

Shambhala Meditation Center
Lexington, Kentucky

Local Vision Document

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Shambhala Meditation Center of Lexington (SMCL) Vision Document October 2014

Introduction:

This document is in recognition that SMCL is entering a phase of growth and transition through the desire to align with the Sakyong's 2020 Vision for Shambhala International and our recent new property acquisition. In order to address these circumstances and provide guidance in the coming years, the Sangha Council has initiated the development of a "Lexington Local Vision". The starting point for this "Lexington Local Vision" is a summary of the Sakyong's 2020 Vision which is attached as reference. An open invitation to all Sangha members for input regarding this topic resulted in a group visioning session held on September 14th, 2014, with 28 Sangha members attending.

The collective wisdom of the Sangha from this gathering is summarized here below as Key Aspects, Findings and Recommendations. They represent the Sangha's view of how the Lexington Center can align with the Sakyong's 2020 Vision of Shambhala.

The two major initiatives of the Sakyong's 2020 Vision addressed are:

I. Deepening our Culture: Key Aspects

- Develop a Culture of Kindness
- Openness and Inclusion
- Become "more like life, less like school"
- Awaken as a community
- Explore our societal vision and share in this with others

II. Develop Resources both Human and Financial: Key Aspects

- Magnitize people, their energy and expertise – identify , acknowledge and encourage the varied talents of our Sangha members.
- Foster an environment where volunteerism is valued and promoted at any level. No gesture or effort is too small. All are recognized and appreciated.
- Attract new membership representative of the demographics of our Centers servicing area.
- Develop local leadership

Developing a Culture of Kindness is inherent in all the key aspects and is therefore not addressed separately.

Summary of General Themes Identified on 9/14/14

- **Strengthen the sense of personal belonging**
 - Improve communications of Center structure, leadership, operations, programs, and protocol to sangha
 - Improve dialogue and interaction between members (in person, electronically)
 - Increase opportunities for sangha to 'show up' (and have fun)
 - Value and celebrate the generosity of sangha (money, time, skills)
- **Review and realign our Programming to Local Vision**
 - Formal: ST, IEL, BG; Heart of Recovery; sadhanas, feasts; Dharma Arts, ?Kasung?
 - Informal: Salon, Arts and Crafts, Food & Conversation
 - Magnetize structures and resources to support new activities (human and fiscal)
 - Celebrate and evaluate
- **Clarify our Brand**
 - Vision, mission, and values; internally and externally
 - Look, feel, style, tone
 - "wearables" – clothing, bumper sticker
- **Engage Youth and Families**
 - Ages birth through college age; family inclusiveness for minors
 - Welcome whole families, not just the practitioner
 - Increase opportunities for older youth and young adults to participate in the Center, become the next generation of members and leaders
- **Interface with Greater Lexington Community to foster a Culture of Kindness**
 - Establish a network of natural partners with liaisons from Center
 - Improve our internal culture of welcoming and hospitality
 - Membership/Communications Coordinator as paid position, (involved in all open door activities).
 - Expand relations with diverse communities
 - Go out to them; invite them back to us
 - Consider an overarching initiative to 'establish' us: Compassionate City?

Key:

- **Key Aspect**
 - Finding
 - Recommendation

Lexington Local Vision:

- **Openness and Inclusion: within the Sangha and with the greater Lexington Community.**
 - Communication within the Sangha is poor. Center business and process is poorly understood by Sangha members.
 - Publish Sangha Meeting minutes to the Sangha through appropriate channels at regular intervals. Publicize and invite attendance to Sangha Meetings.
 - Create opportunities for internal networking including One-on-one conversations.
 - Membership/Communications Coordinator as paid position, (involved in all open door activities).
 - The Center does not currently incorporate family into it's programming
 - Provide for childcare in program planning and preparations.
 - Integrate family and parenting topics into programming
 - Invite Sangha member's non-practicing family to events (spouses, children)
 - The Center does not have enough Youth/Young people coming into and staying with the Sangha
 - Develop programming of interest to Millenials, which may involve going out to where THEY are
 - Consider student rates/scholarships to participate in programs, including to Land Centers
 - The Center has a unique perspective that is not well-known in Lexington/Central Kentucky.
 - Use the new space for community engagement:
 - Arts activities such as Gallery Hop, Music, Contemplative arts, Yoga, Play (?re-initiate Dharma Art programming?)
 - Learn to Meditate Programs (that could also be offered off-campus)
 - Leadership Training (Shambhala "6 Ways of Ruling" Program)
 - Conversations about Enlightened Society and Cities of Compassion with youth, police, prisons, Urban-County Gov't, UK, and other 'natural partners'. (Specific mentions of Steve Kay, Linda Harvey, Everett McCorvey, Mark Allen, Ruth Baer, organizations along National Ave and the Plantory).

