

A person is kayaking on a calm lake at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow across the sky and water. The person is in the lower right foreground, paddling a dark kayak. The background shows a line of trees on the far shore under a clear sky.

THE
REtreat Center



FINDING

YOUR LIFE'S CALLING

is no small matter.

Each of us seeks this discovery through our work, relationships, and personal pursuits. Frederick Buechner says calling is found in “the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

My deep gladness has been found in times and spaces where I have gotten out of the everyday busyness of life and to be still. Being outdoors in the woods or near water has typically made this experience even more meaningful. Times like these have shown me where my personal rhythms and relationships needed to be put in balance or reshuffled. These experiences have profoundly shaped me and made my life better in countless ways.

I am convinced every person needs this sort of experience. People need times and spaces to discover how their rhythms and relationships need restoration. They need a place where they can be shaped and be able to thrive in life.

I believe the next step in my calling is to provide the people of Bloomington–Normal a retreat center that provides experiences that enable them to thrive in life.

This document outlines a vision for taking next steps in my calling. Thanks for walking with me.

Robbie



We are off-balance and suffering.

Everyone wants to live a life of fulfillment and purpose. More often than not, however, we fall into life patterns and rhythms that prevent us from thriving.

How many young people do you know who so badly want to know what they should “do when they grow up”. . . but they lack the tools and self-awareness to launch in a meaningful direction? For that matter, how many maturing adults do you know who are still feeling unsure about their path and lack the vision or resources to pivot in a new direction?

It seems there are more people struggling with their place in the world than not. And that’s because this disconnect is not about age or life stage—it’s something much more subversive than that.

And how many couples do you know with relationships strained and stretched at the seams, with both partners unable to connect and communicate their hopes, dreams, hurts, and needs?

I’ve seen too many life-less relationships to count.

How many leaders struggle to develop a culture of trust and commitment to effectively move their organization forward and to impact the world... but they lack the insight to halt negative cycles of poor productivity, reactive decision making, crushing morale, and more?

I’ve talked to so many leaders who have the talent to be successful but are simply stuck and unsure how to move forward.

How many people have you met who want to nurture their interior faith life or want



a deeper relationship with Jesus . . .
but they lack the safety and guidance
needed to grow into a deeper faith?

I've heard this desire for a more vibrant
faith from people both inside our churches
and out in the community.

In all these scenarios, one thing is true:

**People in our community
long for more out of life
than what they currently
are experiencing.**

We are disconnected and fragmented
internally from ourselves as well as
externally from others, the world, and
God. When these key relationships are
out of order, we struggle on every front.
Our family life suffers. Our work suffers.
Our faith suffers.

But resetting these relationships will
require resetting the patterns and
rhythms of our lives. How we got to
this point will not get us anywhere new.
We may long for something more from
ourselves, our work, our relationships,
and our faith. But this longing, if not
stewarded and guided, can lead to some
very unhealthy ends. None of us on our
own fully know how to point our lives
in more meaningful directions—or to do
so with consistency.

We need help.



Enter the REtreat Center.

Everyone longs to thrive in work, relationships, and faith, but few people know the way forward.

The REtreat Center is where people in our community can find time and space to discover life-giving rhythms that will renew their entire approach to work, relationships, and faith, setting them on the path to thrive.

The Center provides a variety of holistic experiences for guests to discover life-giving rhythms for mind, body, and spirit. We will tend to every detail, freeing our guests from the usual everyday stresses, allowing them to focus on the retreat experience they've selected. We'll offer a variety of options to help guests focus on a particular area of need or even provide them a silent retreat program they can follow alone.

Upon arrival, guests check in at the main house where they are welcomed and become oriented. Then, we'll take them along wooded paths to their personal tiny house. Our private tiny homes are nestled throughout our wooded grounds for maximum quiet and minimum disruption. Each tiny house is fully designed and decorated, loaded with textures and colors that contribute to the entire experience.

Food is a key part of the retreat experience, as it stimulates the senses and nourishes the mind, body, and soul. Our menus are designed to delight and satisfy, and dietary needs will be handled in full. Meals, drinks, and snacks will be available at the main house, giving our guests the opportunity to walk through the woods along the way.

