

Planting Zen in Siskiyou Square

An initiative by Dharma Rain Zen Center to transform a brownfield into a space for spiritual practice, community connection, and native habitat.

If you care about the establishment and evolution of Buddhism in the west; the strengthening of Oregon's contemplative tradition; facilities for interfaith and cultural activities; the cultivation of mindfulness, ethical living, and compassion in the community through an extensive array of programs for adults and children; and continuing the deep and subtle transmission of Soto Zen, then Planting Zen is for you.

If you live, work, go to school, or recreate near Rocky Butte, and would enjoy a scenic place to walk your dog and chat with neighbors; tend a raised bed to bring food to your family; drop your child off at preschool; learn about the science behind restoring a landfill; take a bike route through the neighborhood without risking busy 82nd Avenue; or look through an oak grove with a sense of satisfaction born from your stewardship of the land; then Planting Zen is for you.

If you care about the environment in the Portland metro area; the health of the regional aquifer; the creation of habitat for wildlife within the urban boundary; the restoration of derelict land; the highest standards of sustainable, equitable and responsible development; and the enjoyment of ample, accessible greenspace, then Planting Zen is for you.

It is economically and logistically difficult to make use of a site such as this, and several have tried over the last thirty years. Fortunately, Dharma Rain's combination of a light footprint, adaptive use and holistic vision aligns with community values, the state of the land, governmental policy, and the inspiration of donors like you. This makes it possible to create an attractive and sustainable campus that benefits Zen practitioners and the surrounding community. Planting Zen is an incredible opportunity to create something special for the community and the region, and unique in American Buddhism.



Planting Zen Goals and Objectives:

Ken Barker
Photo 2012

Temple

To establish a new campus for Dharma Rain Zen Center that:

- Provides expanded offerings and access for beginning and advanced lay practitioners;
- Strengthens the formal residential/monastic practice;
- Supports children, youth and family programs, and creates a daily preschool;
- Allows a greater capacity for hosting large events;
- Affords handicapped accessibility;
- Promotes greater institutional flexibility.

Habitat

To restore the former landfill to a vibrant, resilient and biologically sound state that will:

- Provide native sources for forage, shelter and passage in an important wildlife corridor between two major habitat islands in NE Portland;
- Engage, educate and inspire hundreds of volunteers from the numerous partner organizations that are involved in this effort, cultivating a sense of stewardship for this land and of the broader environment.

Watershed

To protect the health of the watershed and its inhabitants by:

- Minimizing the potential for landfill pollutants to leach into the groundwater;
- Preventing exposure of landfill contents during or after construction and maintaining the methane abatement measures currently in place;
- Featuring extensive use of holistic tactics such as using plants and fungi to absorb and process contaminants, and to hold and filter stormwater, minimizing the load on the municipal system.

Neighborhood and Community

To improve the local experience of neighborhood connectivity, safety and beauty through:

- Developing public gathering areas; pedestrian pathways; temple grounds; and the Siskiyou Householder Refuge - a residential cohousing complex, that are models of sustainable, equitable, community-oriented and multi-generational design;
- Extensive collaboration between Dharma Rain's membership, local citizens, non-profit groups, public agencies and private enterprises.



About the Project

Overview

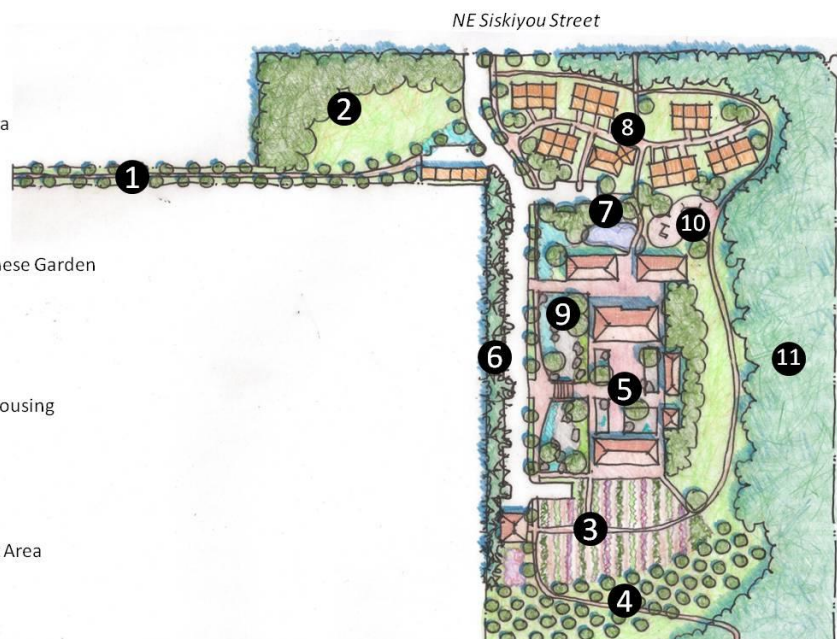
Planting Zen gradually transforms Siskiyou Square into an inspiring facility that will effectively house Dharma Rain's programs and congregation for many decades. The temple complex and surrounding grounds will have attractive, compatible, low-impact uses that provides our members and the wider community with a broad array of activities, events and services.