- Offering of the space for community events with natural partners (as a co-sponsor), name the building something memorable, eg., “Mill and Max”.
- Sometimes we get caught up in our internal Shambhala terminology/jargon, which can be confusing or create barriers to inclusivity.
 - Create/implement a ‘civic vocabulary’ that can be more inviting to community conversations and new participants/members.
- **Become “more like life, less like school”**
 - Center programming tends to focus on Shambhala Training and necessary ‘classes’ to stay on the ST path, or other formal practices.
 - Identify other activities to build community within the Sangha and encourage participation
 - Workshops like ‘difficult conversations’, ‘parenting as path’, Dharma Arts
 - More food and conversation
 - Fun activities: running groups, monthly arts and crafts, soup suppers, cultural appreciation events, social activity teams (eg., Habitat for Humanity, Faith Feeds)
 - Offer ways for ST Students to have the *experience* of Basic Goodness, etc., and not just complete the *training*.
 - Sangha and program participants do not reflect the human diversity in Lexington
 - Make the Center campus more physically accessible (Americans with Disabilities Act) via ramps, etc., as part of new building design phase.
 - Offer meditation and contemplative practices to diverse, existing communities in Lexington
 - Identify ‘natural partners’ also serving diverse communities who may be open to/interested in our programming.
 - Organize a catalog of WHAT we can offer and WHO within the Sangha could offer such programming.
 - Develop a model for such programming (fiscal - participant fees, teacher remuneration; structural - maha coordinator for external programming)
 - Identify Sangha members to serve as liaisons between the Center and these natural partners; members may be already hooked in with these natural partners, or have an interest in that partner’s mission/vision.
 - Offer our space to partnering groups with similar interests
 - Sponsor a community event (like a 5K or little league team) applying Shambhala vision/principles/mindfulness
 - Enhance Center “Branding” for better community recognition
 - Public grand opening celebration for new building

- **Awaken as a community**

- The Center must offer opportunities for members to enrich our interactions with one another
 - “Watch out for each other”
 - Celebrate new members, share good news, support those in need, monthly sukhavati/maitri bhavana (?Medicine Buddha?)
 - More opportunities for shared communications, not just one-way: blog, stories, online forums, etc.
 - Develop a “Dharma Buddy” system.
 - Consider new workshops/Salons on interpersonal relations, such as skillful means, skillful communications, having difficult conversations, diversity/inequality/cultural awareness
 - Employ resources such as; Interfaith Alliance of the Bluegrass; Shambhala International.
 - Increase fun/artsy activities offered (eg. cooking, crafts, singing/music, hiking/adventuring, ikebana)
 - Identify a coordinator for planning these fun activities
 - Advertise and budget (some \$\$ might be needed for materials)

- **Explore our societal vision and share this with others**

- The Center needs expanded programming to offer to the community
 - Identify ideas that would be of interest to others and/or expand our societal vision and create programming to offer.
 - Shambhala / Buddhism
 - Shambhala Household
 - Feminine Principle
 - Compassionate Economic Paradigm
 - Compassionate Communication
 - “Learn to Meditate”
 - Prioritize a sense of welcoming and hospitality within the Center and at external events
 - Consider identifying “Hospitality Liasons” who can Meet, Greet and Follow-up with visitors, etc. ie: Shambhala Guides.
 - Membership/Communications Coordinator as paid position, (involved in all open door activities).
- The Center has a unique perspective that is not well-known in Lexington/Central Kentucky; “Not what you do but how you do it.”
 - Use the concept of “portable shrine” to describe outreach to larger community
 - Increase our visibility at local events
 - Mindful eating at food-related events (Crave, bourbon tastings)

