



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A compilation of statements, issues, and ideas about the Temple Project

January 1, 2021

This information has been collected during the 2.5 months from October into December, from approximately 40 interviews conducted with the Dharma Centre of Canada's community. It is a collection of statements, problems, and ideas about the Temple Project.

This Needs Assessment was presented to the Dharma Centre's Board of Directors and Spiritual Directors for their consideration. The Board of Directors agreed on the features in this document to be *considered* (not necessarily implemented) for the Concept Design(s) of the Temple.

It is expected that as we receive feedback from our designer, and as the project progresses, the need for features will fluctuate. Certain features we currently deem important may become less important, while other features we currently deem unimportant may become more important. Discussion about what to include in the Temple, and what not to include in the Temple, will be ongoing.

The Needs Assessment is being submitted to our general contractor and designer, Jim Boyle, so that we can develop Concept Designs (rough visual designs). This Needs Assessment will also inform our "Final Design", which follows the chosen Concept Design and includes all the detail that our designer and builder will use to remodel/build the actual structure. Hence, there is a lot of detail included in this document.

In the following pages you will find three sections:

1. **Statements**: General statements about the Temple that serve to define terms, and display concepts, which we should all be able to agree on.
2. **Problems**: It isn't possible to agree on the solutions until we agree on the problems.
3. **Features for Consideration**: A list of ideas put forth by our community for the Temple.

In the Problems and Features sections, next to the headers, there are parentheses. For example, "(12/13)". This number represents (the number of people who agreed/total votes). Both the Problems and the Features sections are arranged in descending order. The most popular Problems and Features are at the top, and the least popular are at the bottom.

Best regards,
Travis Olsen
Temple Project Leader & Co-Chair



Statements

General statements about the Temple that serve to define terms, and display concepts which we should all be able to agree on.

1. As stated in the “Dharma Centre of Canada Strategic Plan: 2019-2025”, The Dharma Centre of Canada’s mission is to be a:
 - a. Centre for the study, practice, and conduct of all three cycles of the Buddha’s teaching – in the spirit, guidance, and transmission of our founder, the Venerable Namgyal Rinpoche.
 - b. Non-sectarian charitable organization dedicated to awakening awareness, compassion, and wisdom through the instruction and practice of meditation, the study of philosophy and religion, and the development of community.
2. As stated in the same document, The Dharma Centre of Canada’s vision is to manifest a Centre of Excellence [aka “Temple”] by 2025 for the study, contemplation, and practice of Buddha Dharma. The Temple Project supports this vision.
3. A variety of traditions use and rent the Temple, including but not limited to all three cycles of the Buddha’s teaching, Western Mysteries, Tarot, Hatha Yoga, and more.
4. **“Temple”** and **“Temple Facility”** refer to the entire structure which includes the Meditation Hall, bedrooms, washroom, etc.
5. **“Meditation Hall”** refers to the room in which practitioners study, practice, and conduct the teachings.
6. **“Bedroom Meditators”** refers to those practitioners who reside in the bedrooms of the Temple.
7. **“Public Meditators”** refers to those practitioners who do not reside in the bedrooms of the Temple but come to practice in the Temple.
8. People with **“mobility challenges”** refers to those who use wheelchairs, walkers, canes, or simply have difficulty with movement (knee problems, etc.).
9. The Temple is most often used for groups of 15-25 practitioners, and sometimes used for groups exceeding 50 practitioners.
10. When groups are using the Temple and go on break, multiple toilets are desired simultaneously. When larger groups go on break, there is a bottleneck to use the toilets.
11. If a new structure is built, it is important to the entire community that we honor the existing temple by using elements of the existing Temple in the new Temple, or with a monument, or both.
12. If we choose to build a new Temple, we acknowledge that as of the typing of this document, a site has not been chosen.
13. If the existing Temple is taken down, it is important to the entire community that it is done in a way that is respectful and honors the existing Temple.
14. We have not yet decided whether the Temple will be one story or multiple stories.
15. People use the Temple during *all* times of day and night.
16. Many members of the DCC community are of retirement age or older.
 - a. Many more members will have mobility issues within 10 years.



Problems

It isn't possible to agree on the solutions until we agree on the problems.

