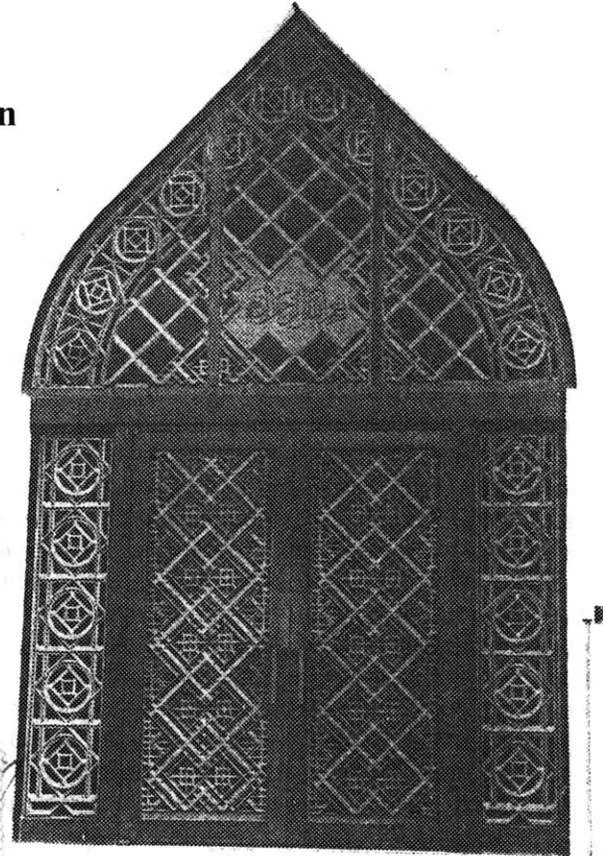


**Segregation by Design?  
The Evolution of an Islamic Community in Michigan**  
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Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and Sociology  
Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts  
June, 1989

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
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## **Segregation by Design? The Evolution of an Islamic Community in Michigan**

by Rula Habal

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 7, 1993  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degrees of  
Master of Science in Architecture Studies and Master of City Planning

### **Abstract**

Today, the notion of the melting pot can no longer explain the process of assimilation in American society. The current cultural scene is comprised of a mainstream group and a large number of subcultural enclaves. The coexistence of these groups leads to tensions between the mainstream culture and the various subcultures, in this case, the immigrant ones. Transformation of the ethnic enclaves occurs over generations of interchange with the mainstream environment and results in specialized communities that are a hybrid of the immigrant's culture and the prevailing American one.

This thesis explores the dialectical relationship between culture and city form by analyzing the evolution of the Islamic community of Dearborn, Michigan, which has the densest concentration of Arab Muslims in America. It traces the original Southend community, which has an irregular, agglomerate city form, to the later developed Eastend community, which has a grid-like city form. This thesis then examines a vision to design a new Islamic community at a proposed site in Plymouth, Michigan. How and to what extent ethnicity is expressed in the physical form of all three communities is examined. Issues of self-image and representation are also explored.

The proposed Plymouth project exemplifies three architectural and urban planning trends: the building of state mosques in the Islamic world, the development of American suburbs, and the creation of subcultural enclaves by design. If it is built, the new Islamic community in Plymouth will be a compromise between the maintenance of self-identity and integrity of the immigrant subgroup and **total assimilation** and integration with the mainstream.

The architectural message sent by these designed ethnic enclaves to the mainstream culture represents new attitudes of the enclave members about their own identity and role in American society. The melting pot model of assimilation is being replaced with a model of distinct but open subcultures. The result will be a culturally pluralistic urban form, where group interchange diffuses polarization and promotes understanding.

Thesis Supervisor: Larry Vale  
Title: Assistant Professor of Urban Studies and Planning

To my parents, Mutaz and Randa  
whose love, support, and guidance have  
enabled me to pursue my dreams.

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To all the people who provided me with the support and help I needed to complete this thesis I give a special thanks:

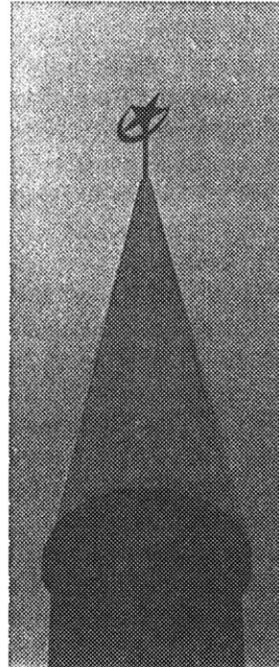
- Eide Alawan, Mike Samhat, and Barbara Aswad, whose hospitable enthusiasm to share their stories and time was invaluable to my research.
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## INTRODUCTION

## **INTRODUCTION**

The objective of this thesis is to explain how the dialectic tensions between culture and subculture have shaped the evolution and urban development of one subgroup of "strangers" in America, the Islamic community in and around Dearborn, Michigan. This community has a relatively long history in the United States (about 90 years), which allows a study of its evolution over several phases. In addition, the fact that one can see the physical manifestations of this community within approximately 20 square miles, makes this a manageable site for research. Furthermore, this is a desirable and manageable case study for me, the author of this thesis because my cultural heritage allows me to identify with and be accepted by the Islamic group studied.

Chapter 1 defines the concepts of culture, subculture, and the stranger and posits the theoretical model to replace the ideal of the melting pot in explaining the American cultural scene. This model also explains how the culture/ subculture tension translates into urban form.

Chapter 2 introduces the Islamic community of Dearborn, Michigan. It describes the original settlement of Muslim immigrants in the Southend of Dearborn and traces their migration pattern to the Eastend.

Chapter 3 describes the vision of a proposed, designed community in Plymouth, Michigan which arose from the perceived

limitations of the current Islamic communities of Dearborn. This chapter was compiled through a series of site visits and interviews with the creators of the Plymouth vision, the planning committee of the Islamic Center of America. This chapter explains the Plymouth vision and the research process behind it.

From my literary and field research, and from critically evaluating the Plymouth project, I draw conclusions about the evolution of an ethnic enclave. With respect to this Islamic community, members who had achieved levels of adjustment and assimilation which would enable them to function outside the subcultural environment still chose to remain closely affiliated with it. In doing so, they induced changes in their physical environment. When the physical environment can no longer accommodate the continually evolving cultural patterns, the result is increasing levels of cultural stagnation and social frustration. The move to the Plymouth site is an attempt to design an environment responsive to the Islamic community's evolving needs and redefine the subgroup's identity and role in the American society. If the implementors of the Plymouth project address the needs and perceptions of their own congregation as well as manage the perceptions of the greater non-Muslim community, I believe the result will be greater social harmony and interchange between Muslims and non-Muslims in the area.





## CHAPTER ONE

### Culture and Community Form

## **CHAPTER 1: Culture and Community Form**

City planning and cultural understanding need to go hand in hand. Gaining a cultural awareness of and sensitivity to a community is imperative in comprehending spatial arrangements and affecting them as an architect or planner. "Cultural and subcultural rules, preferences, and values serve to alter the nature of the relationship between inhabitant and environment and the interpretations of a culturally naive planner may be at variance with the actual behavior of his subjects."<sup>1</sup> Architects and planners often underestimate the extent of discomfort people are willing to bear in order to preserve something of great importance to them, such as a specific pattern of culture. What seems to be most important are their organization structures and the planner or change agent who recognizes this is more likely to create appropriate designs.<sup>2</sup> Success in designing is more a product of accommodating or encouraging desirable cultural patterns rather than merely delivering a meticulous and technically impeccable plan.

### **Culture and Subculture: Coexistence and Conflict**

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, Stanford. On Streets. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 227.

<sup>2</sup>Anderson, Stanford. On Streets. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 227.

Culture is a set of social sanctions that provides the adhesive material for a community group and reflects its desire to maintain group cohesion.

Culture is seen as a patterned, ordered system of symbols that are objects of orientation to actors, internalized aspects of the personality system, and institutionalized patterns in the social system.<sup>3</sup>

In Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, we are reminded of the value of culture in a scene at the funeral for the mother of the main character, Mersault. The reader is allowed a glimpse of the deeper social meaning or culture to which people cling: the rituals and ceremonies, the institution and practices by which society grounds a system of values and beliefs that give shape to the living.

The old people, Mother's friends were coming in...On sitting down, they looked at me, and wagged their heads awkwardly, their lips sucked in between their toothless gums. I couldn't decide if they were greeting me and trying to say something, or if it was due to some infirmity of age. I inclined to think that they were greeting me, after their fashion, but it had a queer effect, seeing all those old fellows grouped round the keeper, solemnly eyeing me and dandling their heads from side to side.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ritzer, George. Sociological Theory. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1988, pp. 213.

<sup>4</sup>Camus, Albert. The Stranger. 1942; translation by Stuart Gilbert. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1946, pp. 10-11.

The appropriation of a ritualized belief system defines and valorizes an individual's place, providing a hierarchy of tasks, taboos, and aspirations.

In every society and especially in contemporary America, a multitude of cultures corresponds to the various population subgroups within the society. Usually, the subgroup that enjoys demographic and/or financial dominance, projects its own set of values and patterns of behavior as the prevailing or "mainstream" culture. The subgroups maintain their identity through the perpetuation of their own subcultures which are distinct from and often in conflict with the mainstream culture. Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that culture seeks to create a familiar world, yet an element of strangeness not only persists but also performs an important role in the quickening of culture.<sup>5</sup> The more familiar the world that is created, the more those who can identify with this world will cling to it. The more tightly they cling and the tighter this bond is perceived by non group members, the stronger the presence of this subculture is perceived by the mainstream society.

A concept that is useful in understanding the relationship between culture and subculture is that of the stranger. As conscious human beings, we tend to grasp the structure of our natural world and strive to distinguish our place in it. We bind together with others who share our vision of the structure of life and the behavioral mechanisms

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<sup>5</sup>Tuan, Yi-Fu. "Strangers and Strangeness." *Geographical Review*, 76(January 1986), pp. 12-19.

which define our existence. The stranger is someone whose vision and behavior differ from the norm, someone who "feels that the prevailing expectations and conventions are to some degree in conflict with if not violative of his personal integrity and identity."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the struggle to find acceptance can conflict with the desire to be true to one's self. Self-conscious affirmation becomes the result of the series of adjustments made between self identity and societal expectations. Albert Camus' stranger is at a distance. He is almost shy, yet maintains a position of neutrality so as not to offend. He is uneasy about what is expected from him and his reactions are often different from what the reader might expect.

As a group member, rather, he (the stranger) is near and far at the same time, as is characteristic of relations founded only on generally human commonness. But between nearness and distance, there arises a specific tension when the consciousness that only the quite general is common, stresses that which is not common. In the case of the person who is a stranger to the country, the city, the race, etc., however, this non-common element is once more nothing individual, but merely the strangeness of origin, which is or could be common to many strangers. For this reason, strangers are not really conceived as individuals, but as strangers of a particular type.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Sprintzen, David. Camus: A Critical Examination. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988, pp. 38.

<sup>7</sup>Simmel, Georg. The Sociology of Georg Simmel (1950). ed. Kurt Wolfe. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1967, pp. 407.

Claude Fischer in *The Urban Experience*<sup>8</sup> points out that urbanites' perception of strangers' "strangeness" results not only from their personal unfamiliarity, but because the urban stranger is likely to belong to a different ethnic, racial, class, or age group. Results of this perception can take the form of suspicion, uneasiness, fear, revulsion, and distrust directed to such strangers. The tension created by "strangeness" is what establishes a dialectic relationship between culture and subculture. The term dialectic is borrowed from the original Hegelian and Marxist writings to denote two entities that affect each other in a continuous feedback loop. In this instance, a relationship of continuous, bi-directional influence is established between the mainstream culture and the various subcultures.

The "stranger" is not always an individual; more often it is a small group of individuals (subgroup) whose culture (subculture) is so different from that of the pervading society that there are almost no links between them. The tension created by "strangeness" is what establishes a dialectic relationship between culture and subculture. In other words, a relationship of continuous, bi-directional influence is established between the mainstream culture and the various subcultures. Music is an example of such a relationship. The mainstream music and the subgroup music evolve as a function of each other. Dialectic relationships between the various subcultures also exist, but are beyond the scope of this thesis.