- Unit in parades (?mindful walking?)
 - Display/booth/activity at art, civic events (ex:*Pillow Fight/Hugs Table at Thursday Night Live)
 - Sponsor activities
 - Art projects, murals
 - Compassionate City designation
 - Liaise with community groups to co-sponsor/support (eg., Interfaith Alliance)
 - “walkarounds” in the community
 - Enhance our ‘branding’
 - shirts, bumper stickers, posters;
 - catchy name for new building (“Mill and Max”)
 - graphic design
 - Deepen/expand our Social Media presence: website, facebook, Twitter, etc. as another way to embed in community
 - Create/implement a ‘civic vocabulary’ that can be more inviting to community conversations and new participants/members.
- **Magnetize people, their energy and expertise – identify , acknowledge and encourage the varied talents of our Sangha members.**
 - Many of our members have disengaged, feeling there is little at the center on an ongoing basis for them and only attend major programs.
 - Initiate changes to current ongoing programs, examples; Café and new programs like Pot Lucks, Salons offering talks on “Obstacles to Practice”, Lungta Workshops, Movie Nights, Orioki Teaching/Instruction, Stress reduction etc. that are engaging for a wide spectrum of members both longtime and new.
 - Initiate events at the Center which incorporate FUN and PLAY for adults and children.
 - There is no clear process for Sangha members to suggest, initiate and enact improvements for positive change at the center. This is critical as we proceed with growth and transition going forward.
 - Create a change process which fosters idea generation and supports all ideas. Key characteristics of the process: open, beginners mind, takes the lid off.
 - **Foster an environment where volunteerism is valued and promoted at any level. No gesture or effort is too small. All are recognized and appreciated.**
 - Volunteerism of all sorts within the Center is low. It is becoming difficult to staff and organize events and programs. We are tapping a small group of people who are burning out.

- Put more emphasis on volunteerism and recognition/reward (example; Tee shirts/pins for volunteers).
 - Engage membership through direct and personal communication of need.
 - Make volunteerism coordination a part of the council structure by assigning a person or team to ensure we get communication coverage and coordination of needs and timely recognition for volunteerism.
 - Enhance internal communications about what volunteers DO within our governance and programmatic structure and who they ARE
 - Bios on Council, MIs, SGs on website, on physical board in Center
 - Report/celebrate what we have accomplished
 - Annual membership parties/celebrations (as in Dec 2013?)
 - Empower members to take on volunteer roles
 - Encourage as a part of being in the Sangha
 - Provide training/guidance in what/how to do things.
 - Be mindful of our human resources when planning programming, internally and externally – do not spread ourselves too thin.
- **Attract new membership representative of the demographics of our Center's servicing area.**
 - The Center does not have enough Youth/Young people coming into and staying with the Sangha
 - Attract new, younger members by cultivating relationships with the Universities (UK, Centre, Transy, ECU)
 - Develop contact lists: get in contact with programs and organizations in the universities, such as depts. of Psychology, Religion, cultural studies; student government/activities board;
 - Explore needs on campus with relevant representatives/liaisons
 - Publicize Open Door programs
 - Invite young people to help us with development and advertising
 - Revamp brochures
 - Create & post fliers
 - Two-Way street: Them to us; Us to them
 - The Center has a unique perspective and programmatic tools that are not well-known in Lexington/Central Kentucky.
 - Identify natural connections between our programmatic tools and potential audiences. Offer offsite community oriented programs; meditation, stress reduction, leadership, etc. (go where they are)
 - Corporate/ for profit – Toyota, equine industry, Amazon, medical/hospital/ (HealthwoRx),
 - Non-profit – Plantory, interfaith organizations, minority groups (via Everett McCorvey?), DCBS, Refugee ministries, Hospice
 - K-12 schools (students and faculty/staff)

- **Develop local leadership**

- The Center does not have a strong path or support for developing internal leaders
 - Strengthen Sangha understanding of the leadership structure and governance processes of the Center (and Shambhala International)
 - Foster communication and limit barriers inherent in hierarchical structure
 - Remove barriers to leadership
 - Develop a mentoring system (?within Council and committee structures?)
 - Strengthen the path for fostering idea generation in Sangha and supporting all ideas
 - Identify and nurture potential leaders
 - Increase internal training opportunities: Umdze, decorum, ikebana, Coordinating.
 - Recruit and nurture more Shambhala Guides (?and MI?)
 - Develop ways for Sangha who attend trainings to share their knowledge with Sangha
- The Center has a unique perspective and leadership programming that is not well-known in Lexington/Central Kentucky.
 - Offer leadership training to INSIDE/OUTSIDE groups (corporations, etc.)
 - Use 6 Ways of Ruling as Platform
 - Identify and network with local community leaders to promote such training
- Center often operates in isolation relative to other Centers
 - Survey successful initiatives at other Centers
 - Evaluate if appropriate for Lexington

Recommendations from the Local Visioning Subgroup to the Council:

- Review and adopt the Vision Document
- Publish the Vision Document to Sangha before Winter Solstice
- Develop priority list of initiatives to implement recommendations
- Report priority back to the Sangha by Shambhala Day