



## GREEN GULCH ZEN CENTER

# **INTERPRETIVE PLAN 2011**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

For those who have visited Green Gulch Zen Center in Northern California's Marin County, the magnificence and beauty of the place speaks for itself. Located just north of San Francisco, the Zen Center provides a retreat from the city and a quiet place to experience nature, spirituality and community. The site itself is located on 115 acres in Muir Woods and provides access to Muir Beach and a number of hiking trails. The main buildings of the Zen Center are located towards the East end of the property and are the home to a number of resident monks. The gardens and farm form the center of the property, while Muir Beach and trails form the western edge of Green Gulch. In addition to being the present site of Green Gulch Zen Center, this property has passed from the Miwok tribe, Spanish ranchers, the co-founder of Polaroid and the National Park Service. Because of its rich cultural history, breathtaking natural landscape, and present spiritual atmosphere, we believe that Green Gulch should be honored and preserved for future generations. Given Green Gulch's rich past and histories, it is important to preserve and safeguard this local heritage; "a filtered past infused with purpose in the present."<sup>1</sup> Our interpretative plan will detail ways in which we can preserve this local history. Both through short and long term preservation projects – Buddhist Monk for a day program, local and global tourism, Koan competition, and a K-8 community education program – Green Gulch expansive tangible and intangible histories can be protected.

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<sup>1</sup> Conkey, Meg and Tringham, Ruth. "Cultural Heritage." Anthropology 136K. University of California, Berkeley. 25 January 2011.



## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background:**

Green Gulch follows the management blueprint designed by the original founders of San Francisco Zen Center. Both practicing monks and visiting resident students communally live in the space. Two cultures merge in the site: Western culture based on local agriculture and Japanese culture focusing on spirituality and aesthetics. The intangible heritage has become very important to preserve as originally developed by Suzuki Roshi, founder of San Francisco Zen Center.

The garden, farm and grounds of San Francisco Zen Center are part of the overall experience for residents, Zen professionals and visitors. Labor is used to help residents and visitors understand work as part of their spiritual practice. Additionally, community involvement and shared work reflects the principles of Buddhism.

Green Gulch produces spirituality by the use of its landscape and tradition. Green Gulch is not only a spiritual site for Buddhists but also open in many ways to public usage. Aesthetic values such as the atmosphere of solitude created by the Zen Center fosters spiritual values or just gives individuals a quiet place to think. Some visitors come solely seeking a place where they can seek generic spirituality. Green Gulch provides residents and visitors a place to meditate, alone or part of the community. Green Gulch also provides a rural and costal environment for individuals that enjoy the outdoors. Hikers and cyclists frequently take advantage of the land set aside by the Zen Center and the Nature Conservancy.

The Green Gulch Garden is certified Organic. According to the website it was one of the original places that explored organic farming in the bay area. Green Gulch Farm partnered with Greens Restaurant in San Francisco to help promote organic, sustainable agriculture. Organic and local produce represents a staple concern for the Bay Area and thus has become an important part of the contemporary culture. The Center works with schools in order to teach children about local farm practices. The kids have the opportunity to learn about planting and natural sustainable processes.

Additionally the Center works to facilitate community. For instance, there is a free morning Meditation program on Sundays. There are also many volunteer opportunities in which people can contribute and socialize. Every month, special lectures cater to children to make families feel welcome.

According to Jennie Klein, the Zen practice focuses on developing a deeper sense of the Buddhist way. Resident teachers lead the morning

meditations. Visiting teachers also give lectures and retreats. The Buddhist philosophy of physical working, sitting and meditation is emphasized at Green Gulch.

Green Gulch has features like the tea ceremony to help create connection between members of the Green Gulch family. The relationship of people to each other and the earth is an integral part of the Zen tradition.

The Zen Center works to preserve the historical aspects of heritage. They have collected oral narratives as a record of history. Continuing to collect oral narratives helps build an archive and comments on the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage. Another method of preserving historical heritage is to document minor and major changes over time. For example, aesthetic values may change and before and after images would be very helpful. In addition, for changes in policy; narrative documentation would be appropriate. Preserving history relies in documenting change. The Zen Center produces an informational pamphlet regarding the history of Green Gulch, which is a great way to disseminate the historical information collected. The bookstore on site would be a great place to display historical documents or photographs pertaining to the site.

In regards to preserving the Native American historical and cultural heritage, the Zen center could create an exhibit in the bookstore containing artifacts and a historical narrative of the Miwok. The Zen Center could also arrange for a portion of the land to be used archeological excavation to further the understanding of the Miwok.