The vision for the site and our method of arriving at it both stem from our core mission to help people bring ever more awareness to their lives. We will build a traditional Buddhist temple layout with a central core of human-scale buildings enveloped in a fabric of wooded areas, inviting paths, gardens and a cluster of residential units. The temple and the site will be a public resource, with a variety of daily classes, events, and programs open to all. There will be two large habitat areas (a ~2 acre oak savanna, and a ~4 acre mixed coniferous ravine). There will also be a large community garden and orchard on the southern end of the property. The spacious layout preserves the benefits of a natural area for community use, health, stormwater management, wildlife habitat and aesthetics. These benefits are emphasized because the site is a brownfield, surrounded by barbed wire, populated with invasive species, used for illicit activities, and has been a source of local controversy for decades.

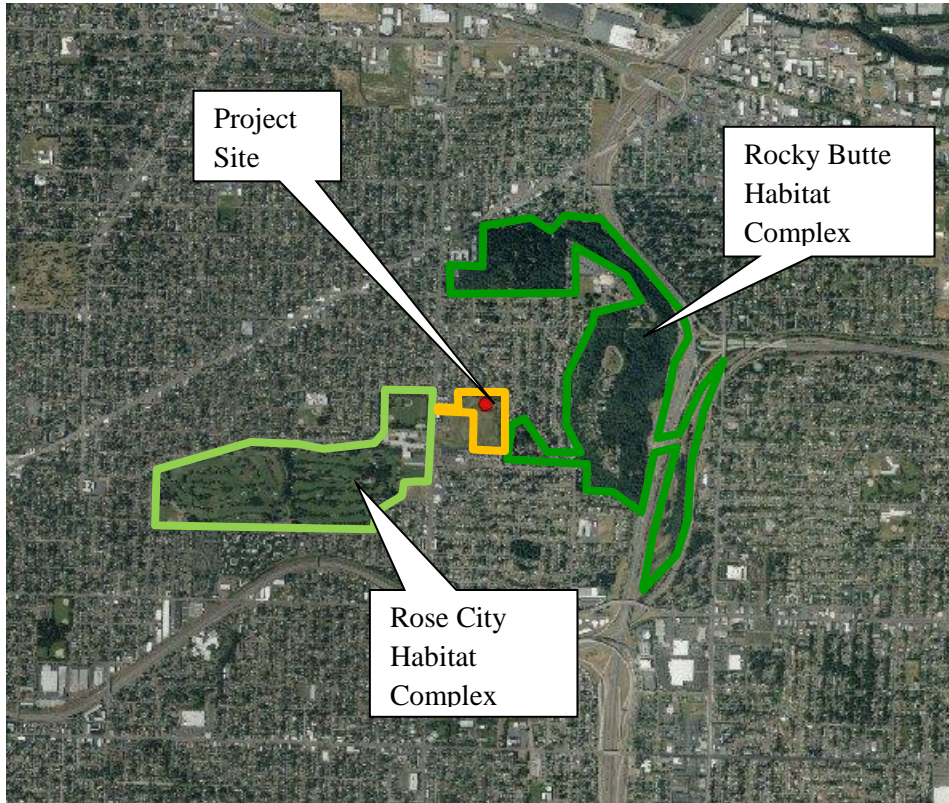
The plan is to develop the site in phases. Ecological restoration work began fall 2012, and major construction activities begun in the summer of 2014. The first structure will be a meditation hall. The formal temple complex will be in the center of the site, with the co-housing development to the north. The parking areas and buffer landscaping will provide space between adjoining commercial and residential uses. In June 2014, Dharma Rain transitioned out of our home of the last 25 years into the immediate vicinity of the site, and established a temporary base of operations and services until portions of the new campus are operational.

