

## **SIMS Dreams of the Future**

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#### **Search for a New Home Continues**

As articles in the past two newsletters have noted, SIMS's lease at our current space ends in June of 2019 and we are currently searching for a new home. To kick off this search, the SIMS board set up two task forces - one to look for potential property to purchase (Site Search Task Force) and one to dream big and envision the ideal future home for the sangha (Pre-Design Task Force).

These two tasks are, of course, connected. So we asked the Pre-Design Task Force to move as quickly as possible through a visioning process to determine the sangha's priorities as we search for property to purchase or lease. The Pre-Design group enthusiastically accepted the challenge and worked through the early fall to do phone interviews with other sanghas across the country to understand what they find important in their centers and to craft a series of visioning questions for our sangha members about the kind of sangha that SIMS wants to be and the spaces we need in a new home to support this.

### **Highlights of Outreach to Other Sanghas**

The outreach to other sanghas indicated that nearly all were open 7 days a week and some had open sit times. Kitchens turned out to be one of the most important attributes of the centers, although garden space was equally valued. They all had various rooms in addition to their meditation halls for use as break out rooms and offices. No one's space was ideal or perfect, but everyone loved their center.

### **Highlights of SIMS Outreach**

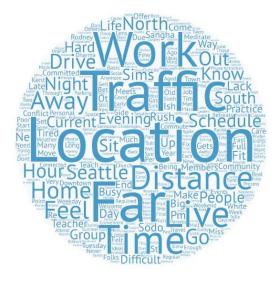
The survey of SIMS sangha members was accomplished through a series of all-sangha meetings in late October and an online survey for those who could not attend in person. In total, 123 people participated in the survey and reassuringly the online and in-person responses were similar.

Some of the survey questions were open-ended to encourage discussion and open up the freedom of a true brainstorming session. Since it's difficult to represent results from open-ended questions, the task forced used the technique of creating word graphics to highlight the words that commonly appeared in responses to the four open-ended questions in the survey.



# Question 1. What are the top three reasons you come to SIMS?

Teachings of the dharma show up heavily in the responses, followed closely by our meditation, community, and the quality of our teachers. This reinforces our focus on SIMS as a spiritual community.



# Question 2. What are the top three reasons you don't come to SIMS?

Distance from the center, bad traffic conditions, and lack of time figure heavily in people not attending SIMS events. Looking a bit deeper into the graphic, we see that a lot of smaller words point to challenges with nighttime sits and schedule conflicts. In addition, although not as highlighted in the word cloud, lack of connection to people was often noted in the comments.



Question 3. Describe your ideal Dharma Center. In addition to spiritual practice, please consider things like the level of diversity, social activities, community engagement, and the like. Please list attributes and/or write a description.

This question probed people's ideas of an ideal dharma center and the most common words in people's responses are highlighted here. This describes the ideal center as an active, diverse, communal, social, and welcoming space. If we look deeper, words like practice, spiritual, warm, quiet, and comfort again reinforce the need for an underlying value of spiritual practice.



Question 4. What specific activities would you like to see added in a new SIMS Dharma Center? Please list activities and/or write a description.

It is clear that people are interested in more opportunities to socialize, share a meal, and meditate. Looking deeper, words like yoga, bookstore, potluck, meet, gather, video, children, and hiking together point to the need for an increase in community-building and social activities.

The next set of survey questions looked for preferences on a sliding scale and probed issues like whether the new center should be more active or silent, dedicated to SIMS events or open to other communities, and used mostly for meditation or open to other activities. As expected, these results show a range of desires, but in general they point to the hope that our new center, or portions of it, be more active and open to other communities and activities.

The final questions drilled down on what factors (not considering the quality of the teaching) would most influence people's attendance at a new center and whether people preferred to lease or purchase a new space or not have a home base at all. A central location, parking, and public transportation topped the list of things that would best support people's attendance at center events. For the ownership options, a long-term lease was the preferred choice (45%) in the online survey, purchasing a property was the preferred choice for the in-person discussions (60%), and no home base was the least favorable choice (59%) for all the responders.

### **Recommendations from the Survey**

From the responses to the survey, the Pre-Design identified the following as essential attributes as of a new center: a centrally located, dedicated center with more options for sits and activities. It should include space for a meditation hall, areas for walking meditation, community gathering area(s), a kitchen, and a library. Other desired amenities include a location in a diverse and active neighborhood, access to public transit and light rail, a second smaller meditation hall, an outdoor garden area for walking, a living room, interview room(s), and a childcare area. Ideally, the new SIMS center would be open 7 days a week for several hours each day and would host a variety of practice opportunities and social activities.

A Special Thanks to all the members of the Pre-Design Task Force for their hard work gathering this information for us in such a timely manner and with such insightful results. The heart of SIMS is its volunteers and this task force has shown itself to be a dedicated and loving heart for our community!

#### **Find Out More**

If you want to delve further into the full Pre-Design Task Force Report, you can find it on the SIMS website at this <u>link</u>. And if you want to help us in the next phase of looking for properties, please let us know of specific skills you may have in project management, financial development, or fundraising by contacting the SIMS board through our email address at <u>board@seattleinsight.org</u>. You can use that

same email address to let us know if you see a vacant or available property that you think we should take a look at. As they say it takes a village!