

**Clouds in Water Zen Center
April Retreat Board Meeting**

April 28, 2013

Attending: Karin Aguilar-San Juan, Carla Breunig, Kurt Errickson, Sosan Theresa Flynn, Carol Iwata, Angus MacDonald, Nathan Thompson, Rachel Vilsack, Elizabeth Wroblewski

Absent: Byakuren Judith Ragir

Guest facilitator: Jennifer Billig

Nathan called the meeting to order at 1:06 PM.

AGENDA

I. Planning committee questions:

- What kind of space supports our beliefs?
- How does our current space fit our vision?
- Is it feasible to modify our current space? (And/or how long do we stay?)
- What's happening in Lowertown?
- How does this information impact the vision work and/or staying here?
- How does this impact what we do about our lease?

II. Discussion of homework

Answers to question 1: What kind of space advances the core practice of zazen and traditional soto zen forms?

- Quiet, green, residential space, light, air, Buddha hall/zendo (could be separate, but not necessary)
- Space that evokes different layers in people (example: art picture), mixture of brightness/solid darkness, warm, space that has good flow (not encumbered by obstructions), movement, hardwood floors, high ceiling (feeling of expansiveness)
- Capacity for quiet, need capacity for being in a separate space where there aren't activities, not house-like as there are separations
- Quiet, muted colors, clean lines, absence of clutter, good air circulation, not too warm/hot, two dokusan rooms, multiple-use rooms, separate space for doan practice

(i.e. without interrupting other activities), private showers/bathrooms within the center, cubbies/lockers for personal belongings during sesshins

- Room to accommodate (20-30 practitioners) for sesshin - could be at another Zen Center, room to accommodate 125 people - could be the same space or another, cushions on a wood floor, dokusan room, should be a way to make the room somewhat quiet
- Way to interact with other sanghas (could be related to size of space), many rooms that can be used in many ways
- Kitchen with oven
- Calm and noise, windows
- Quiet (such that external changes don't diminish experience), adequate bathroom/kitchen facilities, as large - or larger - zendo/hall space, natural elements/natural light
- Large enough zendo (1,584 square feet: size of current zendo), no sharing zendo space with another group/organization, stillness, contemplation, beauty (whatever form that takes), rituals and forms (bells, statues, anything that makes it Buddhist would be present)

Answers to question 2: What kinds of space helps us to practice one or more aspects of the three bases of training: the precepts, meditative awareness and wisdom?

- A space for ritual of reciting precepts, a quiet space for zazen and/or walking path for meditation, no discrimination between high and low, clean Zen atmosphere, showing care
- Opportunity to collaborate with other organizations to emphasize relational practice
- Green, environmentally-friendly space, low impact, how can we best collaborate with the environment
- A space large enough for teachers and students can gather
- Zazen at heart, interaction with children, family, elders, city, other sanghas, the world, not envisioning seclusion, but how the cushion connects to the outside world; our geographic location demonstrates an awareness of suffering
- Geography, urban environment, disadvantaged, affordable, safe, frugal, sound, humble, not clouded by ego
- Outdoor space, connection to the earth, design not as important as efficiency
- Include a study room/room for classes (jukai), youth room, storage

Answers to question 3: What kind of space would communicate the tone and feeling of kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity?

- Security (expressed in a way that don't treat outsiders as a threat)
- A place where diverse people gather - both inside and outside - to practice
- Large, bright community room with couches, chairs, tables for eating, bulletin boards with information about people and events
- Green space, breaking down boundaries between inside and outside, versatility
- Plants, vivid, vibrant, green space, oriented towards the neighborhood not away from it (which is geared toward exclusion)
- Open space, feeling lightnesses (examples of different space designs: Common Ground/Dharma Field)
- Family and friends feel welcome, intro classes for visitors, greeter's table, tea and conversation
- Feeling of openness, being a neighborhood, being part of a neighborhood
- Big, bustling, crazy children's practice, playground

Answers to question 4: What kind of space who provide for spiritual growth for all stages of life?

- Breakout rooms for activities, space within a block of parking
- Bathrooms, handicap accessible, universal design
- Limited levels/stairs or elevator
- Accessible by bikes, cars, public transportation and pedestrians
- Allows for more computer and internet access, digital classrooms, online classes
- Classrooms to be divided by age and/or development, baby changing area, nursing area, accessible fridge
- Community hall, classroom spaces for children, zendo used for life-changing events
- Safety (example of St. Jane House in North Minneapolis)
- Create feeling of emotional stability

Answers to question 5: What kinds of space would be welcoming to people of diverse races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, genders, religious backgrounds, abilities, incomes, family status and level of practice?

- Accessible with free/inexpensive parking
- Pictures and information in space that shows our welcoming nature (example, a giant bulletin board)
- Urban area, colors and decor that might feel attractive to people of different backgrounds, part of a vibrant, wired network, part of a network of spaces that are connected
- Partnering with other organizations

- Flexible attitude with how the space is arranged internally
- Accessible entryways and bathrooms
- Media and web communications should reflect diversity and ways to access classes or retreats in a no or low-cost way
- Library

Answers to question 6: What kind of space would allow us to strengthen our community by supporting members' special needs, holding intra-community events, supporting online access, and providing other forms of service to sangha members?