Legend

- 1 Path to 82nd Ave.
- 2 Oak Savannah Natural Area
- 3 Produce Garden
- 4 Orchard
- 5 Formal Courtyard & Japanese Garden
- 6 Buffer Plantings
- 7 Pond
- 8 Householder Refuge Co-Housing
- 9 Bioswales and Trees
- 10 Playground
- 11 Ravine & Riparian Habitat Area



Project Site



The site is a flag-shaped lot comprising 13.74 acres including a small strip that reaches to 82nd Avenue.

It is a flat field with a wooded ravine and south facing slope, bordered by residential neighborhood on three sides and is a crucial connecting link between two large greenspaces.

The site is easily accessible: Close to light rail and major bus lines on Sandy, Fremont and 82nd; and about a mile from entrances to two highways.

Site History

The site is a former landfill that has been capped for over 30 years. The site was a quarry for Rose City Sand and Gravel and excavated to a depth of 80 feet. From 1972-1982 it was managed as the H.G. LaVelle Landfill and accepted debris from the construction of I-84 and I-205. Municipal solid waste was not permitted. It's considered a clean landfill, composed primarily of rubble and woody debris.

Environmental issues: We have completed Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments. The water table is unaffected; and the geology of the site is very favorable for aquifer health. Landfill gas is the only significant concern with the site, which is mitigated with design solutions and the tapering off of methane production. A methane capture system was installed in 1982, and expanded in 2009, and effectively prevents any perimeter methane migration. DEQ is working with Dharma Rain and our environmental engineers to ensure that methane or the contents of the fill do not pose a risk to users or neighbors of the site.

Structural issues: Typically landfills require deep piles driven down into solid ground beneath the fill. Most of the settling has already occurred, and we are planning a very light development with small, free-standing building. This allows a much simpler and less expensive system that combines a 3-month surcharge to prep the site, followed by placing a 4' mat of gravel and geogrid beneath the foundation.



An aerial photo of the site taken in 1964, showing the quarry at 75% of its eventual size.

Temple Complex

Initially, the main building will be the Sodo (5,200 sf with meditation, dining, and cooking areas). Phase I also includes the placement and remodeling of the two dormitory structures on the eastern side of the central courtyard, a temporary office structure, and a workshop.

The Dharma School will provide classroom, administration and storage space for the Dharma Garden programs, with a playground built next to it that also serves the Householder Refuge.

We are planning the Dharma School building for Phase II of the project. Eventually a Hondo (~6,200 sf assembly and classroom space) will be added. Traditionally, the Sodo and Hondo are separate, but at Dharma Rain we had combined these uses in our previous (and interim) Zendo. When the Hondo is built, we will install formal *tan* in the Sodo for daily zazen and retreat practice. This allows much more flexibility with special events and rentals, allowing regular programming to remain undisrupted.

All buildings except the workshop will be Japanese-inspired, Northwest-informed, and will emphasize rooflines, *engawa*-style porches with connecting covered pathways, and simple, functional interiors. These buildings will be single story structures, raised several feet off the ground. The larger buildings will have timber-framed elements. Significant attention is given to the integration of the buildings with the surrounding environment, in terms of views, use, materials, site conditions and tone. Considerable emphasis will be placed on durable, high performance envelopes for the buildings, and efficient and sustainable mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems.

Householder Refuge Cohousing

The northernmost buildings will be a residential community developed as 31 apartments. It is open to all, and marketing has targeted those with an interest in mindfulness and supportive of ecological and spiritual values. This will allow people to be part of an active Buddhist community while maintaining their independence according to their needs. In this vision, householder and monastic paths and lifestyles are intimately related and support each other.

Co-housing is a form of community-oriented, resident-planned and managed development, which has proven practical for creating socially cohesive communities of individual households. Individual households are still equipped to function autonomously, but may be smaller because some functions, such as storage, laundry, children's play areas, and guest rooms, will be in shared facilities. Units will be in small clusters of attached housing (town houses and flats) containing from one to four bedrooms each. These buildings will be two story structures, arranged to form an optimal balance of private and shared space, and a friendly, collaborative relationship with surrounding neighborhoods.

Watercolor of the Sodo (meditation hall):



Perspective drawing showing the massing of the Householder Refuge looking to the NE.



Finances

Dharma Rain Operating Budget

Dharma Rain is a largely member-supported organization, with very low personnel and administrative costs. Historically, individuals (membership, donors, special events) contribute 60-65% of funding, whereas fees for service and other earned income accounts for 35-40%. This ratio will shift with the transition to the Siskiyou campus, due to significantly more opportunities for earned income.