1. Disturbance to meditators (both Bedroom Meditators and Public Meditators) (13/13)

- a. Mud room functionality
 - i. With the primary public entrance at the rear of the temple, people enter what we call the mud room. Yet, there are no benches, coat hooks, or enough space to store a group's boots, nor is it heated.
 - ii. As a result, people don't use the mud room, so they continue into the hallway of bedrooms where people proceed to sit on the benches to take off their boots and coats. This causes:
 1. Disturbance to the Bedroom Meditators.
 2. Dirtying of the hallway.
 3. Potentially uncomfortable interactions (see Lack of Privacy).
- b. Lack of privacy
 - i. The primary entrance to the Temple takes one through a hallway of bedrooms.
 - ii. Some people, for example, have sexual trauma. As Bedroom Meditators exit their bedrooms (or the washroom) and encounter strangers, it can be disturbing for them to be in a situation which they may perceive as intimate and confronting, and therefore can trigger them into an unwholesome state.
- c. Lack of sound insulation
 - i. Walls
 1. Bedroom Meditators often do not practice meditations (such as reciting mantras) in the Temple bedrooms because they do not want to disturb the other Bedroom Meditators or the Public Meditators (in the meditation hall).
 2. Conversely, the Public Meditators are often hesitant to practice in the Temple (even if they proceed to do so) because they do not want to disturb the Bedroom Meditators.
 - ii. Ceiling/floor
 1. Footsteps and meditation practices performed in the Meditation Hall can easily be heard through the floor/ceiling by those practicing in the bedrooms.

2. The Temple (and the Dharma Centre as a whole), is not designed for people with mobility challenges (12/13)

- a. Lack of ramps
 - i. Up/down to the meditation hall.
 - ii. Up/down to the washroom.
 - iii. Up/down to the bedrooms.
- b. Lots of stairs

- i. Stairs from the lower level up to the Meditation Hall.
 - ii. Stairs from the outside down to the mud room.
 - iii. Steps from the bedrooms up to the washroom.
 - c. Uneven surfaces
 - i. Stone walkways around the perimeter of the Temple.
 - ii. Gravel roads to the Temple from other DC property locations.
 - d. Relatively long distances to walk between the Temple and
 - i. Accommodations (Hermitage, cabins, etc.) to sleep.
 - ii. Bathhouse (Teahouse) to bathe.
 - iii. Food (Main House) to eat.
 - e. Lack of handrails
 - i. Toilet (needed to steady oneself to crouch to sit on the toilet).
 - ii. Shower (needed to steady oneself while washing).
- 3. Moisture (lots!) (12/13)**
 - a. As a result of the poor (or lack of a) vapour barrier.
- 4. Mold (12/13)**
 - a. Caused by the moisture.
 - b. Many practitioners (including a variety of teachers and non-teachers) have stopped going into the Temple.
 - c. It has not been scientifically tested to determine if the mold is a health concern or not.
- 5. Mice/rodent nests (12/13)**
 - a. Caused by the penetrable structure.
 - b. Mice are defecating and dying in the walls.
 - c. Sometimes poison is used, which causes damage to the surrounding eco system (such as the owls, when the owls eat the mice we have poisoned).
 - d. Other rodents, such as racoons, are an issue for other structures on the DC property, though I have not heard about them as an issue for the Temple.
- 6. Audio/Video (12/13)**
 - a. While in-person teaching is the most effective method of receiving teachings, the era of virtual teaching has arrived.
 - b. The existing Temple is not setup for teachers to transmit virtual teachings.
 - c. There is not convenient and/or easy-to-use TV, audio system, reliable wifi, etc.
- 7. Smell (11/13)**
 - a. Caused by the mold and the mice.
 - b. The *structure* has a strong, undesirable smell that is detectable by many people, though not all.
 - c. The *items* within the structure have a strong, undesirable smell that is detectable by many people, though not all.
- 8. Non-Adaptable Meditation Hall (11/13)**
 - a. This section serves to simply acknowledge that the existing Temple has non-movable objects inside it (such as the Buddharupa) which some groups do not want when they use/rent the Temple.
 - b. By some this is not considered a problem, though by others it is considered a problem.