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<sup>8</sup>Fischer, Claude S. *The Urban Experience*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984.

In the case of many ethnic immigrant groups in the United States, the "stranger" group has chosen this status unlike for example the original African Americans, who were forcefully brought to America by invading strangers into their homeland. Thus, for those who choose to come to a new country, it becomes the burden or responsibility of "the stranger" to find his place in the new society. He must adapt and adjust and in a way redefine his status so that he can function and be comfortable within the larger society. The initial formation of ethnic enclaves evolved to do both these things through economic support and by maintaining enough of "the familiar" traditions to make the stranger feel comfortable in his new home.

However, what happens to the stranger who was forced to emigrate to a foreign land in order to take refuge from war or political strife or because of the lack of economic opportunity that would allow his family to prosper? Is it still "the stranger's" responsibility to adjust to the new land or does the new land now share this responsibility? The United States legal system provides for the political and legal welcome of this class of strangers. However, the welcome stops here. Once in the United States society, the stranger bears the full responsibility to adapt. The expectation of the mainstream that the stranger will assimilate is in contrast with the natural inclination of the stranger to cling on to his immigrant culture.

Getting into the United States may be one thing, but surviving within in it is something much more complex. It is this need for survival that has made ethnic enclaves more than just a temporary stopping ground for new immigrants. It is here that "strangers" to the mainstream American society can find support and comfort among people whose values, norms, and mores are the same as their own. "Spatial conditions are the condition, on one hand, and the symbol, on the other, of human relations."<sup>9</sup> The existence of ethnic enclaves, many times closed to others through language barriers, can result in further uneasiness and distrust towards "the stranger." Herbert Gans<sup>10</sup> argues that phenomena like misanthropy<sup>11</sup> and the way of life they imply result from people's social roles as indicated by their demographic characteristics, especially with regard to social class, life cycle stage, and ethnicity. In addition, I argue that xenophobic reactions (i.e. reactions triggered by mere "stranger" status as opposed to subgroup behavior), are an additional cause for misanthropy. This implies that, regardless of how well the stranger integrates himself in terms of social behavior, there will still be a sense of exclusion based upon his inalienable physical characteristics derived from ethnicity.

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<sup>9</sup>Simmel, Georg. The Sociology of Georg Simmel (1950). ed. Kurt Wolfe. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1967, pp. 402.

<sup>10</sup>Gans, Herbert (A.M. Rose, editor). "Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life: A Reevaluation of Definitions," Human Behavior and Social Processes. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin, 1962, pp. 625-648.

<sup>11</sup>Here, misanthropy can be defined as the dislike of those who are dissimilar and/ or unknown to oneself.

In many village societies, the household may function as one type of unit of production while the community may serve to meet larger cooperative group demands. Similarly, in the ethnic enclave within American society, the extended household or cooperative group often fulfills cultural needs especially with respect to domestic life (childrearing, cooking, teaching of traditions, and so on). Gerald Suttles suggests that ethnic group cohesion is not achieved through the workings of social sanctions but through a negative pact.<sup>12</sup> He is suggesting that ethnic group cohesion exists as a method of survival from the prejudice and hardships in the mainstream society rather than as a way to reinforce and perpetuate desirable social sanctions (culture). This may be true with respect to the ghetto communities or those ethnic enclaves which developed as a way for new immigrants to make the adjustments needed to assimilate into mainstream American society, but with respect to today's ethnic enclaves, especially non-ghetto communities, Suttles' assertion is not accurate. Many ethnic communities today, such as Lubovich, Korean, and Greek neighborhoods, have achieved some degree of financial independence and political status, but still maintain as a group, the elements of their immigrant culture. Maintenance of such community groups reflects a desire to preserve the social sanctions associated with a specific subgroup of society. In essence, Suttles argues that subgroups preserve cohesion out of necessity. I believe that the picture is more complete if we introduce the notion of preservation of group cohesion by choice and

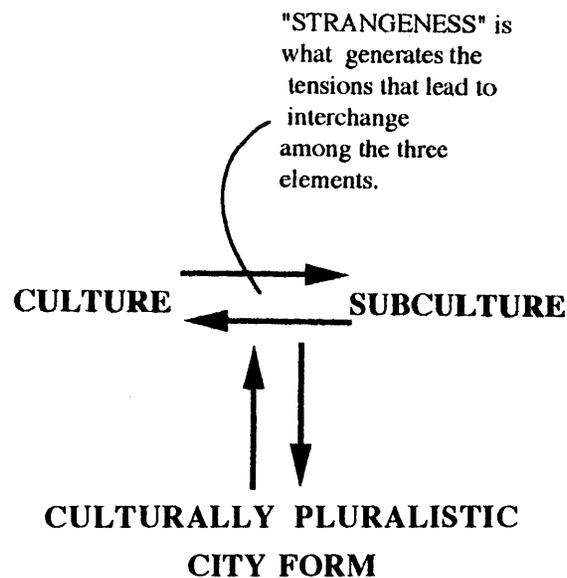
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<sup>12</sup>Suttles, Gerald. The Social Construction of Communities. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp. 25-28.

allow the possibility for a combination of necessity and choice as the driving force to maintaining the ethnic enclave.

### Culture and City Form

The view of cultures as adaptive systems directs attention away from relatively superficial matters and toward the continuous interaction among technological, political, religious, and other structures in creating social and spatial forms. Moreover, by relieving researchers of the burden of specifying the direction of a determinate relationship, the approach focuses on processes of interaction.<sup>13</sup> In essence, culture and city form have a dialectic relationship similar in effect to that between culture and subculture. In this instance, culture dictates city form but at the same time city form shapes culture. Not only do the culture and subculture have their own distinct built form, but the nature of the dialectic relationship between culture and subculture also breeds culturally pluralistic urban and suburban form. In turn, these loop back to reinforce certain aspects of culture, subculture, and different degrees of their interaction (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** This diagram illustrates the dialectic relationships between culture and subculture, and between all types of culture and city form in America. This nexus of relationships obviates the importance for the designer to create flexible and adaptable built environments, which can respond to the changing tensions over time.

To the extent that city form and culture are compatible, this feedback loop becomes mutually reinforcing. This is a very powerful notion for designers. What it implies is that the architect or planner must

<sup>13</sup>Anderson, Stanford. On Streets. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 226-239.

understand that culture is going to affect the use of the design regardless of the technical specifications. At the same time, though (and this is the beauty of the dialectic concept), the design itself will have a formative effect on culture. Which direction of influence will be more dominant (i.e. design to culture or culture to design) will depend on the specific circumstances, timing, and stage of development of the group by either hindering or facilitating certain behaviors. For example, the Middle Eastern coffee house is a social forum for the exchange of ideas among men. The establishment of such a place arose out of a combination of the culturally induced gathering of men to discuss politics and economics and out of the cultural habit of drinking coffee. These behaviors become further reinforced by the creation of a place in which they can occur freely. Another example is the development of the walkable street form which facilitates the close and interdependent relationship between family units. Contrastingly, the suburban street, with its ordered, less dense street pattern, necessitates the use of cars and is consistent with family unit independence.

Tuan believes that the most ambitious creation of culture is the city. With the creation of the city, the concept of urbanism which generally refers to population size can be developed. Sociologist Thomas Wilson specifies two principal effects of urbanism with respect to subcultural theory.<sup>14</sup> First, he states that urbanism creates viable social worlds for urbanites by differentiating the population into

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<sup>14</sup>Wilson, Thomas C. "Urbanism, Misanthropy, and Subcultural Processes." The Social Science Journal, 22 (July 1985), p. 90.

segments, each of which articulates unique norms, customs, beliefs, and values. As these segments or subcultures grow, attaining a "critical mass" and becoming more "institutionally complete," social life within them becomes more intense. Second, Wilson believes that as a subculture becomes more complete and intense, its members are perceived to be and actually tend to become more unconventional according to the standards of non members. Simmel and Wilson concur that, in general, urbanism negatively influences the quality of nearly all social relationships in the sense that proximity of social groups underlines the differences among them and leads to a higher probability of unproductive social friction. At the same time, low population density accommodates social seclusion, and deprives the groups of the opportunity to communicate, therefore leading to productive friction. Unproductive friction can be defined as tension and conflict that lead to further polarization, whereas productive friction leads to understanding and perhaps tolerance.

Furthermore, Wilson develops a model that outlines the nature of the relationship between the subcultural group and the local community at large. According to Wilson's model, a large subcultural group is likely to encounter more suspicion and uneasiness from non group members in urban rather than rural environments. He also states that a large subcultural group has a greater chance of meeting outsiders in the urban environment than in the rural environment where the subcultural groups critical mass would be more prominent. Wilson continues to define the situation for small subcultural groups as well. He

stresses that the critical mass of this subcultural example is small in the urban or rural environment, but in the city, the chances of meeting other co-members is much higher than it is in the rural setting. Although Wilson does not clearly define "large" or "small," some generalizations about his theory can still be made. Basically, he concludes that the size of the subculture (whether large or small) and the overall population density (as expressed by urban or rural settings) influence misanthropy towards non subculture members as well as towards subculture members. Additionally, the impact of urbanism on misanthropy will be strongest against members of relatively large subcultures. Although Wilson does not offer any research findings, I believe that the degree to which the subculture's built form is expressed would add to the degree of misanthropy. Small or large subculture groups whose community form is different from that of the mainstream one would probably evoke stronger feelings of misanthropy than those whose built form was similar to or blended in with that of the mainstream. If the physical environment of the subculture group is different, a higher level of misanthropy would probably occur in urban areas, where the mainstream population is larger and where crowding and other urban phenomena create a more stressful atmosphere.

**Assimilation in the United States: Fusion or Interdependence?**

Despite the efforts of the last three decades, ethnic prejudice still exists in the United States in the 1990's. While organized efforts to bring about a reduction in racial and ethnic tension represent an important part of contemporary American life, resentment and prejudice against ethnic minorities still exists. To some extent, the laws have changed the form that prejudice takes, but they have not extinguished it. It may just be that prejudice and friction among heterogeneous groups is the price that America has to pay for its diversity, and the benefits it derives from it. Although attempting to eliminate prejudice is a desirable goal, the more practical short-term question is: given that intra-ethnic/religious group friction does exist, and is unlikely to be eliminated in the foreseeable future, how can these groups respond to it? Today, in 1993, it is becoming increasingly apparent that some ethnic groups, feeling such pressures, are relying more and more on their own support networks rather than attempting to indistinguishably integrate themselves into the mainstream, a group which has become harder to define in the 1980's and 1990's.

The demographic trends of American society are moving away from the unquestionable demographic dominance of the Anglo-European group of original colonizers. The economic trends certainly lag behind the demographic ones in terms of non-Anglo-European financial status. However, even this inequity is a foreseeably reversible

one in the long run. The increasing prosperity of certain subgroups combined with the lack of confidence in the system's ability to abolish prejudice have led to a trend towards preservation of subcultures rather than the traditional melting-pot ideal of complete assimilation.

Assimilation can be defined as the gradual harmonic coexistence of subgroups with distinct cultures and identities.

Cultural pluralism was a fact in American society before it became a theory... This theory developed into an image of the United States as a country strengthened by diversity. Against absorption or fusion, advocates of pluralism saw America as a "multiplicity in a unity", an orchestration of mankind.<sup>15</sup>

Here, Peter Rose uses the metaphor of the American society as an orchestra. This metaphor can be taken one step further in that the orchestra contains many types of instruments, each with its own timbre and tonality. The combination of different chords of each instrument can create harmony or dissonance's all to make "the symphony of civilization," but with one difference. "A musical symphony is written before it is played; in the symphony of civilization, the playing is the writing, so that there is nothing so fixed and inevitable about its progressions as in music, so that within the limits set by nature they may vary at will, and the range and variety of the harmonies may

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<sup>15</sup>Rose, Peter I. They and We: Racial and Ethnic Relations in the United States. New York, NY: Random House. 1974, p.65.

become wider and richer and more beautiful."<sup>16</sup> Following this metaphor and the theory of cultural pluralism, there is the assumption that there is strength in variety and that the whole benefits from the individual characteristics of its parts. The consequence of diversity is social friction. The net benefit of diversity is derived after subtracting the cost of friction, productive or unproductive. To the extent that friction can be managed constructively, we will see social progress through expanding the pool of ideas and solutions available to each individual member of society.