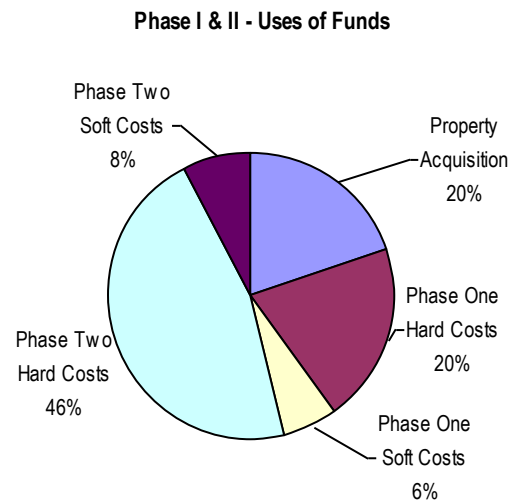
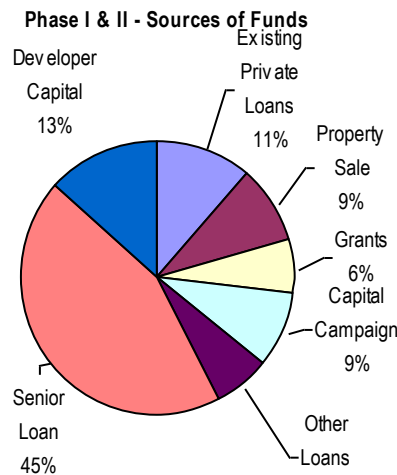
Below are Dharma Rain's abbreviated 3-year Financial Projections Reports are prepared by staff and our Treasurer, and CPA-reviewed, but not externally audited. Projected budgets are typically with 1-2% of actuals. Dharma Rain is in the midst of a large capital project which skews the financial picture significantly. The revenues and expenses that are specifically restricted for Planting Zen are discussed in the next section.

INCOME		2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
	Temple Operations			
	Membership	\$ 92,202	\$ 95,890	\$ 99,725
	Programs, Events, Activities	\$ 88,073	\$ 112,658	\$ 165,524
	Operating Income Subtotal	\$ 180,275	\$ 208,548	\$ 265,249
	Capital Income			
	Lotus Blooming Capital Campaign	\$ 375,440	\$ 372,230	\$ 204,173
	Private Loans, including Semble	\$ 200,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -
	Grants	\$ 215,000	\$ 335,000	\$ 225,000
	Property Sales (net)	\$ 714,918	\$ -	\$ -
	Building Fund Income Subtotal	\$ 1,505,358	\$ 1,807,230	\$ 429,173
	TOTAL INCOME	\$ 1,685,633	\$ 2,015,778	\$ 694,422
	EXPENSES			
	Temple Operations	\$ 223,118	\$ 208,790	\$ 194,705
	Capital Costs			
	Land Acquisition	\$ 114,018	\$ 1,096,524	\$ -
	Soft Costs - (Due diligence, legal, design, permitting)	\$ 257,548	\$ 170,921	\$ 114,000
	Sodo Building (Meditation hall)	\$ 781,456	\$ 260,447	\$ 96,000
	Accessory Structures (Dorms, office, workshop, site)	\$ 346,800	\$ 210,440	\$ 60,400
	Loan Payments	\$ 13,275	\$ 68,046	\$ 111,444
	Building Fund Expense Subtotal	\$ 1,513,097	\$ 1,806,378	\$ 381,844
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,736,215	\$2,015,168	\$ 576,549
	NET EXPENSES	\$ (50,582)	\$ 610	\$ 117,873
	Beginning Cash Balance	\$ 55,000	\$ 4,418	\$ 5,028
	NET SURPLUS/(DEFECIT)	\$ 4,418	\$ 5,028	\$ 122,901

Planting Zen Phase I and II

The 14 acres of Employment-zoned land was purchased for \$1.75 million, approximately one-third of the price per acre of comparably zoned and located lots. The land was purchased Nov 1st, 2012, using a seller-financed Land-Sale Contract, with a down-payment of \$550,000. The remainder was paid November 1st 2014, with funds from a collection of low-interest private loans, giving Dharma Rain title to the land.

Construction has begun, and we are on-track to complete the first two phases of construction by fall 2016. This will include a provisional temple complex, with a meditation/dining hall, a temporary office, two dormitories, and the workshop, as well as the Householder Refuge cohousing. The total cost associated with Phase I and II is approximately eleven million dollars.