Features for Consideration

The following is a list of ideas put forth by our community for the Temple; they are not necessarily the opinions of the author. Each point is mean to serve as a topic of conversation.

I have tried to be detailed in naming specific characteristics of each topic. This level of detail will be valuable for our Concept Design. Later, more detail will be added for our Final Design.

The design of our Temple will be based, in part, on the features we choose to include in the structure. The following is the list of features we need to choose from for our Temple:

1. Mobility Improvements (13/13)

- a. Ramp vs lift.
- b. If ramp, inside.
- c. Proper placement of handrails.
 - i. Toilet.
 - ii. Shower.

2. Sustainability / Energy Efficiency (13/13)

- a. Energy efficiency, ecology, and sustainability.
- b. Minimizing carbon footprint.
- c. Energy-efficient windows.
- d. Power outages at the DCC occur 4-5 times per year, typically for 1-2 days.
- e. When there is a power outage at the DCC, it is important that the Temple continues to be heated, the water works, etc.
- f. Energy sources include power grid (current solution), petrol, gas (natural gas, propane, etc.), solar, and a mixture of the above.

3. HVAC ([Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning](#)) (13/13)

- a. Heating
 - i. Furnace (forced air) versus Boiler (circulated, radiant heat).
 - ii. Baseboard heating.
 - iii. European heating.
 - iv. Wood stove.
- b. Ventilation
 - i. Natural air flow via open windows.
 - ii. [HEPA filtration](#).
 - iii. [ERV](#).
- c. Air conditioning
- d. Comfort. Temperature. Proper humidity levels (not too moist, not too dry).
- e. A local expert's opinion on how to manage/install a system to properly regulate temperature and moisture would be helpful before deciding on which of these elements to include.

4. Main Entrance / Coat Room / Mud Room (13/13)

- a. An inspirational entrance.

- b. Coat hooks.
 - c. Bench.
 - d. Boot storage.
 - e. Mosquito prevention.
- 5. Public Washroom (one of two washrooms in the facility?) (13/13)**
- a. Could be adjacent to the Main Entrance and the Entry Room.
 - b. Multiple toilets, sinks, etc.
 - c. Shower?
 - d. When we have larger groups, how many toilets are needed?
 - e. Groups go on break at the same time, which creates a bottleneck for the toilets.
 - f. How many outhouses do we have currently? Are they all legally able to be used for the foreseeable future?
 - g. Considering the number of outhouses, how many additional toilets are needed?
 - h. Composting toilets.
 - i. Handrails for the mobility challenged.
- 6. Meditation Hall (13/13)**
- a. Adaptable/transformable/flexible/convertible:
 - i. Many people have expressed that they want the Meditation Hall to be easily and quickly transformable. Some groups want lots of rupas, while others do not.
 - ii. Our staff needs to be able to remove/replace rupas quickly and easily.
 - b. Walls:
 - i. Straight walls have been requested by many people, especially by those who use the walls for movement practices.
 - ii. The s-hooks have been helpful to hang items (such as thangkas).
 - c. Natural light/windows/sun protection:
 - i. Wall of windows.
 - ii. Windows on the side walls.
 - iii. Openable windows (with bug screens) for when the weather is pleasant. Air flow.
 - iv. Skylights (assuming builder has a very high-degree of confidence that they will be issue-free).
 - v. People like the circular window in the existing Temple.
 - vi. Proper drapery/shutters to regulate the sunshine. As-is, the sun can be painful for the teachers (eyesight) and hot for the students.
 - vii. Stained glass windows are desired by some, though nobody expressed a strong affection for the current stained-glass windows.
 - viii. An extended (or extendable) roofline that will prevent direct sun from coming in.
 - d. Lighting (artificial):
 - i. Flood lighting to light entire interior.
 - ii. Task lighting to light specific areas or things, such as shrine(s), thangkas, pictures of historic beings, etc.
 - iii. No humming/noise from the lights.
 - iv. No light fixtures that are prone to collect bugs.
 - v. Dimmable lights. Mood lighting.