What makes today's subcultures what they are is not simply the ethnic traditions of their original immigrant culture, but also a shared set of experiences and reactions to America. Thus, what is called immigrant group subculture is different from the culture of the inhabitants of the country of origin. This understanding is equally important both for the scholar studying subcultures and for the subculture members. The scholar must not be biased by his off-the-shelf models of specific ethnic behavior. The subculture member must not be overcome by nostalgia and affinity to the set ways of the original immigrant culture. Clinging onto or returning to the original culture is utopic because culture is dynamic, in America and in the immigrant's country of origin, and therefore it is continually affected by social, economic, and political conditions.

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<sup>16</sup>Kallen, Horace M. "Democracy versus the Melting Pot," The Nation, February 25, 1915, p. 220.

We are witnessing a change in the urban planning profile of America. For over a century there existed invisible enclosures around ethnic communities. The barriers were most often language and a manner of treatment or obvious perception of one as an "outsider." For decades, we have been familiar with the gated community, usually the luxury home site in the fancy suburban neighborhood. In the 1980's, with the increase of crime in our cities and suburbs, these gated community options have been extended to those with middle and low incomes as well. Following this trend, we are also seeing the design or conscious adjustment of ethnic communities to define their boundaries more clearly. Although initially such projects would be contrary to the common sense of political appropriateness, it would not be surprising if in the next twenty years we start to see gated ethnic communities. To the extent that this trend leads to further fragmentation of the American society, it may be counter productive to achieving social harmony. However, if a balance can be stricken between maintenance of cultural integrity and appropriate inter group communication and interchange, then, in the long run, this trend may advance social harmony by eliminating ignorance and promoting tolerance.





**CHAPTER TWO**  
**The Arab Islamic Community of**  
**Dearborn, Michigan**

## **CHAPTER 2: The Arab Islamic Community of Dearborn, Michigan**

### **First Impressions**

On my first visit to the streets of Dearborn, I was looking for some physical manifestation of the Middle Eastern community about which I had spent months reading. In many ways, its presence was not as subtle as I had expected, and yet at the same time, it seemed very well integrated into the surrounding neighborhoods. Driving down Warren Avenue, the main commercial street, evidence of the Middle Eastern community became more and more prevalent. Various establishments lined both sides of the six-block stretch very clearly identifying the community which they serve. Signs, written in both Arabic and English, denoted supermarkets, book shops, auto shops, clothing stores, beauty salons, juice bars, restaurants, and bakeries. There were also offices for doctors and dentists, as well as pharmacists, insurance agencies, real estate agencies, a publishing company, Islamic Institute, mosque, and Arab cultural and social service agency. The weather was pleasant, and I rolled down my car window while slowing down to get a better glimpse of the active street life. From my childhood visits to the Middle East, I noticed a resemblance to Arab village attire of many of the pedestrians. I saw many people who wore traditional Muslim coverings, especially the women who often covered their heads. I

noticed groups of older men sitting in shady spots outside drinking coffee, playing backgammon, or just conversing. As I continued to observe all the pockets of activity, I wondered how such a community could have formed in the midst of Western, Christian America and how it has continued to preserve the traditional culture of a land so far away.

### **First Settlers**

Today's picture represents almost a century of evolution of the original settler group. The development of the automobile industry at the turn of the century provided enough activity and employment opportunity to attract many immigrants to the Detroit metropolitan area. During this time, Arab Muslims who were "driven by poverty, attracted by wealth,"<sup>17</sup> followed the earlier examples of their Christian countrymen who had emigrated nearly a quarter of a century before because of the collapse of the silk industry. Most of them came from what is now called Lebanon, but there was also a considerable number from Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. Numerous scholars believe that religion was the main factor in delaying their movement.

The many waves of migrations throughout the short history of the United States have not come accidentally from Western and European nations. In fact, they have been attracted to the New World, aside from the

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<sup>17</sup>El Kholy, Abdo. The Arab Moslems in the United States; Religion and Assimilation. New Haven, CT: College and University Press. 1966, pp. 17.

economic adventure, by the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants who set the religio-cultural structure of this nation... [A]dherence to the old religion which differs from the religion prevailing in the adopted culture, is assumed to delay the immigrant group in assimilating the values of the new culture.<sup>18</sup>

Abdo El Kholy, who has done much research on Arab Muslims in the United States, interviewed an elderly woman who stated that her father had planned to accompany some Christian friends to America. "He bought the ticket and boarded the boat. Shortly before sailing, he asked the captain whether America had mosques. Told that it had none he feared that America was *blad kufr* (land of unbelievers). He immediately got off the boat"<sup>19</sup> Hence it was the fear of losing their religious identity in the "unbelieving," non-Muslim country that was the main factor which delayed Muslims.

However, the economic prospects of America brought on by the production of the automobile, eventually provided enough incentive to emigrate to the United States and especially to Michigan. Most of the early families came between 1900 and 1915 from the villages of the Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon.

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<sup>18</sup>El Kholy, Abdo. The Arab Moslems in the United States; Religion and Assimilation. New Haven, CT: College and Univ. Press. 1966, pp. 15.

<sup>19</sup>El Kholy, Abdo. The Arab Moslems in the United States; Religion and Assimilation. New Haven, CT: College and Univ. Press. 1966, pp. 17. It is also important to emphasize that in many ways, Islam is more than a religion in the spiritual sense, it is a practical way of life. The teachings and practices of Islam outline one's behavior for every aspect of life from family responsibilities, to law and inheritance, to everyday relations between people. That is why these potential immigrants felt that any violation of these codes of behavior reflected *kufr* (disbelief).

Most were middle peasants, a category which owns its land and works it with the family labor, as opposed to the rich peasant family which owns more land and hires others to farm it. The family work-ethic proved beneficial in their adaptation to the new country. Both men and women went to work, but women would work in stores, seldom in factories.<sup>20</sup>

Many Muslims settled in Highland Park, the original home of the Ford Motor Company, alongside Lebanese Christians from the same villages. They opened grocery stores and worked at Ford as unskilled laborers. Robert Swartz of Wayne State University found that the Ford Sociological Department<sup>21</sup> listed 555 Arabic men, classified as Syrians, among their factory workers in 1916.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to World War I, Ford opened what is today called the Ford Rouge Plant in the Southend of Dearborn. Ford intended this plant to be a European worker reserve; however, Asians and Middle Easterners also were included in this plant. Thus, this area included people who were Chinese, Middle Eastern, Armenian and Eastern European. In the 1920's, the Southend was composed largely of Rumanian, Italian,

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<sup>20</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993.

<sup>21</sup>The Ford Sociological Department was established in 1913 to "promote the welfare of the company employees." It maintained demographic data on all factory workers and also monitored personal behavior and family status. Based on "good behavior" established by the Ford Sociological Department, workers were eligible for profit sharing and other benefits. The department was officially disbanded in 1948.

<sup>22</sup>Before the French mandate (1920) partitioned the Middle East, what is now called Syria and Lebanon was called the Great Syria.

**Figures 2,3,4:** These are various areas within the Southend. Here, the residents are performing their daily tasks of errands. Their attire represents the Middle Eastern villages from which they came, as well as their interpretation of "proper" Muslim dress. Figure 2 shows a woman crossing the backyard of a neighbor to get to the nearby grocery store. The woman in Figure 3 is bringing her child home from the bi-lingual public elementary school shown in the background. Figure 4 shows two men who have just come from the mosque and are heading to a nearby coffee house.



**Figure 2**



**Figure 4**



**Figure 3**

Polish, and a small group of Arabs.<sup>23</sup> During this early period, many Arab Muslims believed that their immigration was temporary. Men came to America to make enough money to return to the old country and provide for a better life. Eventually, some brought their wives or other family members and stayed, but it was primarily after World War II that the idea of settling became more prevalent. It is through this chain migration that long lineages in the community have developed (Figures 2, 3, and 4). This wave of immigration occurred in the late 1940's as a result of the Palestinian War. The most current wave started in the mid 1970's, with the emergence of what became the Lebanese Civil War, and continues to this date (Figure 5).

The Southend became primarily Middle Eastern for three reasons. First, there was an urban renewal program that essentially wiped out the European sector under mayor Orville Hubbard (1960's-70's). The city wanted to turn the area into an industrial park by removing blighted homes immediately next to the Ford plant. They did not grant these residents relocation compensation but merely offered them "market value" for their homes. The residents claimed that these prices were unfair. Although the city was found guilty on 29 counts of illegal procedure, the loss of many European immigrants remained permanent (Figure 6). Second, there was/is a great deal of war and turmoil in the Middle East and the numbers of new immigrants arriving grew (at one point up to 3,000-5,000 per year) and this had a

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<sup>23</sup>In the 1940's, Ripley's Believe It or Not wrote that this community spoke 52 different languages.

**Figure 5:** This is one street within the Southend. The homes do not represent anything obviously "ethnic," although their inhabitants are Middle Eastern Muslims. In the Background is the Ford Rouge Plant which today is minimally operational facility for Ford Motor Company.



**Figure 6:** This abandoned church is situated within the Southend. It is one of the few remnants of the once present Christian community.



tremendous effect on the Southend as it became the main immigrant station for people coming from the Middle East. Third, Arabs tend to have large families. In Dearborn today, while 20% of the adults are Arabs, almost 38% of the children are Arabs. Hence, Dearborn consists of the most densely concentrated Arab Muslim community in the United States.

### **Ethnic and Religion Population Statistics**

It is difficult to find accurate population statistics from Census data for the Dearborn area since the ethnic heritage breakdown is only available for the top ten state ethnic groups, and the various Middle Eastern countries are counted separately. There is no category for "Arabic." The Census identifies only a large number of unclassified foreigners (that is not Hispanic, Italian or Polish) who "speak a language other than English at home." Studies done by Professor Barbara Aswad of Wayne State University help to approximate the statistics for the Arab population in Dearborn. Her count of Arabic surnames from the 1988 Polk City Directory found 4,029 households in Dearborn. She also believes that the average size of an Arab family can be conservatively estimated at four or five, which is larger than the American average. Aswad's studies show an approximation of about 18,000 Arabs or 19% of Dearborn's approximate 93,000 population. She does not know what percentage is Muslim; however, in 1983,

Abraham and Abraham estimated that about 40% of the Arabs in the total Detroit metropolitan region were Muslims.<sup>24</sup>

### **Change and Expansion of the Southend**

As the Arab population continued to grow in the Southend of Dearborn, reaching 50% during the 1970's and then extending to 75%,<sup>25</sup> socio-political pressures generated by the city and non-Arab Muslims emerged. These pressures tested the solidarity of the local Arab brotherhood and their established support systems and resulted in a geographical change of the community.

In the 1950's the city began a concentrated effort to change the Southend from residential to industrial for both economic and racial reasons. On the economic side, the real estate bordering the Ford plant which was occupied by the Southend housing had high commercial value because of its proximity to the plant. Additionally, the growing and closely knit Arab community was perceived as a potential political threat and an economic burden by the city. The Dearborn press as well as local legal advisors have described many incidents of Arab Muslim discrimination, some obvious, which have resulted in court suits, and

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<sup>24</sup>Abraham, Sameer and Nabeel. Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1983, pp. 89.

<sup>25</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into a book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993.

others more subtle. The city's effort to convert the Southend continued gradually in phases during the 1950's and 1960's, although concrete actions did not occur until the 1970's. At this point, the community mobilized and sued the city. After an extensive court battle, the city was found to be in violation of 29 federal and state laws. Although the "taking" of private property was ended in the late 1970's, a final verdict was not pronounced until 1984. By this time already one-third of the housing stock had been destroyed.

In the 1980's money was made available to cities through federal block grants given according to a formula based on families with a low income. (These were cut during the Reagan Administration) Many of these were Arab Muslim families in Dearborn. The city began to put some of the block grant money into renovating the houses and businesses along Dix Road, the major "strip" of coffee houses and shops in the Southend.<sup>26</sup> City government money was provided for the first phase of the creation of an Arabian village through a federally funded facade program (Figures 7,8 and 9). The objective was to create a real ethnic area, like the Chinatown of San Francisco or the North End of Boston, that would attract visitors. Although some residents believed that the area's appearance did improve, many merchants said planning was poor and the quality of workmanship was lacking. One bakery owner felt that "the government should have just given the money to the

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<sup>26</sup>The information in this section is from the unpublished paper of B. Aswad and an interview conducted with Ishmeal Ahmed, the Director of ACCESS, on June 24, 1992.