These costs are split between two entities, each of whom is responsible for a phase of the project. Considered as a whole, long term financing is expected to provide approximately half of the necessary funds. A pro forma for the project is available upon request, containing detailed cost estimates, projected and past budgets, and monthly expenditures.

Dharma Rain is funding Phase I (the initial part of the temple complex) through a combination of property sales, grants, private loans and Lotus Blooming – our capital campaign. Long term loans will be repaid using operating revenue and the capital campaign.

Siskiyou Cohousing LLC is leasing 2-acres of land from Dharma Rain and is functioning as the developer/operator of the Householder Refuge, which is Phase II of Planting Zen. These funds come from membership buy-ins, and a senior construction loan. There are 29 families or individuals who have bought in to Siskiyou Cohousing LLC as members, out of 31 available openings. The initial buy-in (at \$50,000 apiece) will make up the majority of the developer's cash contribution to the development costs, and is primarily being spent on infrastructure and design. Membership confers the right to rent a unit at the Householder Refuge, and participate in the ongoing work to form the social, organizational and legal structures of the community.

Siskiyou Cohousing is actively seeking a senior lender to fund the project at 60% loan to cost, and expects the value of the apartments will be significantly higher than the cost, leading to a sub-60% LTV. The entire property, not just the HHR, will be offered as collateral to the senior lender; therefore the overall project loan to cost or value would be closer to 35%.

Lotus Blooming Capital Campaign

Dharma Rain has an ongoing development strategy that includes support from members, donations, an annual fundraiser, and planned giving. In addition, at the Groundbreaking Ceremony on June 8th 2013, we launched “Lotus Blooming” a targeted capital campaign to raise funds to support the development of the new campus. The campaign will raise \$1,000,000 in donations to the building fund over three years.

As of Nov 1st, 2014, we have already raised \$535,000 for Lotus Blooming, including two \$100,000 gifts. This figure does not include the \$500,000 we have received in grants dedicated to specific portions of the project.

Project Management

Due Diligence

From November 2011 to June 2012, Dharma Rain engaged in a thorough and multi-faceted investigation regarding the appropriateness and feasibility of the site for Dharma Rain's use. The following areas were examined: Financial; Environmental; Legal; City Planning and Zoning; Geotechnical; Neighborhood Concerns; and Sangha Support. In mid-June 2012, the board met to review all the findings and held a final vote, which was in favor of purchasing the property. The complete due diligence report is available at <http://dharma-rain.org/pdfs/12calendars/DueDiligenceSummary.pdf>.

Public Involvement

The large size and central location of the site assure that whatever happens here will impact and reflect upon the surrounding communities. In the past local neighborhoods have stepped forward to take an active and effective role in re-defining the area, discouraging several big-box developers. When Dharma Rain Zen Center stepped into this scene, we worked to engage the community ensuring that we create an environment that is sustainable, beautiful and benefits our congregation and the neighborhood alike. We have actively sought feedback from neighborhood groups, local businesses, related non-profits, and government entities. We also held a series of focus groups to examine key issues associated with developing the site, such as neighborhood connectivity and ecological concerns. Many of those living and working in the Madison South and Roseway neighborhoods have seen the Siskiyou Square brownfield attract unwanted activities including illegal dumping, drug dealing, prostitution, and vandalism. The former landfill has remained derelict for most of the last 30 years, despite its tremendous potential for the neighborhood, city and region. Dharma Rain Zen Center's involvement and 24-hr presence on site will significantly curtail such activities.

Zoning

The parcel is zoned EG-2, an employment/industrial zone that allows religious institutional use outright. The zone allows a wide range of employment opportunities that do not conflict with proximate residential uses. The residential co-housing is viewed as an accessory use of the religious institution. Our pre-application conference took place in April 2012, and the Land Use Review Application was submitted in November, our hearing was in March 2013, and everything that we asked for was approved April 2013.

Sequence

The plan for developing the site is subject to frequent refinement and adjustments to evolving conditions. However, the basic concepts and values guiding them have remained resilient. Dharma Rain sold our properties on Madison Ave in 2014, and are currently renting several venues in the immediate vicinity of the Siskiyou property. This freed up capital for construction, minimizes disruption for providing services, allowing us to focus our collective energy on *Planting Zen*.

Construction is happening in several stages. The first goal is to make the temple provisionally usable. The infrastructure requirements for the site are extensive but were largely completed in summer and fall 2014. The primary remaining scope is the public street improvements along NE Siskiyou St. The Sodo building is well underway, and work has started on the workshop. Once these are finished and the dormitories are placed, we can offer all of our programs on-site.