Preserving intangible heritage presents a challenge. In the case of innovation, an annual or biennial review of the current conditions at Green Gulch could inspire change. Change is not always necessary, nor is it always beneficial, but providing an opportunity for change would be a way to preserve the attitude and action that made the Zen Center possible in the first place.

Not only does Green Gulch already make efforts to preserve the historical and cultural values associated with their lineage, but also they offer a six week course for individuals interested the Zen Center's claim to legitimacy in the Zen tradition.

The preservation of the community can focus on spaces facilitating gathering and sharing such as group meals and meditation. Preservation of the community must also allow for the community to grow. As long as the Zen Center maintains a working farm, Green Gulch will be open for the community, and the visitor and education opportunities promote community growth. The Sunday program, which involves meditation, a dharma talk, a discussion, and lunch, is open to the public. It allows members and visitors to interact with each other, which is important to the growth of the community. The Zen Center is also open to the community during the week, but for meditation practice only. The Zen Center offers a wide variety of instructional classes ranging from the basics of Buddhism to the basics of beekeeping. The Zen Center also provides opportunities for volunteers, which also aids in community growth.

Preservation of cultural heritage, such as traditions of religious practice, may be done digitally with documentaries, short informational videos, or even just oral narratives. The



Zen Center currently records the Dharma talk every week and uploads it to their website. The education relating to Zen traditions is a great way to preserve cultural heritage and values. Regularly evaluating current practices to see whether or not they are inline with tradition will also aid in preservation.

Preservation of spiritual values will also present a challenge due to their intangibility. Personal narratives, or digital stories, are a great way to capture something as subjective as spiritual experience.

Preserving an atmosphere that promotes Buddhist spirituality entails maintaining the air of solitude. Green Gulch does this by encouraging most people to come on Sunday. This leaves the rest of the week for residents and long-term visitors to experience the peace of Green Gulch. Also, the Zen Center closes its doors to the outside public for the month of January to let part of the community to engage in intense Zen practice.

Preservation of Green Gulch land is very important because it was based on an agreement made with the Parks Service. The land is maintained by Green Gulch residents as well as the Park service.

## WILDLIFE

Green Gulch Farm is the habitat of many diverse species of wildlife, including fish, birds, mammals and plants. The Redwood Creek, which runs through the property, is an essential spawning and rearing ground for coho salmon, steelhead trout and coastal cutthroat. In 2005, the coho salmon were listed as a federally endangered species and between 2007 and 2009, no salmon were seen during the winter run. However, in 2010, around 40 salmon were spotted and produced 23 clusters of eggs. This number however is only about 1% of the 1940 levels of coho salmon. The Green Gulch property is also home to many native songbirds, as well as numerous egrets and the Northern Spotted Owl. The pond that sits in the middle of the property was excavated by the National Park Service in 2009, to provide a habitat for the California Red-legged Frog.

From “A History of Green Gulch Farm,” a pamphlet made and distributed by Green Gulch:

We formed a land stewardship committee in 1994 to develop a bioregional awareness in the management of our physical plant. As we construct replacements for our aging student housing we’re considering just how many people our watershed can support. (NEEDS CITATION)

In 1974, Green Gulch became one of the first sites of the compostable toilet, which saves approximately fifteen thousand gallons of water annually.

Additionally, Green Gulch is currently collaborating with the Park Service on a plan to restore the marshland in the lower fields. This plan, which would involve removing the parking lot that currently overlooks Muir Beach would restore the land to its original marshland form. Through their work with NPS, they have “been studying the ecology of our watershed and asking ourselves questions about how the land might look and behave if left to itself.”(NEEDS CITATION) One part of this process would involve removing

the concrete channels which currently hold back the stream flow, and allow this to run through the lower fields, now used for agricultural purposes

## **APPRAISAL**

Significance in Green Gulch lies in its day-to-day practice and way of life. Challenges and opportunities are encountered when addressing the locality of Green Gulch: what the site has to offer, its opportunities and constraints along the lines of site specific meanings and interest groups. This significance can be observed through themes surrounding the site:

- Culinary – We draw connections between the processes of growing food and preparing it and the way that meals at Green Gulch bring the community together.



Through our K-8 program, we hope to educate children about the process of growing food and to use Green Gulch as a model for sustainable culinary practices. One potential challenge we foresee are distribution channels of food around local areas and furthermore internationally. We hope that the intellectual property of Green Gulch's ideas spread to visitors and practitioners (locally, regionally, and internationally) – thinking globally, but growing locally.