Figure 7



Figure 8

Figures 7,8,9: These images show the results of the federally-funded facade program. The arches, signs, etc. represent the efforts of city appointed non Arab designers to make this area into what they thought looked like an "Arabian Village."



Figure 9

store owners and let them do it."<sup>27</sup> In addition to the facade program, federal funds also provided local park and street improvements and subsidized new town houses which improved both the appearance of the area and the availability of housing. Currently housing prices run between \$45,000-\$90,000.<sup>28</sup> Three families may share a house. Second and third generations and those with financial means to move out of the Southend have gone to surrounding Western suburbs such as Dearborn Heights although many have formed a new community in the northeastern section of Dearborn known as the Warren Avenue area, east Dearborn, or Eastend.

During the period of confrontation with the city, Dearborn's Arab community faced the additional problems arising from the political turmoil in the Middle East and the resulting influx of large numbers of Arab immigrants. Initially a volunteer group, the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)<sup>29</sup> was created in 1971 to assist local members and incoming immigrants with social services (Figures 10 and 11). After a period of five years, it received state and local funding, but remained under the control of a rival Arab social service group centered in Detroit, the Arab-American and Chaldean Council. ACCESS became an independent unit and

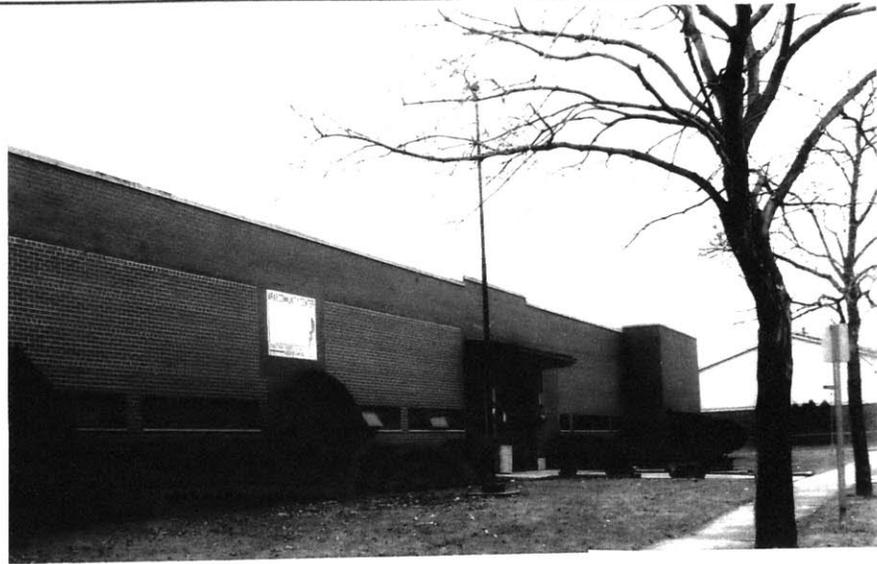
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<sup>27</sup>"Improvements Follow City's Change of Attitude," by Ken Palmer. Dearborn Press and Guide, September 22, 1983, Section A.

<sup>28</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into a book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993.

<sup>29</sup>Information about ACCESS was gathered from B. Aswad's unpublished article and interviews with Sally Howell and Ishmael Ahmed of ACCESS in June and July of 1992.

**Figures 10,11, 12:** These photographs show the Southend and Eastend branches of ACCESS. The directors here make a strong point about being a cultural, not religious, institution, despite being in a predominantly Muslim neighborhood. As a result, their buildings look neither Arabic nor Islamic, but are nondescript, small, and box-like. The flag pole has no flag, Arabic or American.



**Figure 10:** Southend.



**Figure 12:** Eastend.



**Figure 11:** Southend.

established the Mental Health Family Counseling unit. In 1988, ACCESS listed 16,000 clients and gave surplus food to 17,000 people through six food programs. Ishmael Ahmed, the current Director of ACCESS breaks down the center's role into three parts: as a provider of direct services, a provider of a community center, and a provider of advocacy on the part of the Arab community.

We're a human services organization not a religious institution. We provide social services and a lot of social service referrals. We do translations; we have a family counseling unit. We do the whole gamut of psychological and psychiatric counseling, individual, and group counseling. We have a drug prevention and intervention program. We have a teen pregnancy program. We have a health clinic . We have pre-natal and post-natal programs. We do screening for teenagers. We have a whole medical assessment program for the neighborhood. We have a library with a whole range of library services, including tutoring programs, and a museum. Mostly we do educational programs for people outside the Arab community about the Arab community.<sup>30</sup>

ACCESS identifies itself ethnically rather than religiously. The question of self identity as ethnically or religiously based has created tensions within the Dearborn community. As a result, members have developed a close affiliation with either ACCESS or one of the four mosques in the immediate area and tend to maintain relationships with other similarly affiliated community members.

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<sup>30</sup>Interview with Sally Howell, Cultural Director of ACCESS, June 20, 1992.

ACCESS offers a variety of services to facilitate integration and assist the Arab community. Many of these services do not exist in the immigrants' country of origin. In order to survive, the support group has to provide tools and services in response to the conditions of the United States' (host) environment. The immigrant's culture is unable to respond to the immigrants' needs within the host environment, and thus, it has been supplemented by support networks such as ACCESS. It is the adaptability of ACCESS, which understands and responds to the tensions between the mainstream and immigrant groups, that has made it successful. Because of the community's need and desire for ACCESS' services, the Center opened a new branch on Warren Avenue in the Eastend of Dearborn in the summer of 1992 (Figure 12).

### **Role of Religion and Religious Institutions**

It is agreed by both Christian and Muslim communities that moving to a Christian country was easier for Christians than for the Muslims who had no mosques, schools or traditions in the United States.<sup>31</sup> For the early Catholic Arab immigrants, the Catholic churches were the vehicle they utilized to make the cultural transition. Therefore, it was important that the Muslims established mosques early on as a symbol of support of their cultural traditions within the New World. One of the first mosques in the United States was founded in 1919 in

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<sup>31</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993?.

Highland Park, near the city of Detroit. Following this, other mosques were built throughout the country in cities such as Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Toledo, Ohio; Ross, North Dakota; Chicago, Illinois; Sacramento, California; Michigan City, Indiana; and Dearborn and Detroit, Michigan.

The mosque became very significant in the Muslim community life in America. Here, it is the center of religious and social life as well as a liaison between the local Muslim community and others in America and overseas. For one thing, the mosque provides a place to exchange information about the members of their community and other communities in America and overseas. Additionally, the mosque serves as an educational institution, especially by transmitting cultural and religious values and teaching Islam to the new Muslim generation, and also serves as a hospitality house, providing information and accommodations to foreign Muslims or Muslims traveling around the country. The mosque in America can potentially enable the other religious and ethnic groups to learn about the Arab Muslim community, and thus establish a degree of mutual religious understanding and social cooperation with the larger society. This is rarely the case, however, because of the various groups' perceptions of each other's "strangeness," and the fear and distrust that accompanies these perceptions.

Not all of these roles are similar to those of the traditional mosque in the Middle East. When Mohammed went to Medina, the first

task he performed was to build a mosque. In the prophet's time, the mosque was the center of all Islamic community activities. Nowadays, in the United States, the mosque itself is primarily used for religious reasons; however, occasionally extensions have been added to mosque facilities to provide for educational and social activities.

The first mosque in Dearborn was led by a relative of the founder of the one in Highland Park. Imam Karoub led the Sunni mosque in the 1940's and 1950's. It was established in the heart of the Southend community on Dix Road (Figure 13). The Shi'is had invited Imam Cherri from Lebanon to head their group and by 1962, a new mosque, the Islamic Center of America, was built. It was located outside the community, in the northwestern area of Dearborn, and served many of the second generation who had moved away from the community.<sup>32</sup> Abdo El Kholly felt that the establishment of the two mosques was the beginning of a period of religious separation between the two sects.

The existence of the two Arab mosques is a sign of the persisting sectarianism, carried over from the old country by the first generation and still maintained between the Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993?.

<sup>33</sup>El Kholly, Abdo. The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation. New Haven, CT: College and Univ. Press. 1966, pp. 19.

Other writers felt that the separation was also a matter of economic class, although, despite the economic standing of the larger Shi'ite community, there were also some prosperous Sunnis.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1970's, the Dearborn Sunni mosque in the Southend changed from "a mosque with a quite-assimilated second-generation Lebanese community" to a more orthodox mosque consisting primarily of Yemenis. Money for the expansion of the mosque came from Saudi Arabia. The change resulting from the increasing arrivals of Yemini immigrants caused some bitterness among the Lebanese, and led to the establishment of the American Muslim Beka'a Society in the Eastend, with an Imam as their leader.<sup>35</sup>

Within the last five years, another major Shi'ite center was established. The Islamic Institute of Knowledge is located on Warren Avenue, in the middle of the east Dearborn community (Figure 14). There is competition between the two Shi'ite centers and imams and it is said that they favor different political factions in Lebanon.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>"Arab Nationalism in America: The Dearborn Arab Community," Immigrants and Migrants: The Detroit Ethnic Experience. Laurel Wige and Sameer Abraham (editor: David Hartman). Detroit, MI: New University Thought Publishing. 1964, p.279-302.

<sup>35</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993?.

<sup>36</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993?.

**Figures 13,14,15:** These are three of the four mosques in Dearborn. For the most part, these buildings have a simple rectangular form. The Dix Road Mosque and the Islamic Center of America have added domes and minarets, which are two architectural elements that the community has come to associate with Islam. Of the three, the Islamic Institute of Knowledge is the only one not free standing. The building was originally for another use before it was converted into the Islamic Institute.



**Figure 13:** Dix Road Mosque, Southend.



**Figure 15:** Islamic Center of America.



**Figure 14:** Islamic Institute of Knowledge, Northend.

In 1993, the Shi'ite Islamic Center of America serves a congregation of about 1500 households or 6000+ people, who are predominantly Lebanese (Figure 15). The Center's Board of Trustees has recently purchased land which could potentially be used for a large Islamic complex. If built, the new Islamic Center of America will include a mosque, school, cultural and theological centers, a convalescent home, housing, and picnic areas. It will be located in the western suburb of Plymouth, Michigan, which, although it is in the general direction of the migration pattern, is about forty miles from the Dearborn Muslim community.

As a result of the recent Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and of the anti-Islamic feeling in the United States, religion has become much increasingly more important in the Dearborn community. The response to Islamic fundamentalism represents a resurgence of religious devotion and, therefore, a tightening of the bond within the world-wide Islamic community. In the United States, the general perceptions of Islam based upon recent terrorist events and the portrayal of Islam in history lead to an anti-Islamic sentiment, and as such push the Islamic community in America closer together. Both of these phenomena manifest themselves in a new emphasis on Islamic dress for women in public, in schools, parks and malls. It is also reflected in the large attendance at the mosques of Arabic and religious classes. Photographs of various religious leaders are seen displayed in people's homes and banners with excerpts from the Koran can be seen strung

across the houses.<sup>37</sup> The Lebanese cable television programs feature long religious broadcasts. There are also frequent radio programs on Islam.

Attention to dress is discussed and people are ranked according to whether they are 'religious' or not. One Imam said that they used to discuss nationalism, but now it is religion, and that there are more divisions in the United States than in Lebanon.<sup>38</sup>

These differing ideologies create significant differences between new immigrants and earlier generations. For example, until recently third-generation teenage girls often wore shorts, but now the pressures are such, that most of them have started wearing more modest dress. An interview with a non-Arab Muslim member of ACCESS revolved around a story which reflected her perceptions about the changing ideologies.

In 1980, a photographer came here and did a project on the Yemeni migrant community. One of the pictures he took was of a Yemeni family here and the woman was not covered. At the time she had no qualms about this. However, just recently, we displayed some of these photographs at ACCESS. The woman who was in this photo saw her picture and became very upset. She told me that she was afraid, because if one of her husband's brothers saw this picture, it could go so far that they could even kill her. She now wears the hijab or veil. While her husband is a relatively liberal man, more of her husband's family and other Yemenis are here now,

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<sup>37</sup>Interview and neighborhood tour with Hassan Jaber of ACCESS, July 1992.