Key Points of Confidence in *Planting Zen*:

Passionate, committed members: We receive greater than 20,000 volunteer hours yearly, valued at \$460,000 by Independent Sector. 44% of our membership has a regular temple job.

Skilled and experienced consultants: We are using consultants who are appropriately licensed, insured, experienced or specialized in this type of project, and come recommended by multiple sources. Our contractor is B&G Builders - Sustainable Solutions.

Strong, sustained growth in membership: There has been a 68% increase in Dharma Rain's membership over the last decade, with solid retention.

Sound, well-managed organization: Projected budgets have been within 1-2% of actual for the last three fiscal years. We have always had very low administrative overhead and fundraising costs: Membership and Fundraising accounts for less than 5% of our annual expenses. We do not have any unrelated business activity, have filed a 990 form, and are registered with Guidestar to ensure transparency.

The teachings of Buddhism align with Planting Zen: Our message of “living use” and sensitivity to our environment assures long-term stewardship. Zen has a history of embracing the arts as integrated aspects of and for practice, not just as decorations, ensuring a beautiful and inspiring campus when complete.

Diverse network of collaboration: Dharma Rain has commitments of support from numerous non-profit and governmental groups, including:

- Madison High School; Portland Community College; Portland State University; and Jason Lee K-8 School (field work for science/conservation classes on site)
- Groundwork Portland (advocacy, community involvement, and labor)
- Backyard Habitat Certification Program (broad collaboration)
- OSU’s Ecological Engineering Student Society (grantwriting)
- The Center for a Sustainable Today (publicity)
- Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (broad collaboration)
- Ecology in Classrooms and Outdoors (education)
- Friends of Trees (naturescaping)
- East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (funds for restoration)
- Business Oregon (funding for assessment and infrastructure)
- Regional Solutions Center of the Governor’s Office (funding for infrastructure)
- Metro (funding via Nature in Neighborhoods program)
- Portland Parks and Recreation (holding easement, consulting)
- Bureau of Environmental Services and Portland Brownfield Program (funding and consultation for stormwater, naturescaping, remediation and assessment)
- Madison South, Roseway and Central Northeast Neighborhood Associations (advocacy and publicity)

Media Coverage

- *Portland Tribune*, Zen Buddhists clean up Portland’s Mess. March 13th, 2014 by Joseph Gallivan. <http://portlandtribune.com/sl/213574-70623-zen-buddhists-clean-up-portlands-mess>
- *Oregonian*, Plans for Rocky Butte take a Spiritual Turn. August 3rd, 2012, by Anne Laufe http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2012/08/northeast_portland_landfill_co.html
- *KGW News*, <http://www.kgw.com/video/featured-videos/New-Buddhist-temple-coming-to-NE-Portland--196237411.html>
- *KGW News*, <http://www.kgw.com/news/NE-Portland-Zen-center-breaks-ground-on-new-site-210750971.html>
- *Daily Journal of Commerce Oregon*, Building a treasure atop trash. August 21, 2014. By Jeff McDonald.
- *Daily Journal of Commerce Oregon*, Buddhists hope to build facility on former landfill site. April 20th, 2012. By Reed Jackson.
- *Northwest Dharma Association News*, Dharma Rain: Watering the roots of Dharma. Winter 2012. By Jeanna Moyer <http://northwestdharma.org/nw-dharma-news-wp/?p=809>
- Roseway Neighborhood Association, on homepage. 82nd Avenue walking tour. October 2012. By Angela Carpenter
- *Brownfield Quarterly* “Zen and the Art of Landfill Maintenance,” by Abigail Cermak.
- TV- cable access segment in preparation

For More Information

Please visit our website at www.dharma-rain.org. You are also welcome to write Staff@dharma-rain.org, or call 503-239-4846 with any questions, comments, or suggestions. We look forward to hearing from you.



About Dharma Rain Zen Center

Overview

We are a “Soto Zen temple for lay practice” because of our dedication to helping people cultivate and realize the practice of Zen Buddhism in everyday American lives. Northwest Zen Sangha Inc. is a registered 501(c)-3 not for profit organization, doing business as Dharma Rain Zen Center. Our Tax ID number is 93-6095067. The organization was formed in 1983, and operating in Portland since 1973. We are one of the largest and oldest Buddhist groups in Portland and known for an open, accessible community and the depth of our practice. For most of that time we have been located off SE Hawthorne, and enjoyed an excellent relationship with the surrounding Buckman neighborhood.