- Landscape – This theme relates the spiritual nature of Green Gulch with the surrounding landscape. While the zendo is the place where formal meditation takes place, the entire property is a place of worship – through hiking the trails, enjoying the gardens and working the farm. The secluded landscape of Green Gulch offers trails, parking for urban city commuters, visitor facilities, worship centers, and opportunities for small-scale projects. However when trying to bring larger groups to Green Gulch parking and accessibility may become problematic. We understand the challenge can be tackled by a cultural landscape that focuses on contextualized conservation and preservation projects.
- Community Building – Through workshops, meditation practices, Sunday lunches and volunteer work, the activities that happen at Green Gulch serve to foster a sense of community. We hope to encourage this process of community building not only locally, but internationally. Community building will create conversations for the various interests groups and practitioners of Zen Buddhism. Challenges here lie in the creative means taken for communication along different ethnic, religious sects, and cultural differences.
- Spirituality – This is a main theme of our interpretive plan. Our proposed projects seek to explore and interpret spirituality in different ways – by encouraging inner city youth to explore their own spirituality, fostering debate and conversations about different spiritual interpretations, and bringing together people from all spiritual walks of life. We recognize that spirituality is multi-dimensional and we hope to create an increased awareness to the youth around our community. We do also realize that one community will not have the same practices of another.

Memory communities here again offer the link that an open dialogue between communities can allow for the understanding of differences.

- History of Zen Buddhism – We seek to emphasize the importance of the Zen tradition at Green Gulch, and to incorporate this tradition into our museum installations and educational materials. The challenge of creating Museum installations and educational materials is what to preserve, whose histories. Here we hope that the concept of memory communities can bridge the different knowledge areas of Buddhism and preservation of that culture.
- Preservation of nature – Since Green Gulch was founded in 1973, members of the Green Gulch community have focused on respect and cooperation with nature. Our proposed nature center would incorporate Buddhist teachings with educational guides for visitors, as well as work actively to sustain and preserve endangered wildlife. Nature is the base of preservation. The conservation of nature is the challenge in our present day high-emissions and high-energy use society. It is through landscape education and environmentally-sound culinary practices that we can begin to address this challenge, i.e. food production and land use being key features in preserving nature.
- History of Green Gulch and surrounding area – One theme that we feel would appeal to many visitors is using Green Gulch as a resource for those interested in Marin history. Because of its rich history in the area and cooperation with the land, we feel that Green Gulch is an ideal space for teaching others about the various transformations that Marin has gone through in the past few centuries. The challenge in thinking of history in one dimension is not always beneficial. Archiving Green Gulch history along the line of archaeology, anthropology, and various other discourses will allow for the broader importance and modern relevance to contemporary issues that Green Gulch is addressing directly, for example through their on-site gardens and Green Restaurants.

## **Specific Recommendations for Audiences**



There are a number of presently existing audiences to consider when creating an interpretive plan for Green Gulch Zen Center. We are interested in creating an interpretive plan that appeals to present audiences, as well as audiences we are hoping to reach out to.

- Residents of Green Gulch Zen Center would likely be interested in recording and preserving the history of Green Gulch, as well as sharing their knowledge and experiences with others. Our intention is to work closely with GG residents to create an interpretive plan that would encourage public visitation and interest, while respecting the residents' privacy and spiritual practice.
- Members of the Green Gulch community: Laymembers, Sunday visitors, as well as farm and garden volunteers will likely be a large part of the audience we will attract. We imagine members of the GG community being active participants in forming our summer school, Buddhist Monk for a Day program and local/international travel adventures, as well. Additionally, members of this community would be both contributors and docents of the future museum installations at Green Gulch.
- Residents of Marin County: This audience would likely be interested in preserving the heritage of Green Gulch, as well as maintaining the land as an environment for indigenous plants and endangered wildlife. We hope to encourage the surrounding community to attend workshops and discussions, visit Green Gulch for the day or overnight and contribute to local history projects and archives.
- Families/Children/Teachers: Our proposed K-8 curriculum would appeal to this audience. Additionally, our long-term plan of building a nature center on the site would be of great interest to children and families. Educators might also be interested in bringing students for day hikes and gardening workshops designed for children.

- Hikers/Cyclists/Amateur Bird-Watchers: We hope that this audience will be particularly involved in plans to preserve the natural landscape and build a nature center.

Green Gulch creates a space for a diverse group of people to be involved.

