

Overview

In the past several years our sangha has intentionally and successfully transitioned from a pastor-centered community with 50-150 active members, to a program-centered community with 150-350 members. As this has occurred, our financial, physical, administrative, and spiritual resources have been stretched in multiple directions. The current plan is an effort to clarify and direct our collective intention regarding our future growth and development.

In our current organizational documents, the Board of Directors and the Dharma Council are charged with strategic planning. Although the recommendations and goals in this document include a range of target completion dates, this plan is intended to function as an organizational road map for the next 15-20 years.

The process produced a document that addresses these focal points:

- Facilities
- Rigor in Practice
- Children and Families
- Succession and Leadership
- Related and Cohort Groups
- Staffing and Finances

The Strategic Planning Committee expresses deep gratitude to all who participated in the strategic planning process and so helped to create this document. It is our hope that this plan is a meaningful, living document as Dharma Rain continues to fulfill its mission as a sanctuary of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in such a way as to cultivate compassion, love, wisdom and understanding.

Facilities

Recommendations

Form a property search group of 4-8 people to investigate possibilities, refine the search criteria, prepare for buying property and communicate with the sangha about this process. The search group would use a specified set of core Guiding Principles to conduct the search process.

Position for Move

By March 2011:

- Adjust Operations Committee priorities to maximize resale value of Sangha House and Dharma House, and to prolong use of Zendo. Buying the credit union parking lot stays a high priority, as does improving handicapped access for the Zendo.
- Investigate selling the Sangha House to get an idea of how much it may be worth and what we might need to do to it first.
- Begin positioning financially to be able to pay out around \$120,000 towards closing costs on short notice. A loan may or may not be necessary depending on the timing of selling the Sangha House.

Start Search

By June 2011, and preferably before, begin actively searching for potential properties, looking for any of three possible fits:

- Monastery/Residential & Retreat Facility within 30 minutes drive of downtown.
- Centrally-located Zen Center with space for multiple events and dedicated Dharmagarden space.
- Large, flexible, moderately central facility that can have residents, retreats and Dharmagarden.

The decision whether to go with a single or dual campus will depend on what is available on the market and how well the various property options fit our search criteria, guiding principles, and financial situation. The ease of acquiring and transitioning into a given property would also be a significant criterion.

Rigor in Practice

Recommendations

- **Sesshin:** By 2015, increase the number of weeklong sesshin each year to 6. Have some retreats that allow flexible attendance or participation, as well as some that are closed once they begin, or are open only to more advanced practitioners. Hold a zazenai or similar event 11 months of the year. The goal is to triple the number of person-days devoted to silent, formal practice.
- **Residency:** The specifics of how residency is developed depends on aspects of the Facilities and the Succession and Leadership Focal Points. The intent is to transition to offering a more intensive, formal schedule for those who want to take advantage of it. Differentiate between guests, residents, and staff, and shift entry requirements and stay limitations accordingly.
- **Schedule and Calendar:** Starting Fall 2011, simplify yearly calendar to more closely accord with the training cycle, to fit better with school year, and to keep fall term as a unit. Have two ~90 day Ango periods each year, corresponding to fall and spring terms. Summer and winter terms have a lighter schedule. To ease understanding of the Center's schedule, publish separate calendars for public events (e.g., classes and sitting) and for the daily residential routine.
- **Formal Container:** The best way to spread knowledge of formal practice is to make the mature practice held by long-term members more visible. The most effective way for members to develop a sense of the sacredness of everyday life is to see the mature practice of other members in the context of everyday activities. Apprenticeship opportunities are especially valuable in this regard. The Mandala Model already provides the practical structure for developing members' skills in keeping the temple running. Its capacity as a vehicle for spiritual training is currently underutilized. We recommend that the Mandala Council, perhaps in consultation with the Godo and/or Dharma Council, review the orientation, mentorship, and oversight of team leads and trainees to emphasize trainees to emphasize the Dharma of each temple job.
- **Mature Lay Practice:** Having advanced classes, groups, or retreats for senior members is one strategy for addressing this, as evidenced by the Daoren and 7-Up groups. Modifications to the other areas of concern identified above will also affect this category. For example, more frequent sesshins would provide opportunities for Seniors to train in roles such as Tenzo, enabling lay-led retreats. Explore restructuring the role of Shuso, both to provide increased opportunities for deeper challenging practice and to meet the changing and expanding needs of the community.

