



Shambhala Meditation Center of Denver

Vision to Action (V2A) Report

Community Planning Process • November 2011 through January 2012





Coming Together

Community Gathering 1: November 5, 2011

Community Building

At the first meeting participants engaged in several exercises to build community and practice listening to one another. They shared their aspirations for the V2A process and had conversations in pairs about our prior experiences with being in a healthy community. The debrief was heartfelt and poignant and insights were shared about what it takes to become a culture of kindness.

Visioning

Excerpts were read from the Sakyong's "Letter of the Morning Sun," which provided the context for the visioning exercise. Shastri Jeffrey Stevens encouraged everyone to view this work as a practice, and to be genuine and brave through the process. Skjei led the group through a visualization exercise of what the center would look like in 2015 if it were flourishing and manifesting enlightened society. Each person wrote down their vision and shared it in small groups. Themes emerged as elements of these visions were shared. Participants then looked back from the vantage point of 2015 to identify the strategic priorities that had enabled SMCD to get to that fruition. Again, larger topics and themes were identified from this exercise.



Kiki Fulker cheerfully records ideas from the Space Group.

Team Formation

After a lunch break, participants formed small groups around the key themes identified during the visioning work, shown in the graphic below. These groups met to discuss the current state of their topic, their desired future state and the questions that would need to be answered in order to move forward. After reporting out to the larger group, the teams met again (some people shifted to other groups or joined multiple groups) to select a leader for the next six weeks, and to plan a first meeting.

The Charge

Teams were asked to meet three times before the December meeting and to post their working documents to a website dedicated to the V2A process.



Working & Learning Together

Community Gathering 2: December 17, 2011

Reviewing Team Progress

A handful of folks who had not attended the first session were warmly welcomed to this meeting. Participants talked about their experience of the V2A process so far and what they were learning. It became clear that those who had participated in teams were learning a lot about how the Center functions, what might be possible now, as well as learning about how to work in teams and resolve conflicts. Each team gave a 10-15 minute presentation to the community that covered: 1) Their topic and the questions they were exploring, 2) What they had discovered so far, 3) How might their work benefit the center, 4) What requests they had for the larger group.



Moving Toward the Three Pillars Governance Model

Shambhala recommends that Centers align with a governance model based on Three Pillars – Governance, Practice and Education, and Protection (Kasung). Valéria Pasta, Jackie Roberts and Todd Pickton gave a presentation on the Three Pillars Model and a proposal for how the Denver Center can begin to implement it. With Fred Jaben transitioning out of his Center Director role on Shambhala Day 2012 (Feb 22nd), they suggested that the Center select a team of 3 people who could act as the transitional Center Director until the next director can be selected. This proposal was discussed at length, yielding improvements to the proposed selection process.

Learning About The Six Ways of Ruling

Janet Solyntjes presented an overview of the Six Ways of Ruling based on Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche’s book *Ruling Your World* – Benevolent, True, Genuine, Fearless, Artful, and Rejoicing. In six small groups, participants contemplated the ways of ruling. Each group then presented a short creative offering to demonstrate their understanding of that way of ruling.

Next Steps

Teams were asked to meet 3 times before the January meeting to focus on their recommendations for action and their proposed budgets. Everyone was encouraged to join a group, even those who missed the last two community meetings.



Chart paper filled with Working Group recommendations and “dot votes” of support cover the Shrine Room walls.



Participants create a visual symbol of the connections between Governance, Practice and Education, and Protection in the mandala.

Refining the Vision

Community Gathering 3: January 28, 2012

At the third Vision to Action community meeting, the 3-person acting director team of Dixie Good, Carolyn Pickton and Jackie Roberts was introduced. Susan Dean, who facilitated the selection process, and numerous individuals who offered to serve were thanked warmly. The acting director team (Governance Pillar), together with Shastri Jeffrey Stevens (Practice and Education Pillar) and Rusung Kelly Lehmann (Protection Pillar), form the initial Three Pillars Governing Council, which will provide interim governance until the next director is selected.

Cultivating Our Human and Financial Resources

Richard Eidlin and the Fearless Fundraising and Finance Group (FFFG) presented a provocative and uplifting presentation on fundraising, and facilitated an interactive process in which pairs discussed 1) How do you feel when you are asked for money? 2) What have you enjoyed donating to and why? 3) What would you donate to in the future? 4) Based on what we have just heard, what are the innovative ways we could engage in fundraising as a community? The brainstorming yielded many exciting ideas.

