

A Brief History of MZMC Board's Strategic Facilities Planning Process

MZMC's Board of Directors is moving forward with long-term planning to take care of our place of practice. We have been studying options and consulting with professionals and our practice community for four years and have made a clear choice to expand our facility on our current site within the next few years. We are excited to work with you and all members of our sangha to improve our capacity to support people in giving themselves to Zen practice here amidst our gardens on the shore of Lake Calhoun.

This document provides a history of the Board's process in terms of long term facility planning. In particular it shows the rationale for the Board's decision to expand on our current site. Here we will document Board processes from early 2011 until mid-2014.

Deciding what to do with our facilities in the long term has been one of the principle areas of work for the Board from 2011 until today. The process has included: two year-long intensive ad hoc committees which included Board, staff, and community members; two Board retreats; one stakeholder retreat with thirty key members of the MZMC community; four all community meetings; member surveys; the hiring of a consulting firm, an asset management study, and an architect.

Primary reasons for building expansion:

1. Our growing membership
2. \$200,000 in deferred maintenance that requires attention
3. The consistent message from our membership that in the long term they would like to see a full-time guiding teacher
4. Our desire to create a handicapped accessible facility

There is a big upsurge in attendance and energy at MZMC. In the last four years, we have had about three thousand first-time visitors and our membership has been growing at approximately 10% per year. There is programming we would like to offer that we cannot due to space constraints, we have programming that has been badly overcrowded for years, and also have programming that is nearing maximum capacity. We want to create a place where our community can thrive and grow.

We want to take care of our place of practice and contribute to the beauty of our lakeside location. Our building has about \$200,000 in deferred maintenance that a professional asset management company told us needs to be addressed in the near future.

We want to realize our community's vision for a full-time guiding teacher. In a number of different surveys of our membership over the last four years one of the most consistent themes was that people would like to see a full-time guiding teacher here in the long term. Board studies show that we cannot generate enough income with our current space to support a full time teacher.

We want to make a place that is accessible to people with disabilities, so all people have access to the peace and harmony we strive to create.

Here is a timeline of the Board's process from 2011-2014:

2011

Created Expansion Feasibility Study which investigated the possibility of either adding an addition or moving to a different site in South Minneapolis. This study included input from an architect, a realtor, and Minneapolis City Planning and Economic Development office.

Hired Load Bearing to do an asset management study. They gave a detailed, extensive report showing that our building had \$200,000 in deferred maintenance that should be addressed in the near future.

2012

Formed Strategic Planning Committee tasked with providing the Board with a recommendation on how to deal with the many issues surrounding our facilities.

Hired Cincinnatus consulting to help engage the community and facilitate the process of making long-term facility plans.

Held two Board retreats, one stakeholder retreat with thirty key MZMC members, and two sangha meetings to work together to make a choice.

In this process five main options came to the fore:

1. Keep our building as is and take care of the deferred maintenance issues
2. Build an addition to our building and take care of the deferred maintenance issues
3. Demolish our current building and build a new one on our site
4. Move to a different location
5. Create satellite practice centers

We found that people had a very wide variety of opinions on what to do. Each one of the above options had enthusiastic supporters and opponents. Countless details, ideas, and arguments were presented and considered in many contexts.

November 2012

The strategic planning committee submitted their final recommendation: we should demolish our current building and build a new one on our site, and if this is not possible, move to another location. The Board voted to bring this recommendation to the community for consideration at an all sangha meeting.

January 2013

There was a sangha meeting to consider the above proposal. The plan was well received and the Board began to move forward to determine whether it would be possible to build anew here.

March–July 2013

We hired well-respected architect Garth Rockcastle (Meyer, Scherer, and Rockcastle, LTD) to determine whether our plan was feasible. He gave a couple of Board presentations and one presentation at a sangha meeting to help envision the possibilities of the plan. He suggested a phased plan, which would begin by building an addition and allow for the eventual

replacement of our current building. This plan would allow us to practice here on our site throughout any expansion process. It would also allow us to make a larger, improved facility at a lower cost at the outset and then have the option to replace the current building at a further phase of the plan as needs require and funding allows.

Late 2013–early 2014

Facilities issues took a backseat to questions regarding the leadership at MZMC.

March 2014

The Board formed a new Facility Development Committee and committed to moving forward with plans to expand our facility size on our current site. The Board is currently working to clarify challenges and opportunities for expansion on this site and forming plans for a process of working with the community to envision our future home. Just what this home will look like will be up to us all, and we look forward to working together to making something wonderful. We hope you will join us in creating a new space for supporting Zen practice.

**For bi-monthly reports on Envisioning our Home, please visit the website page:
<http://mnzencenter.org/envision.php>**