- Informal gathering space that encourages people to stick around both inside and outside
- Support for electronics (audio, visual, wifi, disseminating talks to web and social media)
- Good offices (with windows), good access to Internet (throughout all space)
- Rooms that could be rented or used by other groups
- Better kitchen
- Washer and dryer

Answers to questions 7 and 8: What kind of space would allow us to extend ourselves to the wider community? What kind of space would facilitate collaboration with other zen sanghas in the regions?

- Appearance of spirituality, circles, attention to zendo entryway, versatility (multi-use and a space we can grow into or that people can contribute to the creation of, continuous improvements without disturbing functions), modularity
- Share with another zen center (especially with MZMC) or shared spaces (like a sewing room)
- A space that is conducive to drop-in traffic, we're situated in a place where people are
- Outreach to other Buddhist (example, Hmong) community to partner
- Green, natural neighborhood
- Focus on facilitating practice locally and in the region, regional hub

III. Jennifer identified key themes:

- Safe and welcoming space
- Multi-purpose space
- Collaboration with other sanghas or other organizations
- Open to the community in service to and connection with

IV. Update on Lowertown

Carla shared a timeline on what the Space Committee has done from 2010 to present. (See Attachment A.)

Carla provided an overall scan of the internal and external environment of our current space. (See Attachment B.)

V. Additions to Space

Jennifer asked for any additional/changes we want to make to the list of space characteristics we developed.

Nathan mentioned that if we move we should have an understanding (i.e. do some research) on the long-range plans of that neighborhood.

Motion: Given our vision, it is in the best interest of our sangha to move. Financial feasibility and sangha energy will shape this direction.

Motion passed.

VI. Action Items

Lease/communication/short-term parking

1. Hold sangha meeting regarding vision and to communicate our intentions around space on June 2 or June 9. (Sosan, Nathan, Carol)
2. Communications (handout/email) on parking options by May 10. (Carla, Sosan)

Specs for new space

1. Develop internal/external space specs for May Board meeting. (Rachel)
2. Establish a more robust space committee by June 1. (Carla)

Finances (capacity to fundraise)

1. Review financial feasibility model at May Board meeting (Carla, Kyoku)

Inter-sangha discussions

1. Meet with MZMC on space collaboration in May. (Nathan, Sosan, Byakuren)

Sangha/board decision

1. Discussion about outreach to interfaith organization or non-faith organization that we might collaborate on space at June Board Meeting. (Angus, Kurt)

Nathan called the meeting closed at 4:43 PM.

Attachment A.

Timeline: Where we've been, and what's ahead

2010

- Three public meetings organized by Capital River Council with goal to create Lowertown MasterPlan. Amy Kirkpatrick went to one meeting in Spring 2011. Clouds entered their process late in the game.
- Steve Goldsmith writes report to Board regarding Space Committee actions and ideas. Space Committee conducted a survey of members in 2010.

2011

- Board retreat regarding administrative items: finance and infrastructure issues (cash flow, revenue growth, attracting people and growing our programs, increased use of technology)
- Byakuren, Will Hegeman, Nicole Alleva-Dickey and Carla meet with Jean Hammink (former board chair, Common Ground) and Mark Nunberg, guiding teacher at Common Ground.
- Clouds Annual Meeting: Brought in speakers to present regarding Central Corridor LRT, Union Depot and Saints ballpark.

2012

- Sosan, Nathan, Alan Williams and Grant Fosteson meet with ArtSpace representatives to discuss questions regarding lease, terms, etc.
- Board retreat at Carol's home. We discussed pressing issues related to volunteers, teacher ryo, space, individual giving and collaboration. Using our current terminology of Vision work, these are "structure" issues rather than beliefs/values or functions.
- Board meeting topic was about 5 Space Models. Attending: Board members, Byakuren, Sosan, Ken Ford, Rachel Sear.
- St. Paul City Council approved Lowertown MasterPlan and Great River Passage Plan.
- Carla visits Bruce Vento site with Lower Phalen group.
- July 15, 2012: Clouds offers a Council on Vision and Space. Broke into triads for discussion.
- July - September 2012: Board offered in-home facilitated discussion groups around Vision questions. Meetings held at board members' homes.
- Sosan, Angus, Carol and Carla meet with Martha Breunig (Carla's sister-in-law) to discuss Capital Campaigns.
- Amy Horne, Sosan and Carla work together to develop parking questionnaire for Northern Warehouse tenants/businesses and to compile data.
- Legislature funds the Saints ballpark: \$23 million.

- Annual meeting of Clouds - Lowertown changes and ballpark are discussed.
- Sosan and Carla meet with Dave Thune and Rafael Ortega regarding parking.
- Union Depot opens to the public.
- Sosan selected to be on Lowertown Ballpark Design & Construction Committee.
- Carol and Nathan meet with consultant regarding Beliefs, Function, Structures. Vision committee creates Vision Mobilization Charter – presented at Board meeting.
- MTC buses begin operating to/from the Union Depot.