Children and Families

Recommendations

- This year (2011), rent more classroom space and recruit more teachers.
- Assemble and distribute a directory of parent's families and teachers.
- Schedule annual family retreats, contingent on staff and volunteer support.
- Have at least one dharma talk per year that is focused on everyday issues and relatively free from unexplained jargon.
- Schedule a game night (or afternoon) or similar all-invited event per year.
- Elicit suggestions for better meeting the needs of young adults, and experiment with different programs to address this group.
- Increase emphasis on the practice of parents.

Succession and Leadership

Recommendations

Succession

- By June 2011, establish a Succession Committee. This Committee will meet no less than annually.
- Kyogen and Gyokuko to notarize, date, and file a Successors List by August 2011, to be used only if they are unable to communicate their preferences.
- By October 2011, the Succession Committee will identify 3-5 Zen Centers nationally that have gone through the process of succession through retirement rather than death. Gather information and perspective from these centers, asking what worked and what didn't, and what recommendations they would have for a skillful succession process. Compile results and report to the Board, Dharma Council, and Elders Council.
- By 2014, the Committee will have developed an Abbacy transition plan and submit it to the Board, Dharma Council and Elders Council for review and to the Board for approval.
- By 2015 the Succession Committee will propose abbot nominee/s for Board approval and ratification by the sangha. Specific criteria have been set forth for these nominees.
- Kyogen and Gyokuko to transition out of Kanin and Godo roles by 2015
- Abbacy transition to be complete by 2020

Leadership

- *Service Opportunities:* Develop and implement procedures for mentoring instructors of classes, workshops, and outreach situations and supporting and honoring leadership in other roles.
- Align *Mandala Model* with changes made in the Strategic Plan. Mandala Council to hold regular meetings. Consider expansion of council if necessary to deal with meta-issues of temple administration, such as the role of Shuso. Promote involvement in the Mandala Council as an opportunity for Lay Leadership.
- *Expand Outreach Coordinator's position* beyond just responding to requests, or add a new position to give attention to broader questions that fall under this team's responsibility.
- *Participation in Broader Community.* Create advertising task group to revisit how Dharma Rain is represented. Remind our members that integrated Zen practice within the community is a way of living that responds with selfless actions to the needs of all living beings with no thought of gain, with no goal, and with no emphasis on affiliation.
- *Lay Practice.* Encourage and support the cohort group of transmitted Lay and Ordained teachers in developing mutual respect and harmonious functioning as they enact their collective responsibility for maintaining and transmitting this lineage.

Related and Cohort Groups

Recommendations

- Increased attention to, and support for, related and cohort groups will support DRZC's mission as well as increase the base of support for DRZC.
- Identify Related and Cohort Groups as an Important Part of DRZC's Mission
- Provide Oversight and Guidance for Formation and Coordination of Related & Cohort Groups
- Encourage and Facilitate Peer Support Among Coordinators and Leaders of Related Groups
- Clarify the Relationship Between Related Groups and DRZC

Staffing and Finances

Recommendations

Staffing

- Financial Support of Abbot(s) or senior staff.
 1. First, plan for salaries for two Abbots, or one Abbot plus a paid senior staff person.
 2. Increase level of financial support to what would be considered a modest income.
- Adequate Staffing
 1. Continue as we are, relying on whatever ordained trainees are present and on lay volunteers
 2. Develop a stronger residential community
 3. Make use of paid help as most efficient and appropriate

Finances

- Ask members to increase annual giving
- Keep developing the Silent Auction, extending base of support beyond members
- Encourage planned giving
- Fundraise specifically for new property
- Use a development professional
- Monitor growth in membership and donations relative to projection of growth in membership and donations from 2010 through 2020