We have a diverse set of programs, an active congregation of around 220 members and 5-10 full-time staff. Our regular events are free and open to the public. We outgrew that location and spent years looking for a single-campus facility within 5 miles of our current location, in an accessible, supportive neighborhood with ample greenspace nearby.

Our Practice

We are a diverse group of people who come together to share the practice of meditation, study Buddhism, and integrate its principles into our lives. Participants come from many walks of life and have differing expectations of the temple. Dharma Rain meets this diversity with a wealth of opportunities for instruction, formal practice, intensive training, and taking on temple responsibility.

Buddhism deals with our ever-changing relationship to emptiness, to the sacred, to that which connects us all. Practice cultivates stillness, compassion, wisdom, harmony –on a deeply personal level. This internal landscape is the realm of all religious traditions, and many of the most effective tools are contemplative in nature. Buddhism makes this mystic aspect the cornerstone of the tradition, which appeals to some who are wary of organized religion. Buddhism does not list required doctrines or beliefs, nor promote specific social views or political ideologies, nor assume that it is a suitable spiritual path for everyone; cultivating instead a deep openness and respect for other paths and traditions.

Soto Zen (one of many different Buddhist traditions), emphasizes the use of everyday actions to bring our full attention to that which is right in front of us. Every thought, word, and action is part of our spiritual life. Zen is not something that can be added to our lives; rather our lives, just as they are, should become Zen. Because of this, Zen practice should lead us to a robust engagement with life for the benefit of self and others.



The congregation during service at Dharma Rain’s current

Our Organization

Teachers

The abbot at Dharma Rain is Gyokuko Carlson. She is a Soto Zen priest who has guided the temple for the past thirty years. The community was originally a priory of Shasta Abbey, where Kyogen and Gyokuko were trained, but since 1986 Dharma Rain has thrived as a separate and independent organization. There are also numerous lay teachers, monks, priests and senior members who hold authority at, and responsibility for, Dharma Rain. Teachers may provide pastoral care and spiritual counseling to the membership, meeting either formally or informally, to discuss aspects of Buddhism and Zen, spiritual difficulties or insights.

Mission Statement

The Mission of DRZC as set forth in the Bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation is:

- To provide for the Transmission of the teachings and practice of Soto Zen Buddhism.
- To be a sanctuary of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in such a way as to cultivate compassion, love, wisdom and understanding within the members.
- To preserve the Transmission lineage.
- To promote lay practice first, but also provide for priest training.
- To provide the facilities and support for the priests necessary for these ends, and to meet the religious needs of the members, their families and the community at large.
- To provide the traditional religious services, counseling and instruction of a Soto Zen Temple, and to provide additional facilities such as retreat centers, affiliate temples, etc. as deemed necessary by the membership to fulfill these purposes.



Shuso Hossen ceremony, testing the understanding of the senior student for the year.

Leadership

Dharma Rain's board of directors is composed of elected members and trustees appointed by the abbots. It is the purpose of the board to hold fiduciary responsibility for the temple's affairs and keep the temple responsive to our community. The board has stewardship for financial, legal, strategic planning, internal governance and communication, and employee management matters.

Four additional organizational councils (The Dharma, Mandala, Elders, and Ethics Councils) help administer, monitor and guide the temple. Numerous committees and working groups have more narrow or time-limited mandates. See http://dharma-rain.org/?p=about_organization for more information.

Ethics and Inclusivity Statement

We strive to manage institutional and interpersonal interactions with the utmost integrity and have structures in place to hold us accountable to this standard. We have an ethics policy, an ethics council, and procedures for resolving conflict, and continue the refinement of these documents and protocols. We strive to be authentic, true to ourselves, and to honor our own path; while also striving to be kind, compassionate, respectful, and considerate of others. See: http://dharma-rain.org/?p=about_ethics.

We acknowledge that suffering is a human condition which can be made worse because of biases or prejudices for or against any race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, sexual identity, political party, or other

belief or position. This Sangha welcomes and affirms all who come here to seek the Way, and who will work toward respectful acceptance of others across our many differences, harmonizing the one and many.

Membership

First formed in 1973 and under current leadership since 1984, our membership has steadily grown to 200 members. Members are those who regularly contribute financially to the organization. Over the last five years, we have seen an average yearly increase of 5.4% in membership, and an average retention rate of 82%. Our congregation has a broad age and socioeconomic distribution, with a high proportion of medical, social service, and technology jobs.

