

Seven Oaks Retreat Center *Guiding Principles for Governance, Program Development, and Facilities Design*

Board of Directors Approved: July 17 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: These guiding principles serve as the foundation for decision-making at Seven Oaks Retreat Center, shaping its programs, services, financial sustainability, and the design of its buildings and grounds. Rooted in Buddhist values of mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence, these principles reflect our mission, vision, and strategic intent. They have been thoughtfully reviewed by our participants and professional team and approved by our Board of Directors.

Guiding Principles for Governance and Management

The governance and management of Seven Oaks Retreat Center will be driven by the following principles, ensuring alignment with ethical conduct, responsible stewardship, and the cultivation of spiritual growth:

- **Excellence and Inclusivity:** We aspire to be recognized as a leading Buddhist retreat and teaching center in the Central Atlantic region. Our commitment is to uphold the highest standards of integrity, innovation, and accessibility, ensuring that all who seek refuge, healing and wisdom find a welcoming space.
- **Harmony with Nature:** We commit to an environmentally sustainable existence, honoring the principle of interconnectedness and striving to minimize our ecological impact.
- **Community Well-Being:** Our work is guided by the ideal of compassionate service. We dedicate ourselves to supporting individual healing, fostering interpersonal care, and protecting the natural world for the benefit of all beings.
- **Engaged Practice:** Through deep listening and responsiveness, we will cultivate meaningful relationships with our community members: retreat participants, neighbors, teachers, spiritual leaders; ensuring their voices shape our offerings and evolution.
- **Mindful Stewardship:** The financial management of Seven Oaks Retreat Center will be conducted with mindfulness and transparency, ensuring long-term sustainability. We honor the generosity of donors by applying funds with the highest standards of ethical accountability.

Guiding Principles for Building and Grounds Design

The physical space of Seven Oaks Retreat Center will reflect the values of simplicity, mindfulness, and universal accessibility. Our design principles are as follows:

- **Sacred Space for Reflection and Growth:** Our retreat center will embody both contemporary and traditional Buddhist contemplative aesthetics, fostering opportunities for meditation, dialogue, and personal transformation. Every space will be designed to nurture healing and strengthen our community.
- **Accessible and Inclusive Design:** In alignment with the Buddhist precept of non-discrimination, we will ensure that our building facilities accommodate individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, and life stages, allowing all to participate fully in our offerings.

- **Ecological Responsibility:** We will maximize the use of renewable and sustainable materials, honor mindful energy consumption, protect air and water quality, and minimize our environmental footprint—all in service of upholding our interdependent relationship with nature.
- **Safety and Well-Being:** Our spaces will prioritize physical, emotional, and spiritual security. Design features will promote pedestrian safety, provide refuge for contemplation, and foster a nourishing environment for all who enter.
- **Minimal Technology Intrusion:** Recognizing the importance of simplicity and presence, we will integrate technology intentionally, ensuring modern efficiencies while preserving the integrity of a serene and undistracted retreat experience.
- **Adaptability for Future Generations:** In keeping with the Buddhist principle of impermanence, our facilities will be designed with flexibility to evolve with community needs, ensuring relevance and sustainability for years to come.

Conclusion

Guided by these principles, Seven Oaks Retreat Center will serve as a refuge for wisdom, compassion, and mindful living. In every facet—from governance and programming to facility design—we commit to embodying the teachings of the Buddha, honoring the dignity of all beings, and walking the path of ethical and sustainable stewardship.