<sup>38</sup>Aswad, Barbara. unpublished chapter to be put into book by Hourani and Shehadi. A Century of Lebanese Migration. London, UK: Tauris Press, 1993?.

making the whole element of the community more conservative. As recently as five years ago, it was very rare to see women wearing a veil or even a cloak. Now, it's very common.<sup>39</sup>

The ACCESS member continues to explain why she thinks this trend has occurred.

Some people are rediscovering Islam. Not just fundamentalism, but conservatism within faith has caught on here. And then there are other people who are assimilating. Some women do this because of how they might be perceived, but there are a lot who just get a shift in focus towards Islam.<sup>40</sup>

The Arab Muslim population of Dearborn today has gone through many changes numerically, politically, religiously, and geographically. The members have been forced to make many adjustments as a result of tragedies abroad and discrimination in the new country. There are differences between the assimilated generations and the recent immigrants and between all the religious, social, and political factions of the larger Arab Muslim community. As do all immigrants, the Arab Muslims came to the United States with aspirations and fears. In addition to their family network, they were able to organize systems of social, cultural, economic, and religious support to assist in the assimilation process while still preserving the essence of their cultural traditions. To some this may seem like an ideal situation, but to others, it represents a permanent nest which shelters the immigrant who remains

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<sup>39</sup>Interview with Sally Howell of ACCESS, July 1992.

<sup>40</sup>Interview with Sally Howell of ACCESS, July 1992.

naive of American ways without ever being encouraged to assimilate with the American society at large.

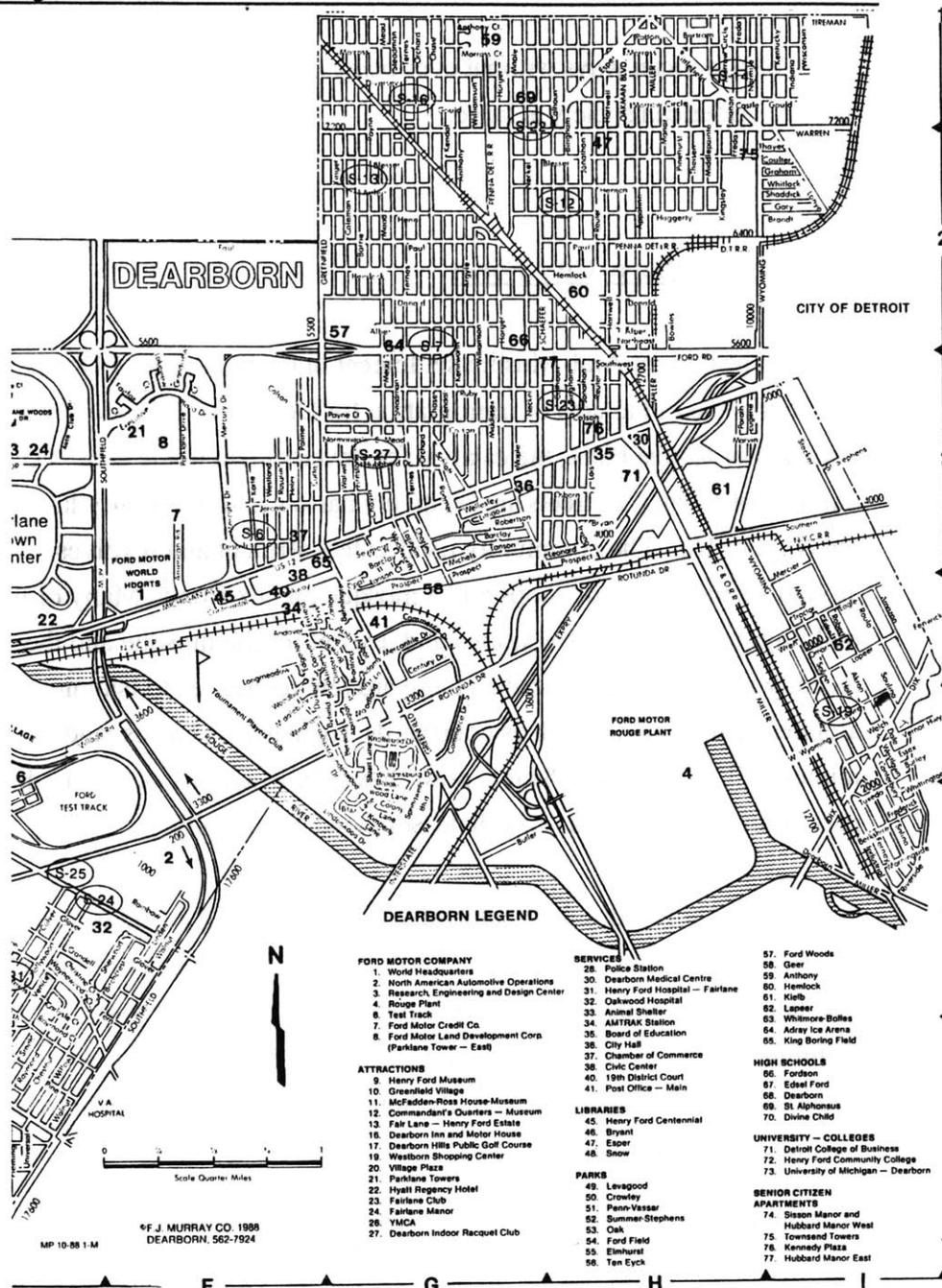
### **Current Dearborn City Form**

The current Arab Muslim settlement in the Southend of Dearborn also marks the initial area of immigration for Dearborn. It borders the Ford Motor Rouge Plant, the catalyst for development in the area. On this side of town, the streets are relatively narrow and irregularly laid out (Figure 16). The community itself is less affluent and revolves around a small string of shops and a mosque on Dix Road. Many of the buildings are less than two stories and, except for the mosque and the recently revamped shop facades, there are few references to Islamic architectural elements such as courtyards, fountains or basins, and minarets.<sup>41</sup> As the Ford Plant is now closed, little activity occurs in this part of town outside this immediate Southend community.

Traveling from the Southend towards Warren Avenue begins on what was once a major road, but is now a run down pathway through a desolate industrial park. After crossing the main east-west road, Rotunda drive, the neighborhood consists of grid-lined streets of suburban American detached family houses complete with grassy front

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<sup>41</sup>Pevsner, Nikolaus, John Fleming, Hugh Honour. A Dictionary of Architecture. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1966, pp. 264-270. Also, refer to Appendix on the Interview with Cleveland Mosque Architect.



**Figure 16:** This map of part of Dearborn. I-4 is the Southend and G-1,2 and H-1,2 indicate the Eastend. The six blocks between Schaffer and Appoline, along Warren Avenue hold the main institutions, shops, and services of the Eastend.

yards, and tree-lined sidewalks (Figure 16). Although the house form does not resemble anything precisely Islamic, many front porches or doors are adorned with Koranic blessings. Travel northbound continues along even grid roads. The approach to Warren Avenue gradually becomes more populated with Arab-run or owned establishments. The only evidence of this at first is the language on the signs (like in the Southend). The Warren Avenue strip contains six blocks of these establishments. The roads here are four-lane and are more conducive to driving than strolling. Crosswalks are placed very far apart making jaywalking a common occurrence for the few pedestrians trying to reach the stores from a parking lot. The businesses on this side of Dearborn are not as modest, they are more like American boutiques and grocery stores rather than the small ethnic markets or delis characteristic of the Southend (Figures 17 to 21).

In both areas, the presence of the ethnic community is revealed most obviously by the attire and physical features of the inhabitants walking down the street, casually conversing in the restaurants, or sitting outside on small stools drinking coffee over a game of backgammon. Although this is not a gated community, it is still very much segregated and outsiders are easily detected. The political history of the community with the surrounding neighborhoods seemed to make the residents very suspicious of anyone attempting to penetrate their community. It is this history that has reinforced the strong bonds among these people. Although the overall architectural style is similar to what one might find in any suburban neighborhood of this income level,

the underlying support establishments are very distinct and, more than anything else, map the community's internal cohesion.



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20

**Figures 17-21:** These photographs show some of the many residences and services with in the Eastend Muslim community. The character of the community is indicated by the language on the signs, types of services, and appearances of the inhabitants. Without these, the community is similar in form to other midwestern towns.



Figure 21



**CHAPTER THREE**  
**The Plymouth, Michigan Project,**  
**Designing the Next Stage of Evolution**

## **CHAPTER 3: The Plymouth, Michigan Project, Designing the Next Stage of Evolution**

### **Limitations of Dearborn: Exploring an Alternative Environment**

The current Islamic Center of America in the northwestern part of Dearborn was originally called the Islamic Center of Detroit. Ten or fifteen years ago the name was changed to Islamic Center of America. The members felt that they were too important to restrict themselves to one mosque and that in time they should build mosques all over the country. Except for an older version of the current Southend mosque, the Islamic Center of America was the only Islamic center in the Dearborn area in the early 1970's. Its initial congregation came from Highland Park, a nearby suburb, and the Southend, and its previous location was in a building attached to a Dearborn bank. For its time, the current center was the largest project of this sort. As the Southend has deteriorated and Warren Avenue is gradually doing the same, the area around the Islamic center is also decaying. Shabby streets and strip malls surround the center which is itself showing signs of its age.

Currently the center's congregation comes from Dearborn and many of the surrounding suburbs. With the increasing number of immigrants as well as the expansion of local families, the congregation

has grown considerably in the last 10 years. For any given religious service or social event, the turn-out may range from 200 to 2000 people. This is causing many problems within the center. If there is any activity within the center it becomes very chaotic. Little gatherings of people collect everywhere, in the prayer room, hallways, and so on. The social and spiritual areas are so close, that it becomes difficult to relax and concentrate on prayer. The women have a particularly difficult time performing wudu<sup>42</sup> and moving to the prayer hall because of inadequate facilities and poor internal traffic within the center. The current center cannot accommodate the size or needs of the congregation and its run down condition does not present a positive image. One member said the following:

[Congregation members] come to this center out of necessity, but they are not really proud of it. There are a lot of people from my business and non-Muslim friends whom I would like to bring to the center, but I hesitate. I have the ability to filter through all the chaotic activity and wear and tear of the center and be very focused about why I am here, but some people have come to the center and gotten as far as the lobby and turned around and left.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, the current facility is not a good ambassador for the Islamic community to the media and the non-Muslim public. For all of

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<sup>42</sup>For a Muslim, wudu or ablution is the ritual of washing or preparing oneself for Salah (prayer). There is a specific method to obtain the cleanliness of body and clothes. Although the washing of hands, feet, face, nose, and arms usually takes place around a common bath space (one for men, one for women), Muslims are not allowed to have a shower in the nude in the presence of others.

<sup>43</sup>Informal discussion with congregation member March 28, 1993.

these reasons, members of the center have seen the need to plan for future expansion to a new facility.

The vision for the new Islamic Center primarily arose from the shortcomings of the current center in Dearborn. Initially a few incremental expansion ideas were explored such as expanding within the Dearborn area by converting old warehouses or other buildings or buying and developing land. To assess these possibilities, a planning committee was established.<sup>44</sup> The chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Islamic Center appointed a chairman of the planning committee, and he in turn selected four other congregation members to form the committee. The planning committee consists of all middle or upper-middle class men, four of whom are involved in business, and three of whom are not first generation American. They are all Shi'ite Muslims, and their families came mostly from Lebanese and Syrian villages. Despite their efforts to relocate the Center, the committee members agreed that they would continue a commitment to the congregation members who would keep attending the current Center by renovating the present facilities (especially the kitchen and lobby areas). However, they saw this was only a "band-aid," as they described it. To

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<sup>44</sup>The current planning committee consists of five men, most of whom are involved in business. The chairman is a successful entrepreneur in his mid-thirties, married with three young children. Two of the members are over 50 with children in their twenties. Of these two men, one is on the board of trustees, is among the original founding members of the Islamic Center of America and is a financially successful and prominent community figure. The fourth member is in his mid-thirties, married with small children. The fifth member is also in his mid-thirties, and is a single man who works as an engineer for one of the local automotive companies.

accommodate the changing needs of the bulk of their congregation they would have to relocate.