Stakeholders and other Key Players which include:

- Residents of Green Gulch
- Laymembers and visiting students
- National Park Service
- Volunteers at the Farm
- School groups or visiting naturalists
- Marin County Residents
- Recreationalists, like mountain bikers, joggers and horseback riders
- Those who purchase Green Gulch's organic produce
- International travelers
- Researchers on preservationists and sustainability

Implementation:

## **Ongoing Projects within 5 Years**

### **Buddhist Monk for a Day Program**

This program will allow people to experience the daily life of a monk. Extra activities will be included to enrich the guest's experience, but the overall day will focus on learning about Zen Buddhism and Green Gulch. People interested in learning about the Buddhist lifestyle will benefit from the day.

Themes:

- Culinary
- Landscape
- Spirituality

Audiences:

- Students of Zen Buddhism
- Those interested in exploring Zen Buddhism
- International visitors
- Bay Area residents

Proposal:

Beginner Buddhists are recommended to spend two nights. The first night is the night before their Buddhist practice day and the second night is the night after their Buddhist practice day. They will stay in the simple guest rooms, which have one small bed and a lamp. They also have limited privacy to increase the sensation of community and openness. On the bed, each guest will receive a small booklet with a daily schedule and Buddhist philosophy to read before the following day.

The meals will be taken together. All food is prepared by a rotating group of monks and comes from the garden. Additionally, all food is organic, in season and vegetarian. The guest “Buddhists for a day” will have the opportunity to cook with the monks and learn the recipes so they can recreate the food at home.

The morning bell goes off at 4:35 am every morning. The “Buddhists for a day” will wake up and wear comfortable robes. Mirrors and grooming are not recommended, so guest can focus on spirituality. They will head to the temple to practice Zazen at 5am. This sitting period lasts for about 40 minutes. Following the sitting, there is a walking Meditation called kinhin at 5:40 am. This meditation allows for the guests to experience the sunrise. After the walking meditation, they will repeat the sitting meditation until 6:30. At 6:30 they will be guided through a series of chants and bows. After the chanting

the “Buddhists for a day” can discuss the meaning of the morning practice with the Monks. The idea of truthful conversations will be emphasized. It is recommended that the guests ask many questions.

Following the question and answer session, the “Buddhists for a day” will head to the breakfast area where they will be greeted to a warm vegetarian breakfast. Upon entering the seating area, they will practice silence and gratefulness for their food for ten minutes. Once everyone has been seated and begun eating in silence, talking can begin. A sample breakfast would be: bittersweet mocha coffeecake with vegan ingredients, roasted millet and tofu smoothie, fresh granola, coffee and tea.

After breakfast, the guest “Buddhists for a day” and monks will clean the dishes together and discuss cooking. This is a fun way for the guests and monks to get to know each other. We hope there will be a lot of laughing and playfulness. They will divide into groups and work on a lunch dish together while learning about the food. Each “Buddhist for a day” will get to take home a recipe booklet after the experience. The food practice will incorporate a culinary theme for learning about Green Gulch. Additionally, the process will build community.

Following the breakfast and cooking class at about 10am, the “Buddhists for a day” will adventure to a guided yoga practice . In this yoga ritual, values of solitude and meditation will be reinforced through the body. The yoga practice will take place on the deck outside the temple overlooking the beautiful landscape. There will be a monk leading the practice and educating about yoga. This will add a movement theme to the experience.

At 11:30 after the yoga instruction, the participants will return to the kitchen to make the final preparations for lunch. Again, they will learn about the produce in season and maybe some new ways to prepare fruits, vegetables, grains and tofu. By 12pm, everyone will be lining up in silence for the noon meal.

After lunch, the participants will spend several hours in the garden. This will be a mini lesson in sustainable agriculture and gardening. The “Buddhists for a day” will learn



about the gardening processes, the organic farming principals and sustainable plants for the Marin region. This will be a hands on experience in which the themes of landscape and environmentalism will be reinforced.

Around 4pm, the garden experience will end and the “Buddhists for a day” will return to the main temple area. They will have several choices for their final activity before the evening rituals. The first choice is to attend an arts activity practicing the Zen painting style with black ink using bamboo brushes. The second choice is to attend a lecture with the Zen master in the temple to learn more about Zen philosophy. The third option is to participate in the tea ceremony. This activity looks at the ritual of Zen Practice.

At 6:00 sharp, the dinner bell rings calling all the monks and “Buddhists for a day” participants to the dinning area to share their last meal of the day together. Again, they line up in silence to contemplate their appreciation for the meal. A typical dinner may be vegetarian frittata with vegetables from the garden, sautéed kale, tofu and garbanzo bean curry and a green salad. After supper, the “Buddhists for a day” will attend their final Zazan at 7:30. Lastly, after the sitting, the “Buddhists for a day” can retreat to the Sauna to relax before bed. All the working and sitting can cause sore muscles, so the sauna is a great way to end the day. At 9:00 pm, the “Buddhists for day” will be getting ready for bed. After a rich experience of learning, spirituality, culinary practice, landscape and arts, the “Buddhist for a day” program ends.