- vi. Proper, modifiable lighting for the teacher. Outlets that can be plugged into so that lamps can be placed for the teacher to see.
- vii. Recessed lighting.
- e. Flooring:
 - i. Wooden floors are desired by all who mentioned the flooring topic.
 - ii. An idea to honor the existing temple: in the new Temple we could use a portion of the existing temple's floor. Maybe this space could be the area the teachers teach on?
- f. Audio/Video/Wifi:
 - i. Will be increasingly more important.
 - ii. Easy to use system.
 - 1. A goof-proof system.
 - 2. Ability to easily connect personal devices, so that things on the internet can be played.
 - 3. A permanently connected iPad so that people can play things off the internet on a whim.
 - iii. Internet:
 - 1. Ethernet (fastest & most consistent internet - wired).
 - 2. Wifi (strong signal - wireless).
 - iv. Zoom capabilities.
 - v. TV(s):
 - 1. Easily movable (for example, a TV on a stand on rollers).
 - 2. Hidden when not in use (in an adjacent storage room).
 - vi. Audio:
 - 1. Recessed vs external speakers.
 - 2. Outdoor speakers for the deck (if there is a deck).
 - 3. CD player: some teachers prefer to use CDs.
 - 4. Microphone(s).
 - vii. Wired and wireless:
 - 1. Internet: people could get internet by plugging in their computer to an ethernet cable (wired), or by connecting to wifi (wireless).
 - 2. Audio: people could connect to a speaker system via an auxiliary cable (wired), or by Bluetooth (wireless).
 - 3. Video: people could connect to a display via an HDMI cable (wired), or over wifi (wireless).
 - viii. Ability to make the Temple signal free:
 - 1. The Temple could be a rare place where people could escape the countless signals/frequencies that they are being bombarded by in the city.
 - 2. The Temple could have the option to be signal free. This can be accomplished by simply unplugging all electronic devices.
 - 3. A hybrid version would be that we could use wired connections (use ethernet cables for internet) and disable wireless signals (such as our wifi). Wires could still be used for internet, TV, audio, etc.
 - 4. Could be a selling point now, and more so in the future, as more people seek environments that help them escape the constant

bombardment of the number and strength of technological frequencies.

- g. Size of the Meditation Hall:
 - i. Opinions of the community:
 - 1. Nobody wants the Meditation Hall smaller.
 - 2. Some said they are happy with the current size.
 - 3. Most want it at least a little larger.
 - ii. Pros of bigger:
 - 1. Accommodates more people, or more space for fewer people.
 - iii. Cons of bigger:
 - 1. Less intimate. More distance between teacher and student.
- h. Shrine:
 - i. Rebuilt.
 - ii. Three levels.
 - iii. Storage behind.
 - iv. Thangka storage.
 - v. Easily movable.
 - vi. Protruding stick to hang thangkas.
 - vii. Two shrines.
 - 1. One for Vajrayana (permanent though sometimes covered for groups who don't want it) and
 - 2. Another shrine for the current group using the temple.
- i. Cabinetry:
 - i. Purpose built: Will help keep the equipment organized and maximize the space.
 - ii. Possibly best to keep all cabinetry in the entry room (if we have one), to maximize the floor space of the Meditation Hall and keep it neat(er).
- j. Canopy:
 - i. An installation above the most common teaching area that would make it possible to install a canopy above the teacher for those who desire it.
- k. Lama table:
 - i. Adjustable height. Right sized.

7. General (12/13)

- a. Rodent proofed.
 - i. Inclusive of mice, racoons, etc.
- b. Wasp prevention.
- c. Modern and effective moisture barrier.
- d. A long-term, sustainable solution that will not *need* to be remodeled in a few years.
- e. Goof proof the building (such as lockable thermostats).
- f. Lots of outlets.

8. Design of the Overall Temple (12/13)

- a. Utilize sacred geometry
 - i. Shape, orientation, location.
- b. Lightness, brightness, elegance, elevation, openness.
- c. When walking up, something visually inspiring.
- d. Awe-inspiring. Inspiration for awakening.