Strategic Plan

In the past decade 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 stretched in multiple directions. In 2010, we used a strategic planning process to clarify and direct our collective intention regarding our future growth and development. 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 full plan is found at: http://dharma-rain.org/?p=about_strategic-home.

Collaboration and Community Engagement

In addition to the project-specific collaborations mentioned above, Dharma Rain is active in regional and national Buddhist organizations, as well as local civic and interfaith groups. These include:

- Soto Zen Buddhist Association
- American Zen Teachers Association
- The Dharma Umbrella
- Northwest Dharma Association
- Home for Good Oregon
- Multnomah Biblical Seminary Interfaith Dialogue Project
- Community of Welcoming Congregations
- Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
- Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns

Our Programs

Introductory Workshops

We offer a variety of practical workshops free of charge for the general public several times each month.

Children’s Programs

Our nationally recognized Dharma School meets approximately every other Sunday, from 10:00am until 11:30am. Seven age groups (ages range from 3-18) explore the world and themselves through age-appropriate teaching and activities. Emphasis is placed on learning values and skills for relating in ways that are wise, harmonious and peaceful. We help the children learn to be comfortable in a religious setting and illustrate ideals such as compassion, mutual understanding, and peace of mind. We also offer Sunday morning childcare and “Mandala on the Mountain,” a weeklong summer camp for 50 youth aged 9-18.



Community meals are eaten mindfully.



The Preschool group demonstrates “Tree”.

Daily Monastic Schedule

This includes full and part-time residential training, private retreats, work practice opportunities, community and social events, and chances to serve in the many temple jobs in practical and/or ceremonial capacities. All these activities take place within the rubric of a full-time monastic container. Rather than being a cloistered training venue, as might be traditional in the Far East, Dharma Rain is accessible to the broader community, so that members and visitors can partake of the same observances, practices, and teachings as the monastics.

Retreats

Dharma Rain holds numerous retreats each year. Once or twice a month, one-day Saturday retreats are held. Each retreat usually has a particular emphasis, such as work practice, “dharma combat,” a term student program, or simply intensive formal meditation. A schedule of sitting meditation and a vegetarian lunch are always part of each day. Most terms, we offer a weekend Introductory Retreat that deals with the problems and concerns of newcomers and provides a gentle introduction to retreat practice. A few all-night vigils and miscellaneous weekend retreats are held during the year. Our most intensive retreats are called *sesshin* and involve significantly more meditation and formal practice over a period of three to seven days. These retreats may offer special teaching, ceremonies, practices, and opportunities to meet with the teachers. Going to a sesshin is an opportunity to delve deeply into meditation in a way that is difficult during everyday life. Dharma Rain leads five sesshin each year.

Classes

Beginning level classes are held at the Zen center almost every Wednesday night, except during the summer months. Series of classes explore related themes over four to eight weeks and focus on Buddhist teaching, primarily from the Soto Zen perspective. Wednesday night classes are meant to be helpful in understanding Buddhist concepts, are open to the public, and are free of charge. These classes are not formal; discussion and questions are encouraged.

On many Tuesday nights, a seminary program meets for members who have an established background in practice and an interest in study. Seminary classes are in-depth and focus on more advanced topics such as a specific sutra, historical period, master or teaching. They are more academic in nature and require registration, preparation, and involvement.

Outreach

Dharma Rain is involved in various service and outreach activities. High school, college, church, and seminary classes frequently visit to learn about Buddhism. Our Prison program supports a variety of meditation groups with weekly or bi-monthly meetings and occasional retreats at five correctional institutions across the state. The prison program also manages pastoral visits and letter writing, as well as assistance, mentoring, and a support group for offenders after they are released from prison.

Zen is a deeply internal process; the motivation for transforming our lives comes from deep within, so participants step forward of their own accord to invite practice into their life. Because of this, there is a traditional injunction against proselytizing in Buddhism. The practice is offered, but not pushed on people.

Groups

Many different groups have formed at Dharma Rain to meet specific needs or populations, including the Sangha Support Net, the Men’s Group, 7-Up Group, and Gay Tea. Numerous affiliated, or independent but associated, groups serve local communities across Oregon, including Salem, Beaverton, Hood River, Sandy, Blachly and Pendleton.

Other Events

Finally, we observe traditional Buddhist holidays with ceremonies that are open to the public. Private ceremonies and services, such as weddings, funerals, memorials, and naming and blessing ceremonies can also be arranged.