### **Local Tourism Program**

#### **Themes:**

##### **I. Local and Global Tourism**

Technology helps connect people by creating communication between



different cultures

- Zen religion and practice across borders
- Understanding and linking customs and tradition

#### Audiences

- Connecting Green Gulch to the greater Bay Area, specifically the neighborhoods of Chinatown, the Indian community in Berkeley, and Japantown
- Families and visitors to the farm
- Participants and community members of Green Gulch
- Neighbors of Green Gulch Farm

#### Proposal:

Dr. Margaret Purser, professor in the Department of Anthropology at Sonoma State University, articulates the idea of “memory communities” within her research of indigenous Fijian communities. (NEEDS CITATION) For the purpose of understanding a global and local tourism program, the notion of “memory community” is needed. Memory communities can be defined as a group of people with a shared connection of some element of tangible and/or intangible cultural heritage.<sup>3</sup>

The potential audience of a global and local tourism program encompasses a wide range – from the men, women, families, children, and diverse visitors of Green Gulch, to its the surrounding communities (globally and locally) that deal directly with the themes of Green Gulch, for example the practice of culinary, landscape, and spirituality. Other audiences to take into account are the shareholders and stewards of Green Gulch and the outside communities entered; to name a few, they are the funders, administrators, facilitators, guests lecturers, visitors, and others that rely on the produce of Green Gulch – the Greens Restaurant and local farmers Markets in the area. To the continue the journey, stakeholders also include local stores in South Berkeley that preserve local customs of saris, incense and other aspects of Indian material culture; as well as the

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<sup>3</sup> Conkey, Meg and Tringham, Ruth. “Guest Lecturer: Dr. Margaret Purser” Anthropology 136K. University of California, Berkeley. 31 April 2011.

neighborhoods of San Francisco's Chinatown and Japantown. Food security, with an emphasis on equitable global distribution, is a crucial issue in future sustainability; Green Gulch's method of food production highlights possibilities and alternatives to the status quo of industrialized global food supply chains. While visiting the other Bay Area neighborhoods, Green Gulch members could begin conversations about extending past cultures to contemporary settlements and receiving greater learning from our past in order to preserve our future). Food sustainability is a lesson that Green Gulch can share with other communities in the world to help make other nations more environmentally conscious. All these challenges are addressed through Buddhist ways of being self-sustainable, plotting your own farm and gardening. Growing locally and distributing globally have become campaign slogans for some organizations. Green Gulch allows this connection locally, and their area connections being made globally to tackle these challenges as well.

Local Tourism will allow the residents, visitors, and affiliates of Green Gulch the opportunity to visit neighborhoods and communities that possess cultural remembrance of the original people of Buddhist and Zen religion. Such an exposure allows for greater understanding of Buddhist practitioners. Local sites of tangible and intangible heritage are seen in the following diagram:

Community	Visual	Taste/smell	Audio
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Indian community in Berkeley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Clothing stores carrying fabric, saris, and scarfs, Buddhas, and jewelry etc.</li> <li>-Visualizing what a large Indian community looks like and understanding their culture preservation practices within the dominant American culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Indian cuisines focusing on the different Indian cultures</li> <li>-Pakistani restaurants and neighboring foods of the southeast Asia (i.e. Afghanistan)</li> <li>-Indian spices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Movie stores featuring contemporary Indian pop culture, Bollywood</li> <li>-Cultural music playing in each store entered</li> </ul>
Chinatown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Engaging in Chinese calligraphy practice</li> <li>-Different kinds of schooling (public school, Chinese school, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Dim sum restaurants and Chinese cuisines</li> <li>-Distinct smell of seafood and Chinese foods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Negotiating for goods and services</li> </ul>

Japantown	-Ichiban Kan shopping center  -Museum	- cuisines and restaurants	- local and international Japanese pop artists
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*Figure 1: Visitors who chose to participate in the local program will have the opportunity to commute to these sites for first hand, free of charge (except travel). When visiting these sites they will have a map with a set of clues where individuals will then have to locate historic local site while engaging in a walking tour and discovering different element of urban cultural heritage*

Memory communities help us understand the interlocking themes of a global/local interpretative plan. It allows for the small farm families that both live and visit Green Gulch connect with the teenagers that visit Ichiban Kan, or the local students who attend Chinese school. While Green Gulch offers “unbelievable beautiful county property to become a practice place”<sup>4</sup> the other local sites visited will offer similar features.