- e. Views of the surrounding nature, trees, sky, etc. Bringing nature in.
- f. Being conscious of what we let in and what we let out.
- g. Considering both male and female design characteristics.
- h. A magnetic space to learn and practice the Dharma.
- i. Let the room speak for itself. Nothing should be fixed/permanent. Very dynamic space.
- j. The room should be an expression of what the current group wants.
- k. Even the Buddharupa needs to be movable.
- l. Good acoustics.
- m. What materials will be used to build? Adobe?
- n. Consider the environment and how it looks in the environment.
- o. Aesthetically pleasing.
- p. Vaulted ceilings.
- q. Stained/colored glass.
- r. Showcasing of pictures, artifacts, etc.:
 - i. Nooks to showcase rupas.
 - ii. Area to showcase historic beings.
 - iii. Area to showcase spiritual directors.
 - iv. Showcase Karmapa texts.
 - v. Task lighting for showcasing.
- s. Lineage and historical photographs.
 - i. How do we choose who is featured?
 - ii. Do we include both males and females?
 - iii. Where do we showcase these beings?
 - 1. Are these pictures non-movable, and if so, how does that fit into the Temple's adaptability?
 - 2. Any permanently placed pictures affect the energy for all groups, even if that's not what they want.
 - iv. Some pictures visible to the teacher when they are teaching.

9. Entry Room / Waiting Room to Meditation Hall (separate from the Main Entrance) (12/13)

- a. A room between the Main Entrance and the Meditation Hall.
- b. A place for practitioners to recollect themselves before entering the Meditation Hall.
- c. Cubbies for personal items such as purses, phones, etc.
- d. Lockers.
- e. Bench. Chairs.
- f. Showcase for teachers, historic beings.
- g. Purpose built cabinetry for storage of equipment used in the Meditation Hall.
 - i. Cushions, bolsters, yoga mats, blocks, desks, etc.
- h. Frees up space in the Meditation Hall.

10. Storage Room (adjacent to the Meditation Hall) (12/13)

- a. Adjacent, and on the same level, as the Meditation Hall.
- b. Would allow for easy and fast conversion of the Meditation Hall.
- c. A lockable room that has ample space to hold temple-related items that are large, small, long, short, etc. (such as large thrones).
- d. Within the storage room, a lockup for valuables.

- e. Clear bins for easier viewing of the contents of each bin.
- f. Shelving.
- g. Thangka storage.
- h. Two separate storage rooms. One for Vajrayana, and another for everything else.
- i. Archive area for documents, pictures, etc.
- j. Office / Publishing areas
 - i. Computer, monitor, printer, stapler, binding machine, etc.
 - ii. Publishing room for fast, on-demand printing and binding of course materials.
 - iii. Part of the storage room?

11. Bedrooms (11/13)

- a. Are we in need of more sleeping rooms at the DCC? If so, how many?
- b. Are there rooms on the DC property that are designed for people with mobility challenges? Are they wheelchair accessible?
- c. How do people with mobility challenges navigate from their bedroom to the Temple, bathroom, and place to eat?
- d. At least one of these bedrooms needs to be wheelchair accessible by 2026 per Canadian regulation.
- e. Privacy from public foot traffic.
- f. Sound proofing from the other bedrooms and from any other floors.
- g. Feel like a separate space (from the other parts of the facility).
- h. For people with mobility challenges, the DCC is a difficult property to navigate. For example, for someone with a walker to go from the Hermitage to the Temple, is a difficult, energy-expending task.
- i. Should we include rooms in the Temple facility, at very least to offer an accessible accommodation for those with mobility challenges? How many rooms?
- j. Should we include rooms in the Temple facility for those *without* mobility challenges? How many rooms?
- k. Legally-sized egress windows.
- l. Desk: attached to the wall and foldable.
- m. Lamp.
- n. Chair.
- o. Closet. Closable or open?
- p. Bedframes and mattresses:
 - i. Bunk beds?
 - ii. Current mattresses are poor quality.
 - iii. Bed frames with slats under the mattress (as opposed to a solid surface) can be very uncomfortable, possibly due to the low quality of the mattresses.
- q. Reading light.
- r. Maximize usage of the room.
- s. Thermostats per room.
- t. Fresh air, open windows, lots of light.
- u. Ample electrical outlets.
- v. As few as 3 rooms, and as many as 12 rooms, have been mentioned as desired.
- w. Have a wing/building of rooms that is detached but connected to the Temple.