After a few months of research, the planning committee decided that the incremental expansion of relocating to other buildings or properties in the immediate Dearborn area was inadequate because of limited space availability and the continual deterioration of the region. They felt that Dearborn is saturated with centers.<sup>45</sup> These centers attract very few people outside of the Muslim community. The members of the planning committee envision an Islamic Center that architecturally would make a positive statement about Islam and take the congregation into the 21st century. They want the center to be on a large parcel of land so that they don't have to worry about the surrounding area. "The important thing is to have enough land so that you can create your own atmosphere even if the area does deteriorate."<sup>46</sup> This comment is spurred by the economic and physical deterioration experienced in the Southend and in other American Islamic communities which have moved their centers/ mosques. Although the planning committee believes that their Center will bring prosperity to the immediate site, they realize that they cannot always control what occurs in the surrounding areas. The new site should allow the possibility to expand the Islamic

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<sup>45</sup>Currently, within a twenty square mile area there is the Southend mosque, Islamic Institute, the American Muslim Beka'a Society, two branches of ACCESS, and the Islamic Center of America. Although none of them is a full religious, social, cultural, and educational facility, cumulatively they provide a large range of services for the Dearborn Muslim population.

<sup>46</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

center beyond the facilities of just a mosque. The planning committee envisions an Islamic center that will contain a school, a retirement home, a theological school and center, a cultural center, and recreational facilities and possibly homes and apartments. The vision is a multi-dimensional one with religious, social, cultural, and intellectual components.

### **Research Process**

#### **Assessing Potential Properties**

The first task of the committee was to analyze what they have in terms of the Dearborn facility and other land properties which the center owns for investment purposes. They began to examine various pieces of land, especially one that the center already owned in Plymouth, Michigan. The Plymouth property has been owned by the center for about five years. It was not clear to the planning committee whether the property had been purchased by the Board of Trustees solely as a financial investment or as a site for a potential project. There were two lines of thought among congregation members regarding which purpose the Plymouth site should serve. Some thought that the property should be sold to finance a project in the Dearborn area. For these people, Plymouth was merely a vehicle. For others, including the planning committee, Plymouth was a godsent piece of land on which to develop. It could satisfy all dimensions of their vision. According to the

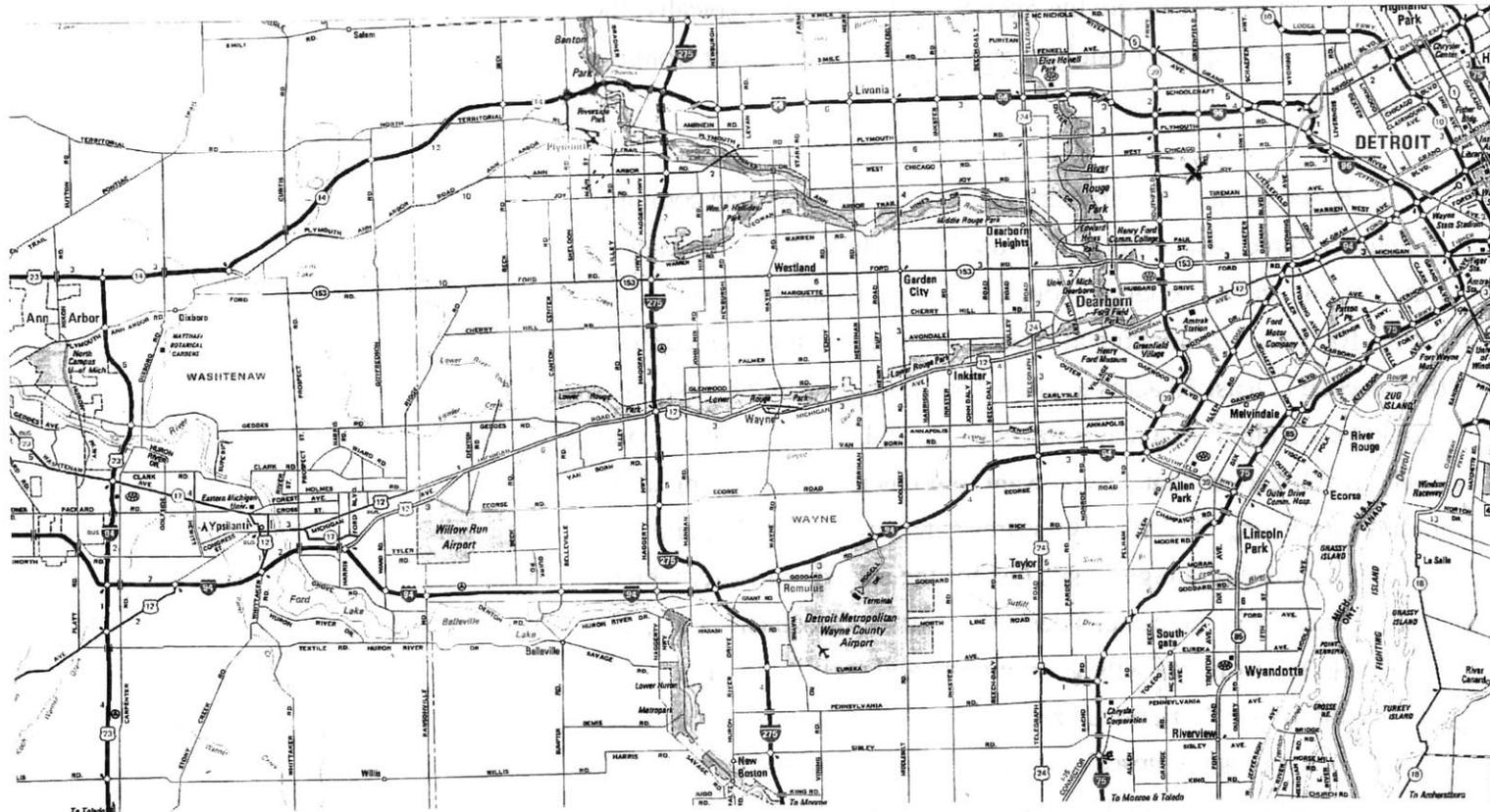
committee, the value of this land as a means to communicate the message of Islam far outweighs its monetary value.

With the above in mind, the planning committee made a presentation to the board of trustees of the Islamic Center in which they successfully advocated that the Plymouth site should be very seriously considered. Subsequently, the committee set out to analyze how well the Plymouth site could accommodate their congregation.

The first issue of concern that the committee had to address was distance (Figure 22). Assuming all families have access to a car and that road infrastructure was available, how far would congregation members be willing to travel to reach a center? Some members expressed that if the new center was ten minutes farther than what they are traveling now, they would not want to make the trip. In order to better understand this issue of distance, the planning committee looked at a number of sites and properties and at other Islamic communities which had undertaken similar projects. They focused on relatively nearby centers with established congregations rather than those which were erected to develop a congregation. That is, they did not want to look at mosques and centers that were trying to build an organization as well as a physical structure. After creating a preliminary questionnaire,<sup>47</sup> committee members conducted telephone interviews with key figures from centers in Toronto, Canada; Cleveland, Ohio; and Toledo, Ohio. For many of these centers, growth of the congregation and deterioration

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<sup>47</sup>See Appendix I.



**Figure 22:** This map shows the spatial and distance relationships between Dearborn and Plymouth and between Detroit, Plymouth and Ann Arbor. The current Islamic Center of America is indicated with an "X" in the upper right hand corner of the map at the corner of Joy and Greenfield Roads in Dearborn. One inch equals approximately 4.5 miles. The following are approximate driving distance times for the various locations with respect to the Plymouth site:

Plymouth - Willow Run Local Airport: 25-30 min.	Plymouth - Detroit Metro Airport: 25-30 min.
Plymouth - Detroit: 45 min.	
Plymouth - Ann Arbor: 45 min.	
Plymouth - current Islamic Center: 30 min.	

of the surrounding area were the reasons for the move. Typically, the new centers were approximately twenty minutes away by car from the old facilities.

Based on these preliminary telephone interviews, the committee established three basic criteria to be used in evaluating potential sites. First, the site should be large enough to accommodate the community for 50-100 years. By looking at other communities they decided that they needed at least 50 acres to allow for future growth. Second, the site should be visible from a major travel route, and, at the same time, not easily traveled to, so that "if you want to go there you are going to have to make an effort."<sup>48</sup> Visibility assures exposure to outsiders, and difficult access discourages visits just for the sake of curiosity which could detract from the center's desired spiritual atmosphere. Last, the site should be in an area with good growth and security in the foreseeable future, "an upscale area, with a lot of promise, a desirable area."<sup>49</sup> A long-lasting upscale image of the new Islamic Center of America was seen as crucial for the repositioning of the Islamic community of Dearborn within the greater American society to reflect the increasing financial strength of the community. At this point, it was apparent to the committee that the Plymouth site was the appropriate choice.

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<sup>48</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>49</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

### Analyzing Similar Projects

With these criteria in mind, the planning committee developed a more extensive questionnaire<sup>50</sup> and visited other centers and locations.

We wanted to be able to go to these centers, knowing that our traveling time was limited, and in an organized, structured way, we wanted to meet with [the key figures] for a couple of hours and be able to absorb as much information from them as possible...We wanted to learn what facilities were most important to them, what problems (administrative, opposition, construction, financial) they faced, how they chose an architect even how much they paid their Sheikhs.<sup>51</sup>

They decided to visit the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo, in Perrysburg, Ohio, and the Cleveland Mosque, in Cleveland, Ohio, because of their proximity to Dearborn and the existence of community and family ties. Additionally, the committee decided to visit five mosques in Toronto because of committee member familiarity with the area.

The Islamic Center of Toledo (Figures 23, 24), in Perrysburg, Ohio, was built in 1980. It is 15-20 minutes from the community's old center in Toledo. This was the first move of its kind in the area. Architecturally the Toledo mosque is very much out of the ordinary and often attracts the attention of travelers driving down the nearby I-75 highway. It is a large white building with an oversized dome and two

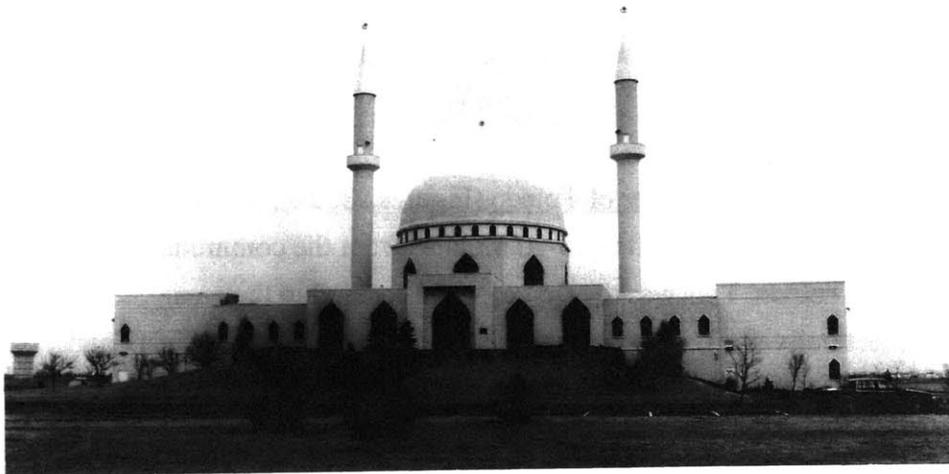
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<sup>50</sup>See Appendix I.

