

Report of the Space Visioning Group to the Council
March 23, 2008

The first meeting of the Space Visioning Group was held on March 12 with Janet Bronstein, Joan Denman, Phyllis Mark and Marion Buckley participating. The agenda for this first meeting was to think about what questions or choices need to be addressed as the Center begins and proceeds along the path toward a new space. A number of questions were generated and then prioritized – what do we need to ask/answer first, etc. Our goal is to have a clearer idea of what to do by the time the lease on the current property is up in October 2008. As Janet put it, we want to know the dream and what it will take to get us there by October.

We hold the principles of openness and inclusivity. We will involve and have input from the entire sangha during this process. This can be done through meetings, posters or bulletin boards in the Center, and through the website. Pat Dunlap said she can add a left navigation topic to the website through which people can access documents, reports, etc., as we go along.

It was acknowledged that the process will be long and require patience and continued momentum. We recalled the Shambhala Day 2008 I Ching casting.

The questions/options we thought of, in order of priority, were:

1. How do we know when to leave the current space?
 - a. What are our limitations in the building?
 - b. Are our current programming decisions based on space or capacity?
 - c. Is space limiting our growth?
2. What do we want in a space?
 - a. What do we have that we like?
 - b. What do we have that we don't want?
 - c. What do we want that we don't have?
3. What are the various options and projected cost?
 - a. Lease or buy? Buy or build? Does anybody (member?) own or want to own something that we could rent?
 - b. What expertise do we need and who do we know – whom do we call to find out the answer to the options question? Real estate, legal, sense of the city/area and how we would fit in.
4. What is each option going to cost (initially and ongoing revenue stream required) and what is our financial situation? How do these match?
 - a. Does space drive money, or does money drive space?
 - b. What is our debt budgeting preference? What are the possibilities and positives and negatives?
 - c. Where does fundraising and growth fall in our community priorities?
 - d. Who can help with fundraising?
 - e. If we own, will we take on subletters?

5. What do we need to be able to proceed?
 - a. If the choice is to buy, what governance structure do we need?
 - b. What are our goals for attracting diverse sangha and how does this affect location/facilities?
 - c. How do we fit into Birmingham culture and physical neighborhood?

The question we want to pose the Council today is: What is the next step? Further meetings of a small group; if so, with what purpose? When to begin to involve the larger community?