Within Dr. Margaret Purser Fijian example, there was and currently is a huge internal debate over what determines a linear Fiji culture, as though there is only one culture.

Our effort at Green Gulch is to awaken in ourselves and the many people who come here the bodhisattva spirit, the spirit of kindness and realistic helpfulness. Through Japanese Soto Zen Green Gulch aspires to ideally bring into question what it means to be human. While cultures differ and understanding these distinctions is crucial, the unifying human race and returning to the basic principles of life – basic needs of food, shelter, livelihood, and spiritual or religious practice are efforts to be restored. This is how we offer our understanding of Buddha's Way.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A [oral history] History of Green Gulch Farm. Mick Sopko, 2002

<sup>5</sup> Green Gulch Website <<http://www.sfzc.org/ggf/>>

The notion of memory community is vital in thinking of a local tourism program at Green Gulch. This program highlights commonalities between diverse people; from the American who wishes to practice locally, to neighboring immigrant who practice within their own communities, and to those who live on different continents and also practice Buddhism.

The objectives of the project can be easily implemented within the first five years. After the program has established itself, the next step would to be expand internationally (See below for International Tourism).

### **Green Gulch Koan Competition**

#### Themes

- Community Building
- Spirituality



- History of Zen Buddhism

#### Audiences:

- Residents of Green Gulch
- Lay members
- New visitors to Green Gulch
- Students
- International visitors

Intuition is at the core of the Zen Buddhist spiritual values, which of course gives rise to the paradoxical nature of Buddhist teachings; how can somebody be taught to intuit? Intuition is defined as the ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning. Typical instruction usually makes use of logical progressions facilitated through language. According to Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, nothing can be said about the world, or reality, and any discussion about the world is just a discussion about how the world is discussed. Buddhists see language as a skillful means, or upaya. In the context of this discussion, very simply, language cannot impart knowledge, but it can point to where the knowledge can be found. Language can be thought of as the finger pointing at the moon. If one focuses on the finger then he, or she, will never see the moon.

Individuals are attracted to Buddhism because they want to end their suffering and find enlightenment.<sup>6</sup> Buddhist texts, like the Prajnaparamita, state rather directly that all beings are already enlightened and that suffering never existed. If everyone is already enlightened, why would monks and lay practitioners spend their entire lives devoted to the practice of Buddhism? If the text is thought of as the finger pointing, it leaves the practitioner to intuit the wisdom, or truth for him, or herself. Until the practitioner arrives at the truth himself, he will not truly believe it is the truth. For example, if someone is in a sound proof room with no windows and is told that it is raining outside is a completely different experience than someone hearing, seeing, and feeling the rain for himself. A man who stands in the rain cannot honestly deny that it is raining, and the same goes for the man who stands in enlightenment, he cannot honestly deny that he is enlightened.

This is where the koan system fits into Buddhist practice. Koans are excerpts of Buddhist texts that are connected to the experience of enlightenment.<sup>7</sup> The situations presented in the koans seem ridiculous and contradictory in regards to Buddhist teachings when conscious reasoning is applied, but fall inline with Buddhist teachings when understood through intuition. For each koan in the koan collections, commentary and a

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<sup>6</sup> Maezumi, Taizan and Glassman, Bernie. *On Zen practice: body, breath, mind*. Wisdom Publications, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Maezumi, Taizan and Glassman, Bernie. *On Zen practice: body, breath, mind*. Wisdom Publications, 2002.

verse of poetry is also included with the koan. Below is an example of a koan and its commentary from the Mumonkan, a well-known and used collection.<sup>8</sup>

Gutei raised his finger whenever he was asked a question about Zen. A boy attendant began to imitate him in this way. When a visitor asked the boy what his master had preached about, the boy raised his finger.

Gutei heard about the boy's mischief, seized him and cut off his finger with a knife. As the boy screamed and ran out of the room, Gutei called to him. When the boy turned his head to Gutei, Gutei raised up his own finger. In that instant the boy was enlightened.

When Gutei was about to die, he said to the assembled monks, "I received this one-finger Zen from Tenryu. I used it all my life and yet could not exhaust it" and then he passed away.

Mumon's Comment:

Where Gutei and the boy attained enlightenment is not at the tip of the finger itself. If this simple truth is not comprehended, Tenryu, Gutei, the boy and you also will be bound together once and for all.

