

\$7M Chinese garden to open Saturday in St. Paul



By [James Walsh](#), Star Tribune
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A parade and ribbon-cutting Saturday will mark the opening of a Chinese garden on the shore of Lake Phalen, a project created to highlight the ties between sister cities Changsha, China, and St. Paul.

The grand opening festivities begin at 10 a.m. at the 1.2-acre St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden at Phalen Regional Park. A dragon and lion dance parade will start at the dragon boat area and end at Xiang Jiang Pavilion, a three-story replica of a pavilion in China.

The pavilion was built last year in China, where it was disassembled and packed into shipping containers. It made its way to St. Paul, where it was [reassembled](#) by a team of Chinese artisans and American construction workers. The replica of China's famous Aiwan Pavilion was completed last fall.

The new garden also features an arch, a bridge and a Hmong Cultural Plaza. The \$7 million project is being funded mostly by individual donors. It's meant not only to honor Minnesota's 35,000 Chinese immigrants and their descendants but also the 80,000 Hmong who live here. Minnesota Hmong claim the Changsha area as their ancestral home, officials said. A Hmong Heritage Wall featuring Hmong symbols was the first element installed in the garden.

As part of the sister cities' 30th anniversary gift exchange, St. Paul sent five Peanuts statues to Changsha's Yanghu Wetland Park in exchange for the replica pavilion. A Lucy statue wearing traditional Hmong clothes was painted by a local Hmong artist. Snoopy's doghouse featuring Minnesota icons was painted by a local Chinese artist.

In 1988, under then-Mayor George Latimer, St. Paul established a sister city relationship with Changsha, and a committee was started to explore creating a garden in Minnesota. The project gained momentum in 2005, when the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society became a nonprofit. In 2011 the city approved a Chinese garden as part of the park plan.

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