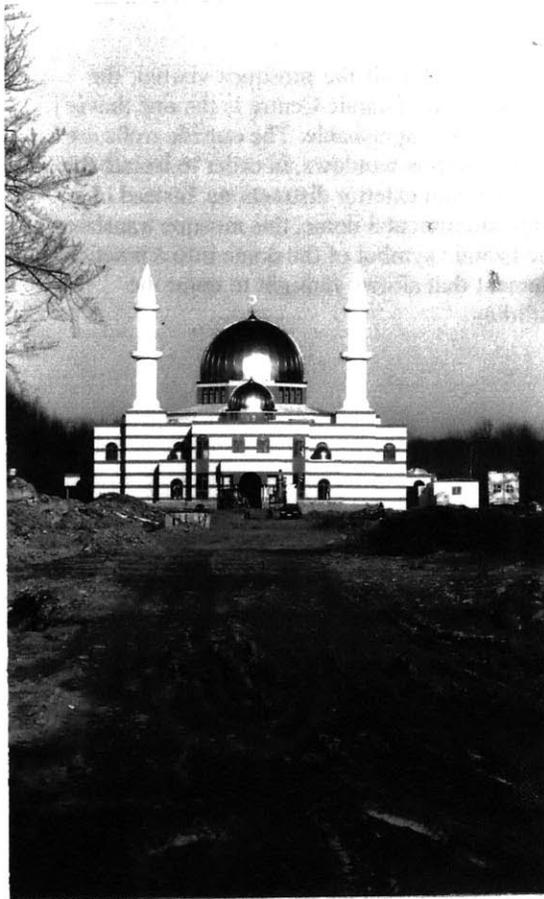
<sup>51</sup>A Sheik or Iman is the Muslim spiritual leader Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.



**Figure 23:** This is a model of the Islamic Center of Toledo's development plan. Currently, only the mosque and two classroom annexes have been constructed. The plan also calls for a school complex (bottom left), multipurpose building (top left), residential wing (top right), and outside gardens. The Masterplan of this center is intended to create a functionally and architecturally cohesive Islamic Center. Keeping this model in the entrance lobby alerts the congregation about the potential for the Center and encourages financial support.



**Figure 24:** This photograph shows phase I of the Islamic Center of Toledo. It includes a mosque and two annexes, one on either side. The design of this mosque mimics the monumental style of the Taj Mahal (see Figure 37) with its oversized dome and tall, thin minarets.

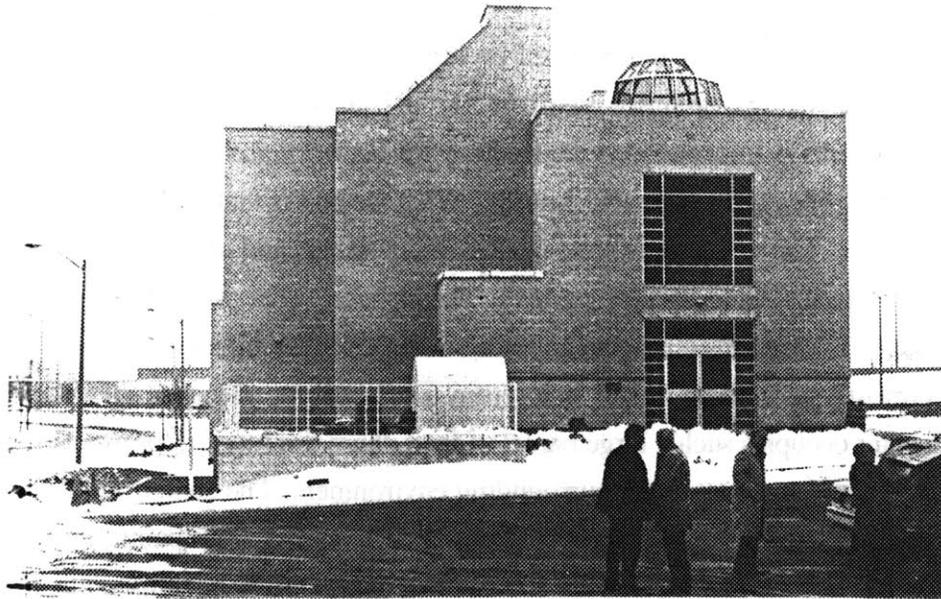


**Figure 25:** This is the new Cleveland Mosque Currently under construction. It is situated far back on its site and is surrounded by research and manufacturing buildings. The design is a post modern translation of the symbols that the architect considers Islamic.

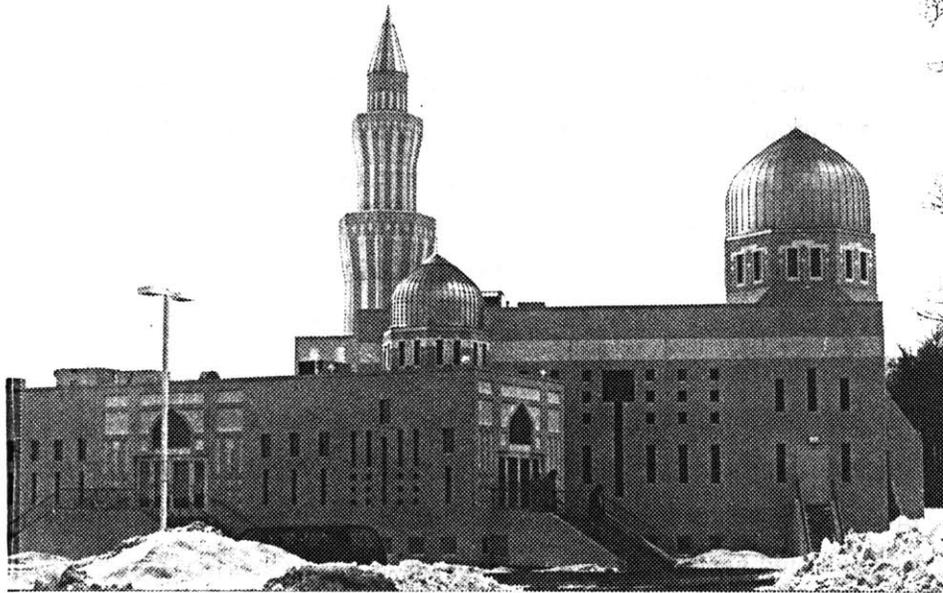
tall minarets, and stands by itself on otherwise undeveloped land. One of the planning committee members for the Islamic Center of America used to drive frequently on the freeway for his work and would often hear people on the CB-radio saying, "What the hell is that? the Taj Mahal?" The response from congregation members and non-Muslims to this mosque has been very positive. The physical form of the building, which is very different from anything in the area, prompts much curiosity and, hence, many visits from non-Muslims. Because the center occupies such a large parcel of land, there is a lot of opportunity to expand and control the surrounding environment. The center has just constructed annexes which hold classrooms and a burial preparation area. They also have plans for a research center, elderly housing units, a recreational facility, and a school on their 48-acre site.

The Cleveland Mosque<sup>52</sup> (Figure 25) is on a site that was bought impulsively by a congregation member. The original center was in downtown Cleveland, about twenty minutes away from the one currently under construction. The site is a long, narrow rectangle of 7.5 acres (245.85 feet on the short sides and 1560 feet on the long ones). Only one short side forms an edge with a street and the surrounding area is built hindering the visibility of the mosque. It is in an area zoned for research and manufacturing and for this reason, the center is having much difficulty achieving its vision. In order to obtain a permit for the mosque, the center had to construct four, single-story office buildings which would generate tax revenue for the city. These office buildings

<sup>52</sup>See Appendices II and III.



**Figure 26:** Of all the mosques visited, the massive Taric Islamic Centre is the one that is the least distinguishable. The outside walls are brick with few windows, in order to isolate the interior from exterior distractions. Instead of a large monumental dome, this mosque translates the Islamic symbol of the dome into a practical element that allows sunlight to enter the building.



**Figure 27:** The recently built Masjid Ahmadiyya mosque uses building materials that are more commonly used in the Western world than in the Eastern or Middle Eastern Islamic ones. Its interpretation of Islamic architectural symbols as well as its interplay between solids and voids are fantastic and futuristic.

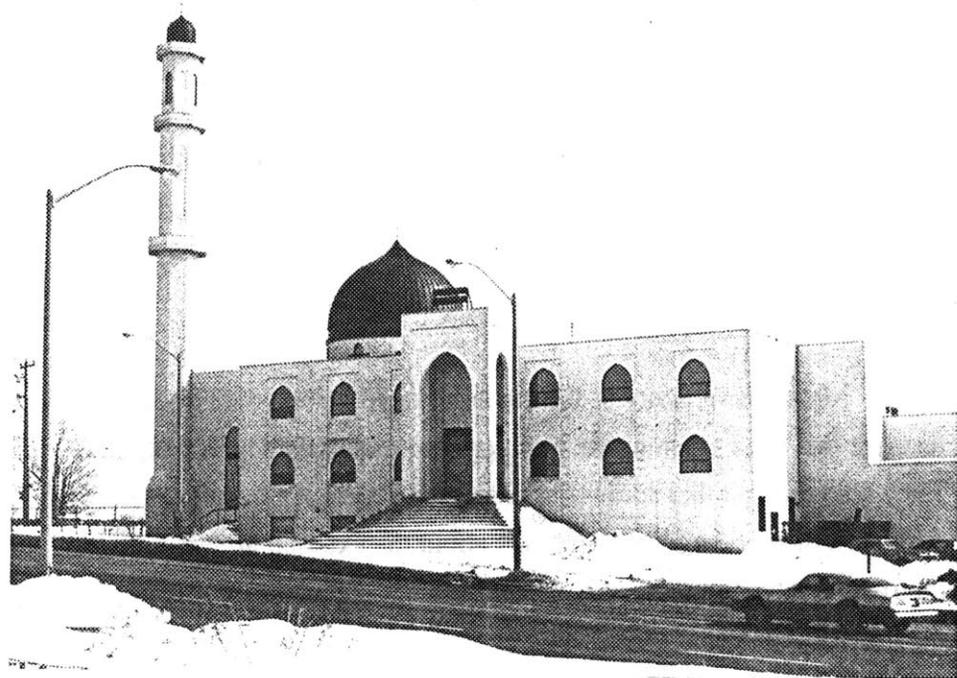
not only occupied a large portion of the parcel, but also created a distance obstacle for accessing and viewing the center. The resulting invisibility is contrary to the Cleveland Mosque congregation's original intentions, but was a necessary compromise. Some recreational and learning facilities have been added in the back of the mosque. The prayer hall is a large octagonal space which contains a mezzanine for the women. There are elaborate ablution facilities as well as a Koranic reading room, administrative offices, a lobby with a fountain, and an apartment for the Imam. The center, excluding the office buildings, is about 24,888 square feet. The domes are made of electroplated gold and the cost of the Center (including the offices) is estimated at about 2.6 million dollars.

The Taric Islamic Centre in Toronto occupies 99% of its property which effectively makes it a walled compound (Figure 26). Because of this, the congregation has no ability to create an environment for themselves. Their surrounding environment includes a freeway and a dense population of businesses such as fast food establishments, automotive shops, and other commercial facilities. Because of these surroundings, this center achieves a lot of visibility, but has to contend with high noise and pollution levels. They are in a hub where there is a lot of freeway interchange and there are many major roads around the mosque.

The Masjid Ahmadiyya Mosque of Toronto is on a 20 acre parcel (Figure 27). It has frontage on the expressway which provides it

with a certain level of visibility. There are some main roads going to the property so there is easy access to the site. The center is in a secluded farm area; there is not anything else immediately around it. The site includes a building that is only a mosque. Under the same roof there are no kitchen and no classrooms, although there are plans for these facilities to be developed elsewhere on the site. Everything is immaculate. The sinks in the wash areas go on when hands are placed under the faucets and the women's washroom includes a well-equipped changing area for babies. The mosque has state-of-the-art audio visual equipment including satellite technology and translation outlets. This mosque was the most aesthetically pleasing to the Islamic Center of America's planning committee members.

The Islamic Foundation of Toronto building encompasses almost all of their property; hence, the congregation has no ability to create the quiet, spiritual atmosphere they would have liked (Figure 28). This center is in a commercial area, at a main intersection with a lot of traffic and noise. One planning committee member described it as a big box. There is a large wall behind the center and a one million dollar parking structure is being built underground. Construction has been going on for two years so far, but it is not yet finished. Among all the centers visited, this was the only one which enlisted a small planning committee to go through a brief and informal planning process prior to construction. Whenever a member of this group traveled around the United States to a place that had a mosque, he/ she would stop in and report on his/ her impressions. Collectively, they looked at 50 mosques.



**Figure 28:** Like many other mosques visited by the planning committee, the Islamic Foundation of Toronto utilizes the dome and minaret as Islamic symbols. If these two elements were removed, it would resemble an avant garde commercial building, thus blending in with the surrounding commercial urban fabric.