The stillness of nature also plays a key part of the experience at the Center. Hearing the wind blow through the trees, exploring the hiking trails, feeling the breeze on your face, coasting along the pond in a kayak... all these physical activities offer sensations that reset the rhythms and stir an awareness we miss in everyday living.

The combination of services that tend to the whole person—mind, body, and soul—make the Center's offering effective in its mission of seeing everyone in Bloomington-Normal thrive.



A low-angle, close-up shot of a person's legs from the knees down, standing on a wooden plank deck. The person is wearing olive green cargo pants with rolled-up cuffs and brown leather hiking boots with orange laces. The background is a dense forest of tall evergreen trees, with sunlight filtering through the canopy. The word "VISION" is centered in white, sans-serif capital letters.

VISION

A thriving Bloomington–Normal.

Empowering every person in Bloomington–Normal to thrive in every aspect of life.

The place Bloomington–Normal goes to thrive.

A photograph of a person kayaking on a body of water during sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and lens flare. The water is slightly rippled. In the foreground, a coiled yellow and green rope sits on the blue deck of a kayak. In the background, a person in a teal kayak is visible, paddling away from the viewer. A dense line of evergreen trees forms the horizon.

MISSION

We make it possible for everyone in
Bloomington–Normal to thrive by offering retreat
experiences empowering healthier life rhythms
that renew work, relationships, and faith.



PROJECT SUMMARY

RELATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The Center will make it possible for everyone in Bloomington–Normal to experience relationships that thrive:

1

Relationship with yourself

We will help people make sense of what is happening in their own heads, hearts, and bodies by helping guests grow in self-awareness and become empowered to more cohesively communicate their own thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires.

2

Relationship with the world

We will help individuals and organizations understand their purpose, calling, and core-values. In addition, this includes putting these elements into words and employing the strategies to bring that true self to the world in order to bring about good for all.

3

Relationship with others

We will provide a third space for couples, families, teammates, and friends to come and engage in the hard questions as well as dream and vision cast for a brighter future.

4

Relationship with God

For those who want to grow in their Christian faith, we will provide tools and direction to help them develop spiritual formation practices to deepen their connection with Jesus. Many guests will not be interested in Christian faith practices, so we will invite them into greater health through practices that are proven to produce abundant life.

RHYTHM RESET

There is power in carving out time and space from our usual routines to focus and reset our priorities. At the Center, we help guests reset their rhythms through three key components:

1. Time

Our culture continually invests and re-invests in busyness and burnout. The Center will invite guests into a slower routine where they can stop the cycle. Everything about the experience will be tuned to this slower, calmer pace. Guests will be taken care of in full, giving them maximum time to savor the experience and grounds.

2. Direction

We all need a guide in pursuit of new rhythms and routines. The Center will offer a wide array of experts who will help guests repair their four key relationships. There will be on-site specialists (such as coaches, therapists, spiritual directors, pastors, nutritionists, physical and massage therapists, fitness instructors and trainers, and so) in addition to holistic helps such as massage therapy, light therapy, sensory deprivation float, yoga and meditation, and a fitness studio.

3. Aesthetic

Our physical environment—both physical and emotional aesthetic of a space—only can affects but also shapes human behavior and emotional health. The Center we will lean heavily on design and craftsmanship to create dramatic yet simple, intentional, and practical interior and exterior spaces. In addition, we will design engaging and meaningful emotional spaces and resources to empower and ignite thriving within each guest.



A man with a beard is shown in profile, leaning over a table and writing in a notebook with a pen. The lighting is dim, creating a focused and contemplative atmosphere. The background is dark and out of focus.

PROGRAMMING

At the Center, guests will be able to select from a variety of retreat experiences. From themed and guided retreats to silent and solo retreats to group sessions, the Center will be the place where Bloomington–Normal goes to thrive.

Our desire is to provide experiences that introduce guests to the rhythm of retreating through one of our structured options. From there, guests will be invited to make retreating a regular part of their well-being and health by returning monthly, quarterly, or annually.

Specific programming options will be developed by specialist and experts who will be hired to conduct these experiences.



THE CASE FOR

TAKING THE NEXT STEPS



I care deeply for my community.

This is where I was born and where I grew up.
I know Bloomington–Normal.