Working Group Recommendations

Each working group presented their final proposals and recommendations to the Governing Council, with community input on priorities. These recommendations are summarized below.

Recommendations for Action

Working Group	Recommendations*
Arts	Create a 3-person Shambhala Arts Steering Committee to examine the current state of the Shambhala Arts program, what has succeeded, what has not, and determine the interests of the SMCD community.
Children & Families	Streamline parent communications. Prepare Children's Room as flex space for children's/arts programming. Begin programming in Sept. with activities for ages 5 – 12 and Teen Program.
Communications	Appoint coordinators for Print, PR, Digital and Welcome Committee teams. Streamline communications, clarify purpose of each venue. Update website and migrate to new Shambhala Wordpress model.
Community Care	Create a system to match persons in the community who seek care or assistance with those who can provide it. Produce a Resource Guide of nonprofit social service agencies. Organize health-promoting activities. Hold WOA (Work on Aging) gatherings for those age 50+ to discuss conscious aging. Develop Sangha (financial) Assistance Fund.
Culture & Community Development	Support member engagement in operation of the center. Develop/refine written procedures for volunteer positions. Develop process for following up with Open House visitors. Support community activities following regular meditation sessions. Encourage membership among program participants.
Director Search	Install 3-person Acting Director Team for a term of 6 to 12 months, effective February 22, 2012. Develop job description and search process for the next Center Director. Establish an Operations Council with representatives from each working group and other key program areas to handle week-to-week management of center operations.
Fearless Financing & Fundraising	Provide information about the current state of the Center's financial status. Offer projections of financial resources needed for various growth/expansion scenarios. Develop fundraising suggestions.
Governance	Establish the Three Pillars governance. Clarify and implement decision making policy. Empower the roles and committees that are working well. Define needed new roles and fill vacancies (Director of Practice and Education, committees, advisors, etc). Prepare the ground for the next Center director.
Space	Stay in our current location, explore ways to utilize what we have differently, and consider fundraising for a future bigger space.

* Recommendations for the Finance group were drawn from its vision statement. Recommendations from the Community Outreach group were not available. The complete reports are available on the website: <https://sites.google.com/site/visiontoactioncentral/home>



Fulfilling Our Aspirations

Inspired by the recommendations of the working groups, the Acting Director Team proposes the following work plan for moving forward to enact the vision created in the V2A process.

2012 -2013 Proposed Work Plan [drafted April 2012]

Start	Action	Recommended by
February 2012	Install Acting Director Team.	Director Search Group
March 2012	Establish Three Pillars Governance Council. Begin Work On Aging gatherings.	Three Pillars Group Community Care Group
April 2012	Set up transitional operations teams. Establish decision-making, grievance and suggestion processes. Authorize creation of small group to renegotiate lease extension.	Acting Director Team Three Pillars Group Space Group
May 2012	Renovate flex space and evaluate for multiple uses. Migrate to new website; revise web scheme. Accept candidate nominations for appointed positions.*	Space Group, Children & Families Group Communications Group Three Pillars Group
June 2012	Develop Operations Manual to guide volunteer activities. Define and initiate search process for next Center Director. Establish Communications plan.	Culture & Community Development Group Director Search Group, Three Pillars Group Communications Group
July 2012	Develop plan for reconfiguring existing space.	Space Group
August 2012	Present long-term fundraising plans. Develop vision and policies for Sangha Assistance Fund.	Fearless Finance Group Community Cares Group
September 2012	Initiate Arts program plan. Initiate Children's programming. Install full Governance Council, including appointed positions, at Harvest of Peace.	Arts Group Children & Families Three Pillars Group
October 2012	Review membership status and support.	Culture & Community Development Group
November 2012	Implement ROAR system to meet community needs for assistance.	Community Cares
December 2012	Review decision-making processes and other governance policies.	Acting Director Team
January 2013	Community gathering to review V2A process and outcomes.	Acting Director Team
February 2013	Install next Center Director at Shambhala Day.	Director Search Group

*Director of Practice and Education, Chagdzo (Bursar), Director of Culture and Decorum, Director of Societal Health and Well Being