

USCPFA-MN and the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society Unveil Phalen Park China Garden Designs

By Linda Mealey-Lohmann and Ivy Chang

The Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society and the Minnesota Chapter of USCPFA, working with the St. Paul Parks & Recreation Department and two Changsha architects, are pleased to announce the conceptual plans for a Changsha-style China Garden at Phalen Park. This China Garden is a sister-city project between St. Paul and Changsha in Hunan Province; a sister-city relationship that began in 1988. This will be the first China garden in the US that uses Changsha-style architecture.

Design features include an open-air pavilion and stone garden, a lake-side pavilion with a waterside patio and veranda, an entrance arch, and an arched bridge. The main pavilion will be in Changsha-style architecture and modeled after the famous Aiwan Pavilion in Changsha. A stone garden will lead from this pavilion to the water channel and use Minnesota stone. These structures and elements will reflect Chinese culture and the long history of Chinese garden aesthetics. The design also includes a Hmong Cultural Plaza. This is an important element in the China Garden because Minnesota Hmong claim Changsha as their ancestral home, and a large Hmong community live in the Phalen Park area. Hmong cultural symbols and historical information will be included in the Plaza.

The China Garden will be built at a site north of the Phalen Park picnic pavilion and water channel and east of the Stone Arch Bridge along Lake Phalen. It will complement Public Art St. Paul's "Minnesota Rocks!" symposium sculpture "Meditation," already at Phalen Park that was created by internationally known Changsha sculptor Master Lei Yixin, who introduced the two architects to the China Garden Society. Master Lei was the sculptor of the Martin Luther

King Jr. Stone of Hope Memorial in Washington, D.C.

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. Garden designs will integrate nature and culture; expand cultural understanding; demonstrate the aesthetics of Chinese art, landscape design, and architecture; foster further sister-city activities and trade; and create a sense of community as a place for celebrating life events, recreation, and meditation.

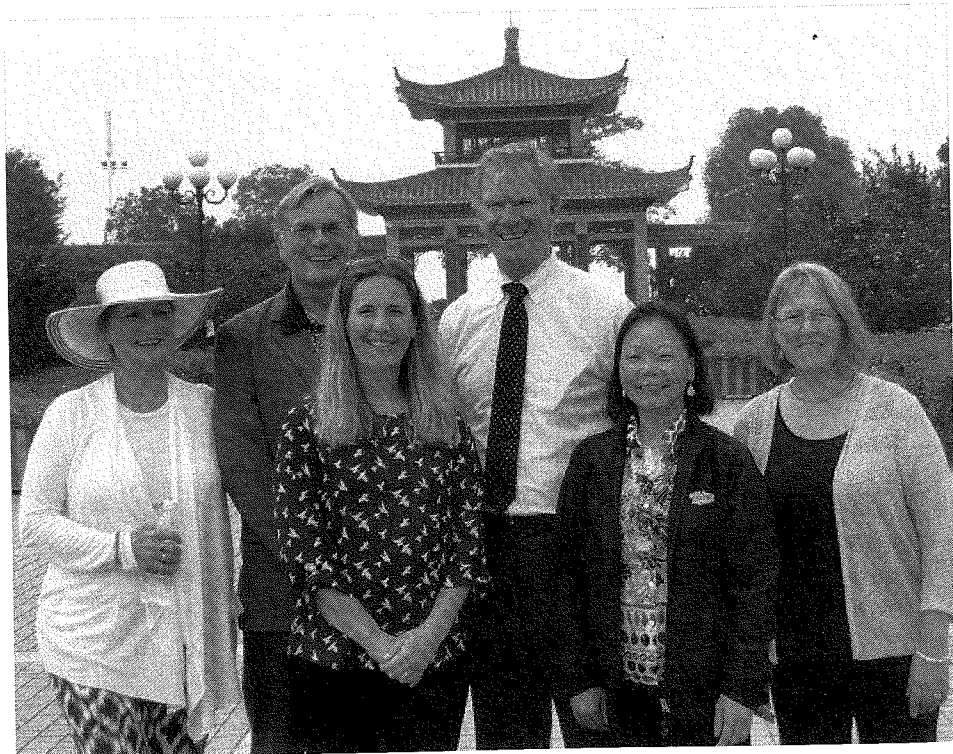
The husband-and-wife architect team, Jennifer Junfang Fan and Jon Youhua Wen, from Changsha, have been working with Alice Messer, senior landscape architect at the St. Paul Parks & Recreation department, and completed the conceptual design in January 2016.

