

MZMC Facility Expansion Feasibility Study

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The purpose of this document is to provide a rough overview of the potential need for, costs of, and ways of expanding the space in which MZMC operates. All figures and information are rough estimates and subject to debate.

Current Capacity

We have been turning people away from Introduction to Zen Meditation often due to capacity issues, we had people sitting on the bare floor at a recent dharma talk when we ran out of chair and zabuton space, and we may need to seat people on the porch for Rohatsu. We do not have space, or at least adequate space to offer Children's programming on Sunday during our other programming.

At present we are working to address capacity issues for the Introduction class. The possibility of offering two large community oriented Sunday morning style events per week could greatly ameliorate capacity issues, perhaps a weekday and Sunday, two Sunday or a Saturday and Sunday talk. Offering multiple one and two day options at different times during the week of Rohatsu could ameliorate overcrowding. Ted forwarded the idea of renting our Southern neighbor's unoccupied house on Sunday mornings for intro or children's programming.

There are varying views on our current capacity. Matt Larson, with input from Kim and Rosemary suggest that our current facility can accommodate membership of 175 people, roughly 1.75 times our current membership. They suggest immediately addressing expansion issues when membership reaches 150. Matt's entire report is attached as an appendix. However, the fact that we are struggling to accommodate current demand in our space at present with 100 members suggests to I and others that expansion should probably be a consideration at a lower threshold. Ted suggests the time to move towards expansion is now.

Current Value and Condition of Building/Property

The current value of our building and property is estimated at one million dollars as is. The board has contracted for an asset management plan which I had hoped to use to estimate long term costs of maintaining the property but it is not complete. I will forward a extremely rough estimate that the building will need two hundred thousand dollars worth of upkeep in the next twenty years.

Vision for Expansion

Ted, Dan, and I came up with a vision for what we would love to see in terms of space and size of our MZMC community. Due to the large numbers of people flocking to MZMC for intro programs and the growth of other dharma and yoga practice centers there is a sense that people in our community are looking for the kind of thing MZMC provides.

We envision a space with capacity for 200 members, A zendo and fellowship hall that could accommodate the whole community, sufficient classrooms to handle multiple children's groups and a large intro class during a Sunday event where the whole community comes together.

This vision would require a zendo and fellowship hall of 2,000 sq. ft. each, several classrooms, handicap accessible bathrooms, expanded office space, a few teacher offices, in addition to all the facilities we currently have. We would need a total of 8,000 sq. ft, currently we have 5,000. A residence is not a part of our vision. We feel that an on-site residence is more limiting than appealing in terms of attracting a teacher. An on-site teacher is a nice thing, it's just not a priority.

Costs and Prospects for Expanding space on Current Site

In terms of city zoning issues the possibility of expanding the MZMC space on our current lot is good. Various issues are likely to be challenging: Handicap access, parking, our sewer line, our location on the lake.

The degree to which our current space would need to be made handicapped accessible is unclear, any sizeable addition would need to be so. The city requires 10% as many parking spaces as the maximum capacity of a facility's great room; a 200 person zendo would require 20 parking spaces. Our sewer line is shared with our neighbors, and expansion on our lot would like require some expensive sewer work. Our location on the lake makes us subject to the Shoreland Overlay District regulations, it's not clear what these are but they could be challenging, they generally have to do with water run-off.

MZMC currently has a set of architectural plans drawn some time ago by someone named Ann. They show a two story expansion to the North and Northeast of the current building. These plans add a slightly larger zendo and fellowship space in the new wing. We have plenty of room on our lot to add an expansion in the same area of the size we envision (2,000 sq. ft.). Ann's plans also line the back of the lot (just East of the kinhin path with Parking spaces. We could fit the full expansion and 20 parking space on our current lot. The green space of our property would be very compromised.

Building a zendo and fellowship hall expansion on the North side of our building would free up the building space we have now for more classrooms and offices, and provide all aspects of the vision described above, giving us 9,000 total square feet.

The total cost of such an expansion is estimated at \$1,000,000. A reasonable estimate of cost

for new building is \$125/sq. foot. The expansion would be 4,000 sq. ft, \$500,000. Working with our complex sewer issues and other unforeseen challenges would likely run \$100,000. Updating our existing space might cost around \$400,000. We have an architect who has volunteered to do the job for free. These last figures are very rough, but are intended to be conservative.

Cost and Options for Renting or Purchasing Another Site

The principal cost of moving to another site will be the loss of the extraordinary attraction of our location on the lake and our connection to our neighborhood if we move too far, and potentially the goodwill of our current membership. I suspect this would be a very divisive and challenging decision.

Currently commercial real estate that we could rent that would potentially be fitting and in our neighborhood is about \$12/sq. ft. per year in the uptown neighborhood. An 8,000 square foot space would cost about \$100,000 per year. Whether we could find a space really suitable in our neighborhood is somewhat questionable.

There are some spaces for sale of the size and type we might be looking for in South Minneapolis, most of them along major thoroughfares, Lake, Hennepin, Franklin, Nicollet. They represent a major downgrade in appeal of location. Their prices range from \$500,000-\$1.25 Million.