Gutei made a fool of old Tenryu,

With the sharp blade he did simply harm the boy.

That's nothing compared to the Mountain Spirit when he raised his hand

And split Kasan (the great mountain) in two.

#### Proposal:

Green Gulch already has workshops revolving around the koans, but our intention is to take koan use one-step further. Our plan involves a monthly competition that is open to all. The competition will consist of the reading of a random koan at the beginning followed by an hour or two of zazen, seated meditation, which then will be followed by the construction and recitation of a koan commentary and verse, like those

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.angelfire.com/electronic/awakening101/mumonkan.html>

found in the well known and used commentaries. The Roshi, or Zen Master, will judge the competition. The performance, or recitation, and the judging of the commentaries and the verses will be held in the evening as an event itself open to all. This will be done to encourage those who did not enter in the competition to be a part of. Participants and audience members will be asked to provide a donation on a sliding scale of five to twenty dollars to ensure that Zen Center at Green Gulch can continue to operate. The entirety of the competition will take place in the zendo. All of the traditional elements of ceremony and ritual will be present, such as the burning of incense and ringing of bells. This plan will incorporate the senses of vision, olfaction, and audition.

After all the commentaries and verses are preformed, the Roshi will provide her, or his, decision for the winner. It must be noted that there may be more than one winner, or even no winner at all due to the nature of the competition. More specific rules cannot and should not be supplied because answers will reflect individual's intuition that will differ from one another. The Roshi usually judges mastery of koans, and this is why the Roshi needs to be the judge of the competition. After the competition, the winner(s) will inscribe their commentaries and verses into a tome that will contain all the winning verses, creating a tangible element to the intangible heritage of Green Gulch and Zen. The new collection of koans created by the competition at Green Gulch will also be posted and updated on their website, much like the Dharma talks are now.

Not only does this plan facilitate the preservation and nourish of the value of intuition, but it also acts as a fundraiser and community builder for Green Gulch. Another benefit of this plan is that it does not require a lot of extra resources to implement it; Green Gulch already has everything it needs to make this competition happen. Therefore, it is safe to say that within 5 years this project will not only be up and running, but it will have the time to work out any issues that arise. It is predicted that this competition will also motivate individuals to enroll in the already offered koan workshops at Green Gulch expanding Buddhist education, another important value of Green Gulch. Within 10 years, if the program is popular it may be extended to other sites of the San Francisco Zen Center. Over the long term (25 years), the competition can even be extended to other schools of Zen around the country, and even the world. A



worldwide competition would not occur every month, but an annual competition would be practical and beneficial for extending community ties.

### **Green Gulch K-8 Community Education Program**

One audience that we would like to bring into the Green Gulch Zen Center community is the children of the San Francisco Bay Area, particularly children in urban environments. Subjected to increased academic pressures, standardized testing and technological overloads, children living in urban environments are receiving less time for experiencing nature, practicing mindfulness and, frankly, just being kids.

#### Themes

- Spirituality (Meditation and mindfulness)
- Culinary (Organic gardening and healthy eating habits)
- Preservation of nature.
- History of Green Gulch and surrounding area.

#### Audiences

- Elementary school children
- Teachers and administrators.
- Parents and families of students.

#### Proposal

We are proposing to create a curriculum for elementary school children in the Bay Area which would teach them about a number of aspects of life at Green Gulch – including meditation, organic gardening, environmental preservation and Native American history. As 4<sup>th</sup> grade is typically designated for a curriculum around California history, this would be the ideal time to incorporate our proposed curriculum into their learning. This curriculum would be taught in the spring in the months leading up to summer vacation – and would span across academic subjects.

#### School year academic curriculum:

- Once or twice a week, during physical education period, children would be instructed in simple meditative practices for 10-15 minutes. Not only would this provide an opportunity for students to become familiar with meditation practice, but it would also help students to regain focus and centeredness for the rest of the school day.
  - Senses: mental relaxation, sounds of silence and surroundings, quiet reflection.
- During history class, children would learn about the history of Marin, focusing on the pre-Spanish history of Native Americans in the Bay Area.
- Additionally, we would encourage the Green Gulch garden center and farm volunteers to work with us in establishing organic gardens at the schools. This would provide students with the opportunity to learn about food production, healthy eating and connecting with nature. Once established, these gardens would serve as a tool for both science and health class curriculums, as well as potentially provide fresh produce to cafeteria lunches.
  - Senses: Tastes (differences between fresh and artificial produce), touch (experience of harvesting crops, pulling weeds, bugs), smells (flowers, dirt, cooked meals), movement (action of planting and harvesting).



