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St. Paul Chinese garden getting pavilion gift from sister city



Rendering of how a replica of the Aiwan Pavilion in Changsha, China, would appear at a proposed China Friendship Garden in St. Paul. (Courtesy of city of St. Paul)

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The Chinese Friendship Garden planned for Phalen Regional Park will feature a replica of the famed Aiwan Pavilion, thanks to St. Paul's sister city in China.

On Wednesday, St. Paul officially approved an exchange with sister city Changsha, China. St. Paul will send five statues of Peanuts characters to the south central China city of 7 million residents. In return, Changsha will send St. Paul a replica of its pavilion, one of China's most cherished.

The pavilion will be a focus point of the planned St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden. Other features of the estimated \$7 million project would include an entrance arch, a pagoda-like lakeside pavilion and a Hmong cultural plaza. Changsha is the ancestral homeland of the Hmong.

"The garden will honor our bond as international partners, and connect the Minnesota Hmong and Hmong ancestral home of Changsha, China," St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman said. "This gift exchange will be a symbol of our global community ties for generations to come."



Rendering of the China Friendship Garden proposed for Phalen Regional Park in St. Paul. (Courtesy of city of St. Paul)

The Lake Phalen park is already home to the Meditation sculpture created by Changsha's renown sculptor Master Lei Yixin.

The Aiwan Pavilion is located on Mount Yuelu in western Changsha. The pavilion built in 1792 during the Qing dynasty is considered to one of the four most famous pavilions in China.

SISTER CITIES BOND

The gift exchange will take place in 2018, the 30th anniversary of the St. Paul and Changsha sister-city relationship. This is the first exchange between the two cities.

The two cities are connected by their ties to the Hmong community. Minnesota has the largest Hmong population in the United States and Changsha is regarded as the ancestral home of the Hmong people.

Respecting that tie, one Peanuts character statue will don traditional Hmong clothing; another will feature Snoopy on his doghouse and will have Minnesota symbols painted on it like the loon and lady slipper flower. The Peanuts cartoons were the work of [St. Paul native Charles Schulz](#).

The statues will be placed in Yanghu Wetlands Park in Changsha, the sister park to St. Paul's Phalen Regional.

The [Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society unveiled in 2016](#) plans for a [Chinese garden at Phalen](#). The organization is working closely with St. Paul Parks and Recreation on the concept and could be tackled in phases.

“This is a great project that will not only draw people to visit and spend their money on the East Side but also strengthen our international relationship with China,” St. Paul Councilman Dai Thao said of the announced gift exchange.

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Selam Berhea, a summer 2017 intern, is studying Journalism & Mass Communication and Arabic at George Washington University.

<http://www.twincities.com/2017/07/20/st-paul-chinese-garden-to-feature-pavilion-donated-by-sister-city-changsha/>