2013

- Sosan attends Lowertown Ballpark Design & Construction Committee meetings. Carla attends parking meetings convened by the Capital River District Council.
- Board retreat regarding Beliefs, Function, Structures.
- Sosan and Carla meet with Josh Lieberman of ABM Company/Union Depot to discuss parking in Lot C and costs associated with validation tickets.
- Amtrak trains will begin running from the Union Depot (pending federal transportation approval).
- Light Rail trains begin running (practice only - no passengers).

2014

- Summer - Fall 2014 (estimated): LRT trains begin running. For sure, will be running by holiday season.
- August 31, 2014: Clouds in Water current lease expires

2015

- May: Projected Opening Day, Saints ballpark.

Attachment B.

Clouds in Water Board Mini-retreat: April 28, 2013

The Environment: Internal and External

Internal Environment – meaning inside Clouds itself and inside the Northern Warehouse Building

*Please note: these are in no particular order. Some of this information was taken from the 2010 survey of members, and also from Board work in 2012 on 5 Space models.

1. Sound/Noise: the people above us, Black Dog music are a distraction for sesshins primarily. Investigation into sound abatement of the wall that we share with Black Dog showed that cost could range from \$5,000 - \$20,000 and there is no guarantee that it would completely solve the problem. Sosan sent us an email about this.
2. Youth Space: East Hall, Room 160 – physical separation
3. Overnight Space during sesshins - inadequate
4. Kitchen facilities – health department does not allow us to have a “real” oven/stove; inadequate for sesshins and certain parties
5. Bathroom facilities – sometimes dirty, share with the general public, occasionally people who are drunk
6. More outside/nature/green/park space – small, inadequate
7. Better entry/mingling area/coat area – crowded, poor traffic flow
8. More office space for staff/clergy – too little space, would like more windows/fresh air
9. Better changing space for clergy – dual or triple purpose rooms, crowded, inadequate
10. More storage space – cramped for space; poor storage space for Youth Practice

External Environment

1. Density: More restaurants are locating in downtown/Lowertown and current ones are expanding (sidewalk café on 6th St.). Real Estate: construction of apartments, lofts, condos. More people into and out of the Union Depot/LRT.
2. Traffic: Commuters come between 6 – 8 AM and leave 5 pm. Saints games: weekday evenings (game time 7 – 9ish with fans arriving earlier for food/tailgating etc), also Saturday evenings, and Sunday afternoons. Art Crawl is twice per year. Farmers Market: Saturday and Sunday mornings, 6 AM until 12 noon. Business and non-profit customers/traffic can be all day, depending on the type of business.
3. Sound/Noise
 - People noise outside our windows on Broadway
 - Vehicles on Broadway

- Ding-ding from bells announcing trains, and sound of trains going in to and out of the OMF (first train 4 AM, last train 2 AM)
 - Unsure if we will hear sound from ballpark fans in stadium
 - Temporary sounds: during demolition of old highway 52 bridge (now) and construction of Prince, Lafayette and Willius streets (2013)
4. New Roads and widened roads – Prince, Willius, Lafayette (Sosan to discuss this)
- Loss of 200 parking spaces in the combined TransPark and Dart lots.
5. Parking – parking could be considered a negative but light rail a positive
- Less Supply: fewer parking spaces (Market House, Rayette building, etc).
 - More demand for on-street, and off street parking (ramps, surface lots)
 - Emphasis on leaving your car at home, riding public transit, biking or walking.
 - Higher prices for parking (\$3 or \$5 at Lot C, Union Depot lot)
 - Less convenient parking – people may have to walk further to get to Clouds
 - Parking for disabled people: it is an improvement that meters are available for up to 4 hours for disabled people. There are no meters or other nearby designated parking reserved specifically for people who are disabled.
6. Many groups – some with competing needs
- Commuters/workers: walk, bus, LRT, car
 - Residents (owners and renters): both with and without secured parking
 - Businesses, non-profits, artist businesses (small, medium, large/corporate): varying needs re: parking
 - Ballpark sports fans
 - Farmers Market patrons
 - Special events people: Art Crawl, Winter Carnival, future concerts at ballpark

The Times They are a Changin'

Saints Ballpark (this information taken from EAW, Environmental Assessment Worksheet)

- 160 events per year, with from 100 – 12,000 in attendance
- Highest attendance: 15,000 for a concert, with paying attendees, ballpark workers, vendors, security, performers, and performance crew
- Saints: 55 games per season, with maximum of 7000 fans per game
- A maximum attendance Saints game is 9,000 people: paying attendees, ballpark workers, vendors, security, players and coaches

- Event times: weekday afternoons, weekday evenings, and weekends. Expect to not overlap with Farmers Market, especially on Saturdays. But will overlap with Clouds events.

Farmers Market

They are concerned about parking. Future of the Farmers Market in this location – to be determined. According to Jack, the general manager of the Farmers Market, they will give it a try in 2013 and see how it goes. The Farmers Market leases their land from the City.