Summer session program: At the end of the school year, students will be encouraged to participate in a 3-5 day overnight camp at Green Gulch. Expanding upon the tools that they have learned throughout the school year, students will have a fun, hands-on experience at Green Gulch. Activities include working in the gardens and farms, hiking nature trails, meditation in the zendo, camping and learning about Zen Buddhism. Additionally, they will participate in the preparation of meals and in conservation of the surrounding natural features of Green Gulch. On the last day of camp (ideally a Sunday), the parents and families of each student will be invited to visit Green Gulch for the day – to engage in meditation, explore the grounds, enjoy lunch and meet other members of the Green Gulch community.

## **APPENDIX [Future Projects]**

### **International Travel Programs**

### **Medium Term: 10 years**

As a future project Green Gulch can implement a global expatriate program where the men, women, families, children, and wide spectrum of visitors can travel to for either short or long term programs to the countries of India, China, and Japan. These three regions specifically were original sites for Zen and Buddhist practitioners. Individuals will have the choice and opportunity to visit with a local Buddhist monk or practitioner of some sort. Visitors of Green Gulch who decide to participate in the program will receive first hand accounts of indigenous cultures and the people who maintain and preserve a collective way of life, Zen Buddhism. These Zen travelers will have the opportunity to be paired with individuals in these three sites. In order to create an enriching experience families and/or individuals, prior to departing, will be required to fill out a detailed pre-survey questionnaire in order to better pair them to similar individuals in the host country. Lastly those who participate in this global program will be recommended to live in a monastery and have a designated "host" family look after them.

This project will take a lot of work and planning to get it off of the ground. In the first five years, relationships need to be established with host countries since this project relies on ongoing international relationships. The next five years will consist of maintaining the previously established relationships and actually having participants travel and stay in the host countries. If the program proves to be successful in the long term (25 years), it can be extended globally and not only focusing on the countries where Buddhism originated.

### **On-site Museum Installation**

This would involve establishing a museum collection on site, for visitors to view. Collections could be rotated by seasons: in summer, perhaps there would be a collection of photographs taken when the Zen Center was opened – along with stories from those who were involved in transforming the Wheelwright Farm into the Green Gulch Zen Center. Potential projects might be a community-made documentary with photographs

and videos, as well as recorded audio from those involved. Another possible installation would be the pre-1940 history of the area: the Miwok people's history in the area, as well as the history of land use as a Spanish ranch. Finally, an installation about the history of Zen Buddhism would attract a number of different audiences.

Instead of repurposing one of the existing buildings at Green Gulch, we propose the construction of a new building. In line with the value of sustainability, Green Gulch may make use of new sustainable building materials and techniques. This project would also allow for residents and visitors of Green Gulch to get involved. With the planning and supervision of a few skilled project managers, anyone who wants to be involved in the construction of the new building may do so, much like in instance of Habitat for Humanity. The first five years of this project would include researching new sustainable building techniques and materials to ascertain which would work best for the site, as well as the planning and fundraising that is necessary to make this idea a reality. The second five years would include the actual organizing of the exhibits themselves, such as obtaining materials and creating a cohesive narrative that aids in their display. The newly constructed building may also accommodate the future nature center (see below).

### **Nature Center**

Establishing a nature center on site – perhaps further past the farms, to encourage visitors to hike and explore the property and to provide a destination between the Zen Center and Muir Beach. The Nature Center would serve as a liaison between the Zen Center and the National Park Service, in coordinating projects to conserve the wildlife that calls Green Gulch home. This would be a great place for children and families – as the nature center would provide “nature guides” which illustrate and describe the various indigenous plants and animals in the surrounding area. Donations to the nature center would not only help fund projects such as creek bed restoration (a project designed to improve the survival chances of coho salmon in the area), but also bring financial support to the Zen Center, which currently funds conservation projects.

The nature center, much like the museum, will need a space to live. This project is on the ten year plan for that reason. With the proper planning a building can be commissioned to accommodate both the nature center and museum. After the building has been constructed the nature center itself may be organized.

## **Digital Archives**

### **Long Term: 25 years**

We plan to cr. Available online, this archive would serve to reach a number of different audiences; students and scholars might be interested in accessing the digital texts and lectures; out-of-town visitors might want to get a sense of the place before traveling to visit it; prospective guests would have access to resources such as the “Day in the Life of a Monk” program – which would be detailed in the archive. Additionally, children and families interested in participating in the proposed school curriculum would be able to find information and testimonials from past participants. This archive would be readily available to visitors online.

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