

The Minnesota Zen Meditation Center (MZMC) Facility Development Committee is pleased to present this report to the Board of Directors, following three months of constructive community discussions held in conjunction with the “Envisioning Our Home” effort. These discussions have generated much excitement and momentum around the planned expansion of MZMC’s Lake Calhoun facility. This document summarizes the community inputs gathered to date through the engagement opportunities listed on the next page.

Some of the original materials gathered through this effort have been sent in a separate document. Readers are encouraged to review the entire body of material. Facility-related inputs have also been generated by other bodies – for example, the Leadership Group, representing MZMC’s paid teaching staff. This document is not intended to reflect comments generated by this or other MZMC groups, only those of the membership community at large.

The comments below are organized into two general categories: areas of consensus and areas of further discussion. These points are intended to represent recurring themes in the body of community input, not to record every individual viewpoint, imply unanimous agreement on any given statement, or address all issues which will need to be resolved in expanding our facility.

Areas of consensus

Multi-generational accessibility

- The facility should be accessible to persons of all ages and physical abilities.
- The Zen Center should accommodate families by hosting on-site day care and spaces for youth activities.
- We need accessible, convenient bathrooms.

Multi-purpose functionality

- We need a larger zendo, where we can all be in the same space for a retreat or dharma talk.
- We also need smaller, multi-purpose spaces, to accommodate a variety of programming (classrooms, project spaces, social space, areas for relaxation, etc.).
- The interior should be sufficiently sound-proof to maintain quiet spaces (zendo) alongside noisier spaces (kitchen, daycare). (*External sound-proofing is mentioned under “Areas of further discussion”.*)

Harmony with surroundings

- The expansion should promote harmony with our natural surroundings and with the neighborhood.
- The future facility should maximize natural light.
- People want good windows and to be able to see the lake from indoors.

Environmental ethic

- Design and construction should incorporate environmentally friendly building materials, or reuse materials from the existing building, if possible.
- This should be a “healthy building” – safe and free from toxins.
- Outdoor construction should maintain green space and limit the use of pavement.

Process

- Community is optimistic about this project and the possibilities. We have discussed the facility for many years, but now it feels like it is “really happening”.
- This process should be conducted in a way that preserves the legacy and vision of Katagiri Roshi.
- We need to do this project thoroughly *now* to accommodate future growth. This should not be just a “band-aid” solution.
- The community is eager and ready to see and react to more concrete building plans.
- We need to be fiscally responsible throughout this project, have a solid financial foundation and avoid taking undue risks.
- Fundraising should be conducted in a way that does not alienate people.

Areas of further discussion

Inside versus outside

- To what extent should we insulate ourselves from the outside world?
- Should the building be soundproof to the exterior? (Think of motorcycles revving and other noisy activities around Lake Calhoun.)

Old versus new

- What architectural style will we pursue?
- To what extent should we preserve the current look and feel of the building, versus a more modern Zen aesthetic?

Other

- We need a bigger and better kitchen, but how much bigger and better? Does it need to be commercial-grade?

Community engagement opportunities

The summary above was synthesized from comments gathered through the following opportunities in 2014:

- Community meeting, August 3
- Tea and conversation, September 7
- Council process, November 2
- E-mail comments solicited from late August through early November
- Bulletin Board activity made available during October (members posted their comments and ideas on the downstairs bulletin board in response to visioning questions)