



15 West Kellogg Boulevard, 320 City Hall, Suite 320B  
Saint Paul, MN 55102-1615  
Email: ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us  
Tel: 651-266-8660 | Fax: 651-266-8574

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**May 13, 2026**

TO: Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission  
FROM: Nelsie Yang, Councilmember  
SUBJECT: Support for Official Name Change - Tou Ger Xiong Island

Dear Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission,

As St. Paul's Ward 6 Councilmember, I am writing to express my support to officially name the island at Phalen Regional Park as Tou Ger Xiong Island.

Tou Ger Xiong was a pioneering Hmong American artist, storyteller, and cultural leader whose work advanced public understanding of the Hmong people's identity and experience in Minnesota. Through performance, humor, and advocacy, he created meaningful dialogue across communities and helped elevate Hmong voices within the state's cultural and civic landscape. His career in public service and activism coincided with a period of significant growth and visibility for Minnesota's Southeast Asian communities, one of the largest and most influential in the United States, making his contributions both historically and culturally important. This project will situate his life and creative work within this broader context of migration, adaptation, and community-building, illustrating how his legacy continues to shape Minnesota's evolving cultural narrative.

Tou Ger Xiong and his family are refugees. As a child, Tou Ger Xiong moved to Saint Paul, Minnesota with his family. Saint Paul's Phalen Regional Park held personal significance to Tou Ger Xiong, as it was a space he frequently visited and drew inspiration from—a place that mirrored his deep connection to community, nature, and reflection. There is strong demand from the Saint Paul Community, especially Saint Paul's Hmong community, to create a physical memorial space at Phalen Regional Park, through the design and construction of a mural and statue, where Saint Paul residents and out-of-town visitors can celebrate and honor the life and legacy of Tou Ger Xiong. The community is passionate about carrying forward Tou Ger Xiong's work and vision fostering community connections, celebrating Minnesota's multicultural identity, and inspiring the next generation of Hmong American leaders through the creation of a physical memorial space for reflection and remembrance.

I appreciate your consideration of this naming and your continued commitment to accessible, inclusive public spaces. Thank you for your time and leadership in our community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 651-266-8662.

Sincerely,



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
NELSIE YANG, COUNCILMEMBER

15 West Kellogg Boulevard, 320 City Hall, Suite 320B  
Saint Paul, MN 55102-1615  
Email: ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us  
Tel: 651-266-8660 | Fax: 651-266-8574

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nelsie Yang".

Nelsie Yang (she/her)  
St. Paul Councilmember Ward 6



# Payne-Phalen

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

567 Payne Avenue, St. Paul MN 55130 [www.paynephalen.org](http://www.paynephalen.org) 651-774-5234 [district5@paynephalen.org](mailto:district5@paynephalen.org)

June 11, 2026

VIA EMAIL

Brett Hussong, Principal Designer  
City of Saint Paul, Parks and Recreation – Design & Construction  
400 City, Hall Annex, 25 West Fourth Street.  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

RE: Tou Ger Xiong Memorial and Renaming

Dear Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission:

On behalf of the Payne-Phalen Community Council, I am writing to convey our strong support for the renaming of Phalen Picnic Island to Tou Ger Xiong Island.

Tou Ger Xiong, a Hmong American storyteller, artist, educator, and community leader whose work left a significant mark on the Hmong community in St. Paul and greater Minnesota. The renaming of the Phalen Picnic Island to Tou Ger Xiong Island will honor his creative and life work deepening understandings of Hmong history and culture but also the broader narrative of the Hmong people and the contributions to St. Paul and Minnesota.

Tou Ger Xiong was born in Laos in 1973 during a time of war and displacement. Like many Hmong families, he experienced the hardships of refugee life before immigrating to the United States. His family eventually settled in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he graduated as valedictorian of Humboldt High School and earned a degree in Political Science from Carleton College. Phalen Regional Park holds personal significance to Tou Ger Xiong as he frequently visited and drew inspiration from.

We are looking forward to the development and installation of the Tou Ger Xiong memorial that will include a sculpture, mural, and site finishings incorporating Hmong artistic styles. This physical memorial space is where St. Paul residents and visitors alike can celebrate Tou Ger Xiong's life and legacy. It is apt to rename Phalen Picnic Island to Tou Ger Xiong Island to honor his role as a pillar of the community, the continuing work of sharing Hmong history and storytelling, inspiring future leaders, and remembering future generations.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require further clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivian Tran', written in a cursive style.

Vivian Tran  
Executive Director

cc. Rebecca Nelson, Chair, PCC Board of Directors  
PCC Board of Directors

MCFGS Co-Presidents: Brian Hammer & William Zajicek  
1492 East Shore Drive  
St. Paul, MN 55106  
October 13, 2025

Minnesota Historical Society  
CSMHP Grant Program  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Subject: letter of support for a mural and statue honoring Tou Ger Xiong's life and contributions

To Whom It May Concern:

As Co-Presidents of the MN China Friendship Garden Society, we are writing to express our full support for the City of Saint Paul's project designing and constructing a mural and statue honoring Tou Ger Xiong's life and contributions to the state of Minnesota at Phalen Regional Park.

Tou Ger Xiong was an active and passionate supporter of our China Friendship Garden. His testimony in our 2021 video of "9 Voices", spoke eloquently of the garden's importance to the Asian Community:

"So, what better way to honor and commemorate these family traditions than with the Chinese Friendship Garden where we celebrate family culture and tradition. So, I'm excited that the Chinese Friendship Garden will not only plant flowers but plant memories for generations to come, and sending a message to the community there that, hey, as Asian Americans our stories matter, and that we are here, we are an important part of Minnesota and are here to stay. So, congratulations on the Chinese Friendship Garden. "

Full video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=zZ1GPV5iXZo>

He was also our nimble, funny and kind Master of Ceremonies at the 2021 "New Voices in the Garden" Poetry contest which offered readings and awards for works in Chinese, Hmong, Dakota and English.

This project will situate his life and creative work within this broader context of migration, adaptation, and community-building, illustrating how his legacy continues to shape Minnesota's evolving cultural narrative.

As a child, Tou Ger Xiong moved to Saint Paul, Minnesota with his family as refugees. Saint Paul's Phalen Regional Park held personal significance to Tou Ger Xiong, as it was a space he

frequently visited and drew inspiration from—a place that mirrored his deep connection to community, nature, and reflection. There is strong demand from the Saint Paul Community, especially Saint Paul’s Hmong community, to create a physical memorial space at Phalen Regional Park, through the design and construction of a mural and statue, where Saint Paul residents and out-of-town visitors can celebrate and honor the life and legacy of Tou Ger Xiong. The community is passionate about carrying forward Tou Ger Xiong's work and vision fostering community connections, celebrating Minnesota's multicultural identity, and inspiring the next generation of Hmong American leaders through the creation of a physical memorial space for reflection and remembrance.

We encourage your favorable consideration of this Commemorative Statues, Memorials, and Historic Preservation (CSMHP) grant application and hope you will support this important project.

Sincerely,



Brian Hammer  
Co-Presidents  
MN China Friendship Garden Society  
brianhammer.mcfgs@gmail.com | 832-386-5516  
bzajicek@mnchinagarden.org | 763-913-4438



William Zajicek

attached, New Voices PDF.