12. Bedrooms' Washroom (11/13)

- a. Number of toilets and washrooms depend on number of bedrooms.
- b. Toilet: including a handrail for the mobility challenged.
- c. Shower: including a handrail for the mobility challenged.
- d. Faucet.

13. Kitchen / Ceremonial Preparation Area (adjacent to the Meditation Hall?) (11/13)

- a. Space and equipment for making coffee and tea.
- b. Laundry sink (deep for filling buckets, etc.).
- c. Counter space.
- d. Refrigerator (for keeping perishables cold).
- e. Close to the Meditation Hall, for ease-of-use.
- f. One kitchen for bedrooms?
 - i. So that people with disabilities do not need to 1) travel to other parts of the property, and 2) use structures which themselves are not designed for people mobility challenges.
- g. A second kitchen for public use?
 - i. Tea, coffee, and ceremonial preparation.
 - ii. Preferably adjacent to and on the same level as the Meditation Hall.

14. Outside/perimeter (11/13)

- a. Garden
 - i. Desired by multiple people.
 - ii. Nooks for seating and conversations.
- b. Fire pit
 - i. For gatherings and fire pujas.
- c. Deck/patio
 - i. Outdoor seating area for drinking a coffee/tea, having a chat, relaxing, enjoying nature, etc.
 - ii. Overflow space for when the number of students exceeds the capacity of the Meditation Hall.
 - iii. Could be used for outdoor teachings (when the weather's nice)?
 - iv. Screened in for bugs.
 - v. All the way around the structure.
 - vi. A series of sliding doors or French doors that could open from the Meditation Hall to the deck.
 - vii. Glass porch.
- d. Outside Stairs
 - i. Need to have non-slip protection.

15. Community Offerings (9/13)

- a. Members of our community have a variety of skills.
- b. Some could be used for manual labor on work weekends for non-essential items (such as the carpentry, gardening, etc.).
- c. Some could contribute their artistic skills (artwork, stained glass, etc.).

16. Meeting Room / Interview Room / Room with a View (8/13)

- a. Coffee table.
- b. Conference table.
- c. TV.
- d. Enclosed by glass for visibility/transparency and views of nature.

- e. Or adaptable to dual function as the Art Studio?
- 17. Teacher's Entrance (into the Meditation Hall) (7/13)**
 - a. Non-teachers value having a separate teacher's entrance.
 - b. Teachers named this as unimportant, though sometimes helpful.
- 18. Art Studio (7/13)**
 - a. Could the Meditation Hall be adapted for this, or should it be a separate room?
 - b. A separate, small teaching space?
 - c. Adaptable to dual function as the Meeting Room?
- 19. Science Lab (6/13)**
 - a. Suggested by several practitioners.
 - b. A strong differentiating factor when compared to other retreat centres.
- 20. Miscellaneous (6/13)**
 - a. Purchase more instruments of high quality (for ceremonies, etc.).
 - b. Purchase thangkas of high quality from Marlene.
- 21. Laundry Room (3/13)**
 - a. Or machinery included in one of the other rooms.
- 22. Library (1/13)**
 - a. There are challenges in housing all our books in the Main House.
 - b. A cozy environment to read.
 - c. Security of books would be a concern.
- 23. Store / Gift Shop (1/13)**
 - a. A place to purchase crafts, implements, etc.
- 24. Site Locations of Facility**
 - a. Named as viable by Jim/Shelane/Tracy:
 - i. Existing site.
 - ii. Open field w/small pagoda.
 - b. Named as not viable:
 - i. Near chorten.
 - ii. Near/adjacent to the bathhouse/teahouse.
 - iii. Galaxy Cabin.
 - iv. Near Hermitage.
- 25. Tara Cabin (11/13) – SEPARATE BUILDING**
 - a. A renovation or rebuild of the cabin next to the existing Temple. This building is the accommodation for our visiting teachers.
 - b. Has been identified by multiple Spiritual Directors as in need of being rebuilt.
 - c. Kitchen.
 - d. Living room.
 - e. Include a second teacher/attendant/guest room:
 - i. Separate room.
 - ii. Separate bathroom.
 - f. Patio.