Even so, I've always longed to pursue something new, which I had assumed meant something outside of this community. Despite my desire to leave, God has continually brought me back and kept me right here. This is where I am to leverage my gifts and talents, my story, and my vision to help the people of Bloomington–Normal—and everything they are involved in—thrive.

Here's the path that I've taken over the past 30 years that seems to be leading me to taking the next steps for a retreat center in our community.

I distinctly remember, at age seven, the birth of my desire for and delight in beautiful spaces. It became something of how I saw the world around me—I wanted to spend time in special places, and I wanted to be the one creating them for others to enjoy.

June of 1989 is when I first remember specifically dreaming about providing retreat experiences for others. I began asking God that someday He might allow

me to use my gifts to create spaces for people to get away and reconnect with Him and each other.

Over the years, this prayer has resulted in countless floor plans and sitemaps being drawn, pitches being made, and—unfortunately—crowbars being used to try to force open doors that were not yet ready to be opened.

Frustration and longing both grew over the years, as I learned to wait and trust God's timing. He continued to bring people and opportunities into my path that reminded me He has a plan—and it is way better than mine!

Recently, I've noticed a convergence of a variety of people in my corner, resources on the table, and a heightened awareness and appreciation of our human need for resetting rhythms in order to thrive.

I believe the time has come to take the next steps forward in this calling. To do so, I've developed this project summary, site map, program outline, and budget. Thank you for taking time to review it.



LOCATION

The setting for the Center is integral to its success. Helping guests detach from their usual daily routines and stressors is easier when they are ushered into a new environment. Wooded grounds, hiking trails, and a lake large enough for kayaking and boating are all pieces that make up the whole for this setting.

I've identified a potential location for the Center at Lake Bloomington in Hudson, Illinois. The map to the right outlines the various components of the Center.

LAKE BLOOMINGTON

The REtreat Center Potential Location & Map

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. Main Lodge | B. Full Service Tiny Home |
| • Concierge | C. Limited Service Tiny Home |
| • Meeting Rooms | D. Staff Housing |
| • Food Service | E. Maintenance & Housekeeping |
| • Spa / Therapy | F. Boat House |
| • Coaching Suites | G. Landing Spots |
| • Administration | |

County Rd 1850 E

Ron Smith Memorial Hwy

ESTIMATED BUDGET

Estimated costs for building each site component are also provided, including year one operating expenses.

A	Main Lodge	\$1,000,000
B	Full Service Tiny Homes	\$300,000
C	Limited Service Tiny Homes	\$150,000
D	Staff Housing	\$400,000
E	Maintenance / Housekeeping	\$150,000
F	Boat House	\$25,000
G	Landing Spots	\$100,000
H	Infrastructure & Landscaping	\$500,000
I	Branding, Marketing, & Programing	\$125,000
J	Furnishings, Fixtures, & Equipment	\$250,000
TOTAL		\$3,000,000
	+1 Year of Operating Expenses	\$500,000

STAFFING

Providing a full-service retreat experience will require gifted and visionary full-time staff members.

Retreat Managers

I'd like to hire a couple to manage the retreat center and everything it provides. This includes the programming, the grounds, the maintenance, and the support staff.

Retreat Chefs

I'd like to hire a nutritionist / chef to handle the meals, snacks, and drinks. Food must be presented with care as well as healthful and delicious.

Support Staff

I foresee the hiring of support staff to assist the Managers and Chefs with functions and tasks related to executing the mission of the Center.

NEXT STEPS

For this project to move forward, several things need to come together:

1

Support from my wife, family, and friends

The people I trust the most will need to consider this the best time to take the next step with this project.

2

Commitment from donors / funders

Both major donors and grant organizations would need to commit and donate the seed money for this project to move ahead. I would like 50% of the initial budget in-hand to purchase the property and begin property planning.

3

Interest from land owner

The property I'm interested in is currently owned by Easter Seals. My close connection to this organization means that I have a quick entry for negotiating for the purchase of this property. If the interest to sell remains, I will take the next step in this project.

4

Interest from local corporations / businesses

Because the Center is designed for helping the entire Bloomington–Normal community thrive, employees from local businesses will be regular guests. I would like commitments from four local organizations to use the Center for quarterly or annual sessions by making it part of their benefits package and wellness programs.

life-giving rhythms that will renew and set us on the path to thrive

