The Hmong Cultural Plaza is an important element in the China Garden because Minnesota Hmong claim Changsha as their ancestral home and a large Hmong community lives in the Phalen Park area. A Hmong advisory panel will be formed to ensure authenticity and accuracy of the Hmong cultural symbols and historical information to be

included in the Plaza.

Construction on Phase 1, the Main Pavilion, is expected to begin in 2016. The China Garden will likely be built in 3 phases, depending on fundraising. The Environmental Committee of the Payne Phalen District 5 Planning Council will be scheduling a community meeting to gather further community input.

The China Garden will be located north of the Phalen Park picnic pavilion and water channel, and east of the Stone Arch Bridge along Lake Phalen. The China Garden will complement the "Meditation" sculpture already located at Phalen Park, created by

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Changsha China Garden at Phalen Park

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internationally known Changsha sculptor Master Lei Yixin.

The China Garden will be a recognition of the many contributions by the Chinese in Minnesota to the fields of science, medicine, technology, art and culture, since their first arrival in Minnesota in the 1870s. The China Garden will integrate nature and culture, expand cultural understanding, foster further sister-city activities and trade, and create a sense of community as a place for celebrating life events, recreation and meditation.

The idea for this garden was initiated by Professor C. C. Hsiao and Linda Mealey-Lohmann, who planted the seed for building

a China Friendship Garden in the Twin Cities by founding the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society in 2005. In addition to Linda's and C.C.'s efforts, the success to date is also the result of hard work and dedication by Joyce Hsiao (founding director), China Garden Society advisors Weiming Lu, Brenda Fong, Bill Zajicek, Romi Slowiak, and Bill Pesek, and by Representative Tim Mahoney and Senator Hawj who secured Legacy funds for the conceptual designs.

This project is seeking volunteers and donations. To contact the China Garden Society or learn more about this project, visit www.MnChinaGarden.org. ♦



Bird's eye view of the planned China Garden



The future garden site will be north of Phalen Park's picnic pavilion