Overview

We can continue to operate in our current location at our current size by more effectively using our space. At some point if our programs continue to grow we will need to consider expansion or methods to slow the influx of participants. What that point is is very much in question and I think it should remain in the awareness of the board. The possibility of moving towards expansion with the idea that the new space will attract more people is worth considering. However, MZMC is very strong in practice and rather low on funding.

If we were to move to expand on our current lot as envisioned in this document, it would require raising \$800,000 as well as a concerted effort to work with the city, construction people, and our community to get the job accomplished. If we were to leave this location we could expect to sell it for a million dollars which could potentially allow us to purchase a larger and perhaps more appropriately designed building outright. There is little question that this would leave in a much less appealing location.

MZMC is thriving as a community of Zen practice as evidenced by our need to consider the possibility of expansion. I trust that in all our decisions and deliberations on this matter we will consider the improvement of our community and the world, as well as the values and vision of our Zen ancestors as our principle guides

Appendix

Maximum Capacity of Current Space 2010:

Objectives:

- Determine how much we can grow in membership without building expansion
- list some creative temporary solutions to managing larger membership

Outcomes:

Max membership before expansion is necessary: **175**

*MZMC should start immediately addressing space issues when membership reaches **150!**

175 is a rough estimate based on an estimated ratio of member attendance. With 100 members we sometimes have 50+ for Sunday talks. If MZMC had 175 members we would likely need limits for nearly every activity including Sunday talks. If this were the case, the prospect of adding new members would be unreasonable.

If MZMC were to have 150 members it would be a red flag that space issues are right around the corner.

Possible space issues: Sunday talks, Rohatsu 2-day option, classes/practice period, Intro to Zazen

Sunday talks: If MZMC had 150 members, we might be able to expect up to an average of approximately 75 in attendance for Sunday Dharma talks. The zendo is currently set up for 52 and the Founder's Hall is set-up for maybe 15. If we did have 75 people it would be very crowded and beyond a reasonable capacity. Possible solutions for this might be to have a weekday evening talk, two Sunday talks, a Saturday and Sunday talk, etc.

Rohatsu 2-day option: MZMC could offer up to three two-day options throughout the Rohatsu Sessin week.

Classes/Practice Periods/Workshops: With MZMC's current class attendance, an increase of 50 members would not create any space issues. Our zendo can fit up to 52 people. The highest attendance from 2010 was 26 for Fall Practice Period and 42 for the Redpine Workshop. MZMC might have to consider class or workshop limits.

Intro to Zazen: MZMC is already experiencing space issues with these classes. If membership were to increase, Intro to Zazen wouldn't necessarily be effected. A possible solution to the current space issue is to conduct an identical class in the 3rd floor guest room with another instructor or to add more options throughout the week.

Research: from Rosemary Taylor based on MZMC's database and records

number of people at 2010 retreats:

Feb Mindfulness Day: 8

Apr Mindfulness Day: 16

May Half-day sesshin : 13

June retreat: 21

Aug half-day sesshin: 7

(No data on the half-day sesshin in January, the Hokyoji retreat, or the October

mindfulness day)

(No data on last year's Rohatsu -- in 2008 we had 31, which I think is about what we had in 09 too)

number of people at 2010 classes:

Winter study group: 11

Spring study group: 10

Fall study group: 10

Red Pine workshop: 42 (actual)

Song of Grass Roof Hermitage: 6

Harmony of Difference & Sameness: 7

Precious Mirror Samhadi: 4

January How to Practice: 7

(No data on either practice period; here are the numbers for 09:

Spring 09 Practice Period: 22 (includes a.m. group)

Fall 09 practice period: 26 (includes a.m. group)

Right now we have 359 people who attended Intro to Zazen this year and gave us their contact info. (You could ask the instructors for an estimate of the % of people who sign the sheet.)

Caveats: all these numbers include just the people on our database (except Red Pine, which is an actual count). Sometimes people sign up for things without giving us their addresses (more often for mindfulness days and half-day sesshins, less often for study group and practice period). I think there may have been classes that didn't get in there; sometimes the sign-up sheets don't make it into the data entry inbox.

- sesshins: ordinarily, 32-34 people fill up the zendo and founder's hall. One time we did have a huge sesshin with guest teacher Reb Anderson that sat something like 50 (but that had people sitting on the front porch, not a good idea IMHO)

- Sunday talk: zendo is set up for 52; Founders Hall can probably seat 15 more

- classes: we can have one going in the zendo with up to 52 people, while another in the third floor room holds about 20. Possibly could also have a small one in the library (5-10 people), but the sound travels between the zendo and library, so it's not so good to use both of them at the same time

- intro class: I usually estimate 20 for the third floor room, but one of the intro instructors (Ben, Marty, Ted, Tim, and Monica) could give a better idea of how many can fit in there; some Sundays it seems like more than 20 come down the stairs

- special events: for ordinations/shuso/jukai, we usually estimate having up to 60 guests. One time we hosted a memorial service that completely filled the zendo, founders hall, stairs, and also had people on the porch and looking in through the back windows. I'll bet there were 100 people here for that one.

Once we get the other third floor room painted, we could probably also use it -- but can't really use both third floor rooms at once because of sound traveling.