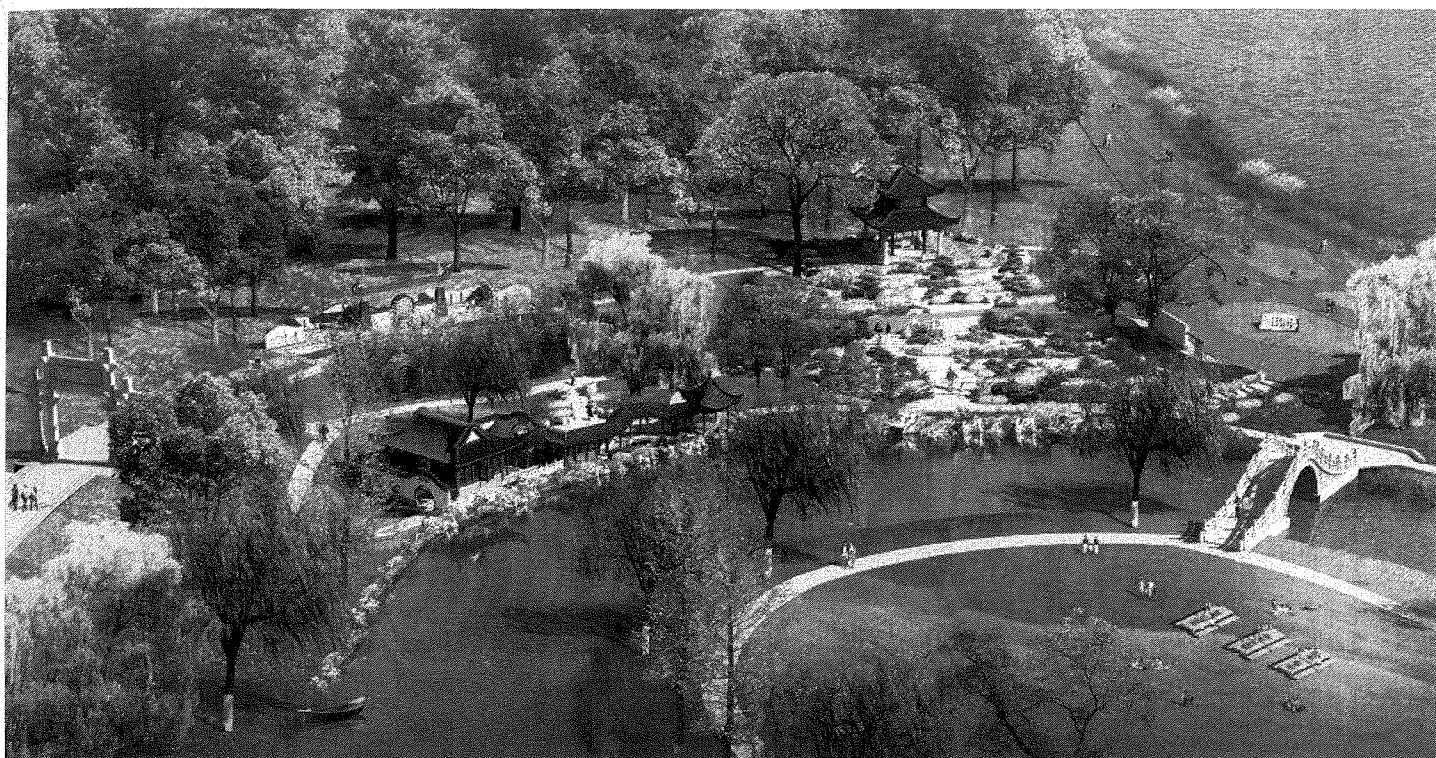
China Garden conceptual designs are preliminary, and the China Garden Society and St. Paul's

District 5 Planning Council will be seeking community input in March. This garden will be built in phases with Parks & Recreation creating the phase budgets. Construction will begin in 2016.

The City of St. Paul, Ramsey County, and the Metropolitan Council approved the China Garden as part of the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Master Plan in 2011. The conceptual design process began with a District 5 Planning Council community meeting in November 2014 to gather community input. In 2015 a bill sponsored by House Representative Tim Mahoney and Senator Foung Hawj provided \$50,000 Legacy Funds for the China Garden conceptual designs.

In October 2015, four members of the China Garden Society, Linda Mealey-Lohmann, Brenda Fong, Bill Zajicek, and Romi Slowiak, traveled to Changsha with St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman's eight-member delegation to conduct research on Changsha garden architecture, tour





These photos are computer-generated conceptual designs for the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden to be built at Phalen Park created by the Changsha architects.

several famous gardens, meet with Changsha architects, and learn more about Hmong culture in Changsha. A sister-city park agreement was signed between Phalen Regional Park and Yanghu Wetlands Park in Changsha at that time.

For more information, visit the website at www.MnChinaGarden.org.

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Linda Mealey-Lohmann is an attorney who practices exclusively as a mediator and arbitrator. Linda is a co-founder of the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society who has dedicated thousands of hours to promoting friendship and understanding between the peoples of the U.S. and China. Ivy Chang is a journalist who practices public relations and owns a small agency. Ivy also works in international trade.

Group at left: (left to right) Romi Slowiak, Bill Zajicek, Alice Messer, St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, Brenda Fong and Linda Mealey-Lohmann. Linda is a co-founder of the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society and Romi, Bill, and Brenda are China Garden Society advisors.