### Successes and Failures of Other Centers

In analyzing the impressions of their visits, the planning committee of the Islamic Center of America identified successes which they would like to replicate and failures they wish to avoid in the development of their center. Most of the failures that the committee observed revolved around structural, procedural, or architectural issues. Many congregations wished that they had built on a larger piece of land so that there would be room for expansion; often they found that they

had outgrown the new center before the construction was even completed. Members of all the centers believed that they could have improved upon the construction process. Many thought that hiring an on-site project manager to monitor the construction may have eliminated errors. Almost all complained of cost overruns and problems with contractors who did not complete jobs on schedule.

Members of many of the centers visited believed that not enough thought had been given to the products and materials which were used. They also thought that some of the designs were not carefully planned. Although there were few complaints about the external architecture, the internal architecture seemed to be the primary source of discontent in most mosques.

When you visit some of these centers you think it's a beautiful place, but when you visit with the intention of examining and understanding how well it has been put together, you look at it in a whole different way.<sup>53</sup>

For instance, in Toledo's multi-million dollar mosque, it is very difficult to get out of the hallways after prayer. This happens not because of an overcrowded situation but because the circulation design of the interior cannot accommodate the normal traffic flow. Toledo also has another problem with the material that was chosen to frame their stained-glass windows. The metal window frames harbor condensation and have caused the interior of the frame and wall to become wet and warped. Although not originally intended, the washrooms now include these

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<sup>53</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

stain glass windows with Koranic writing. The bathrooms were not large enough so they had to be extended to a section of the building which included these windows. Toledo and other places also have a problem with the internal traffic flow, especially with regard to a woman's passage from the ablution area to the prayer area.<sup>54</sup> In the Toledo mosque, this move is made across a crowded, loud, and sometimes dirty hallway; this condition often breaks concentration and is distracting to the person who is about to pray. Many men and women also feel that these paths should be completely isolated. That is, the men's wudu area should lead directly into the men's prayer area, and the women's wudu area should lead directly to the women's prayer area, and that these passage areas should be used for nothing else.

The mosques which tried to accommodate social, religious, and educational functions under one roof usually were ridden with congestion or some element of chaos. Often, certain activities were overlooked during the design, and subsequently, no space was planned for them or the space allotted was too small. One mosque in Toronto did not define its need for classrooms and privacy; it now has partitions. Members of another center said that they did not pay enough attention to the women's prayer area. In another, not enough attention was given to the wash area in terms of size and function. Members of the Toledo

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<sup>54</sup>The process of wudu or ablution before prayer is not only intended to be a cleansing ritual but also a way to prepare the mind for prayer. That is, the methodical actions of cleansing are a way to relax and almost reach a state of meditation, thus freeing the mind of the stresses of material life. Because of this, the physical move from wudu area to prayer hall must maintain this spiritual state.

center felt that certain areas overlapped. For instance, often when cooking was going on, the smell of food permeated the areas where other activities were occurring.

Of all the mosques that they visited, the committee members admired the Ahmadiyya mosque the most. They liked its use of alternate color strips of carpeting to align people in the prayer hall and thought that this gave a sense of organization while also being aesthetically pleasing. They also appreciated the fact that activities in this center are to be compartmentalized. The current mosque was only a mosque; cooking, learning and other activities will take place in areas adjacent to the mosque building. In this and other centers the prayer rooms were quiet so that people could focus when they prayed. The planning committee thought that this created an atmosphere that commanded respect of the facility and was more relaxing spiritually. The Ahmadiyya mosque had rules and regulations posted about the expectations of a person while he/she was in the mosque, such as no discussion in the halls, proper attire for men and women and so on. The internal traffic flow of the Islamic Foundation of Toronto addressed the problem of wudu, the women had a place for preparation on the first level and then proceeded upwards to a mezzanine level through a separate stairway. This movement was acceptable to them because they were not being observed by the men and the travel path was not used for any other purpose. In Islam, men and women are separated during prayer. This is usually done in one of three ways: men and women side by side with a

partition in between; men in front of women; men on one level and women on a mezzanine.

Although Dearborn's planning committee liked certain things in each center, they did think that any center completely addressed their congregation's needs and desires. No matter how much the committee researched other centers, each community is different and eventually they would have to make their own assumptions and judgments about the perceptions and tolerance levels of their people. The planning committee also believed that they could develop a more successful project, not only because of the desirable location of their site, but more so because they were taking the time to research all aspects slowly. Finally, they saw their investment of time and money as a credit into their religious account, and as one committee member said, "Anything we do to further Islam in the better understanding of one another is a plus in my account with God."<sup>55</sup>

Of the sites visited the committee thought that the Toledo mosque most closely paralleled their situation because there was much controversy within the congregation about the move.<sup>56</sup> The committee members were also most impressed by the architect, Mohamed Najjar,

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<sup>55</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>56</sup>As is natural in a community of this size and level of socio-economic and educational disparity, not all congregation members saw the immediate need to relocate the center, especially to a location outside Dearborn. The planning committee is currently debating the merits of the proposed Plymouth site with various constituencies within the congregation.

who designed and managed the construction for the Islamic center in Cleveland.<sup>57</sup> From his example, they set their own standards about the architect they will choose for their project.

He/ She has to be a Muslim who has studied Islamic architecture and who is personally compatible with the committee. [He/ She] should be someone who will eat, sleep, and drink the project; someone who has it in their blood. We want someone for whom it is an honor, a deed, a vision, a dream for them to build this center.<sup>58</sup>

Mohamed Najjar epitomized this image and is a likely candidate for the new Islamic Center of America. The desire for a Muslim architect stems from the planning committee's assumption that such an architect would be more likely to understand their vision and dedicate himself to their project. In interpreting this assumption we must go beyond the assertion that the committee is mistrustful of non-Muslims. Although this may be partly the case, it appears that the committee has a strong need for assistance in solidifying their vision and translating it into a concrete design. Therefore, they believe that a Muslim architect may be more able to provide the necessary guidance by understanding their culture and religion.

Overall, the committee believed that the most important issues were those of appropriate interior design and functionality, and an architect who would be dedicated and able to achieve a cost-efficient design which met their vision.

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<sup>57</sup>See Appendix on Design Process for Cleveland Mosque.

<sup>58</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

### **An Examination of the Plymouth Site**

The location of the land is strategic and serves the vision for the Islamic Center of America in a multitude of ways. It provides visibility from the surrounding area; proximity to academic and commercial centers and upscale residential areas; accessibility through major highways and two airports and the ability, because of the large size of the parcel, to allow for privacy and for almost any type of future expansion. These characteristics are supportive of the dual mission of the Islamic Center of America: to offer a site that allows the perpetuation of Islamic values while fostering interchange with the mainstream American society.

The 89 acre parcel is bordered by two gravel roads, Napier (which also divides city and county lines) and Powell; a future housing subdivision, Plymouth Commons; and the M14 highway, which connects Detroit to Ann Arbor (Figures 29,30). It is five minutes from Plymouth's town center, and 25-30 minutes from the Detroit metropolitan airport and Willow Run local airport. The town of Plymouth has a population of about 9,560 and was settled in 1825 by settlers from Plymouth, Massachusetts.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Information obtained from Plymouth City Hall.



Figure 29: Enclosed area is Islamic Center of America property.

Figures 29,30: These show the current developments in the western Plymouth township along the M14.

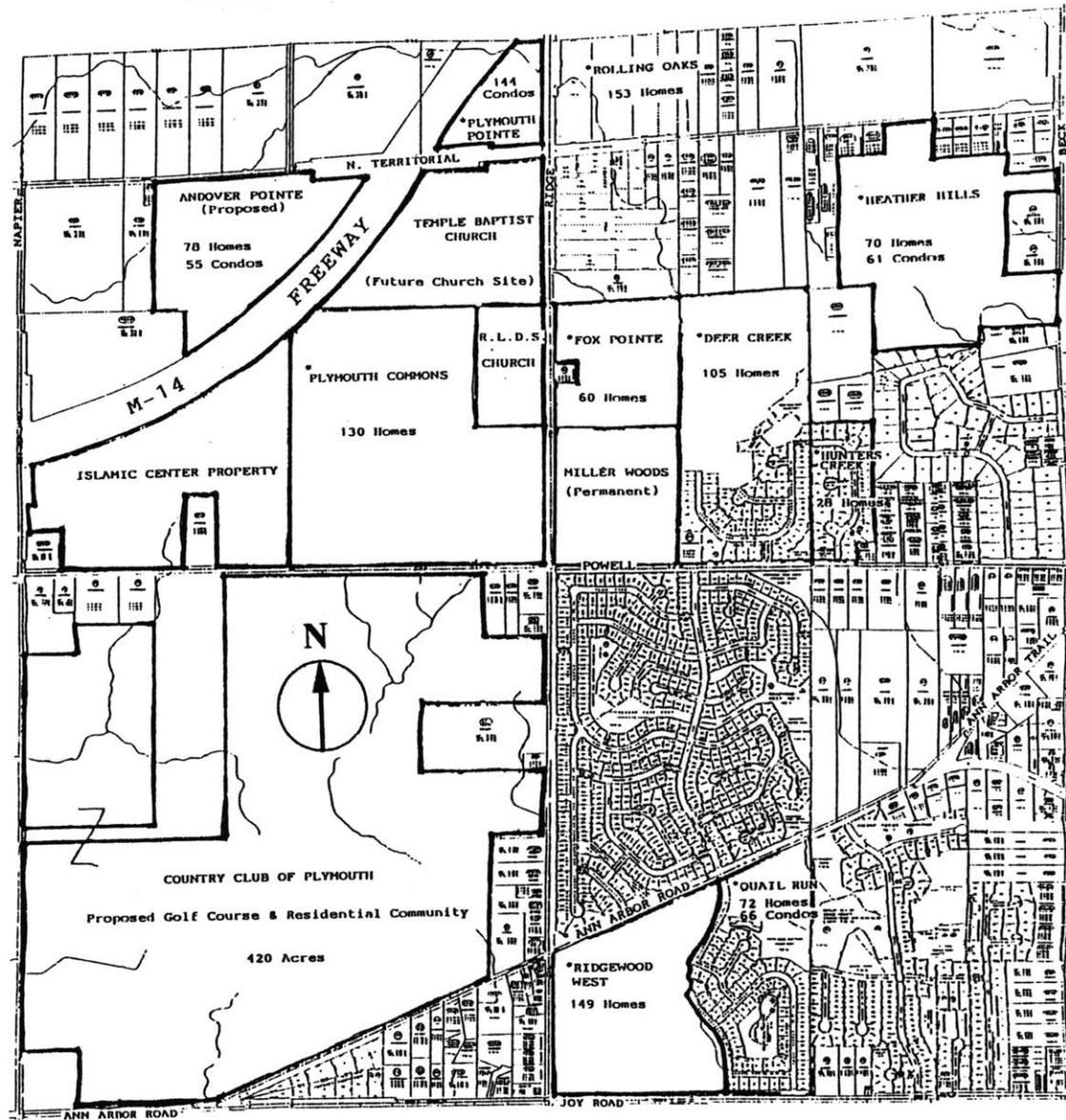


Figure 30: \* Indicates developments under construction

The site for the future Islamic Center of America has a 1400 foot frontage onto the M14 which, although it is not considered as major a road as I-75 or 696, is a well traveled thoroughway.

Development pressures - fueled by open land, access to freeways and Metro Airport as well as recreational opportunities - have turned M14 between western Wayne County [which includes Detroit and Dearborn] and Ann Arbor into what one developer calls the 'growth corridor of the 1990's.'<sup>60</sup>

On April 11, 1987, The *Economist* wrote:

The fastest growing high-tech corridor in the United States today is no longer Silicon Valley south of San Francisco, nor Route 128 around Boston, but a 40-mile strip in Michigan stretching west from Detroit to the leafy campus town of Ann Arbor (M14). Locals call it Automation Alley.

The proximity to the high-tech area is a fortunate coincidence because it places the Islamic Center of America in a high profile part of Michigan and the United States. Access to the Islamic Center site from the M14 highway is possible, but not entirely obvious. The nearest exit ramp is about one and a half miles away. The planning committee believes that this will encourage only visitors with a sincere interest in the center to make an effort to access it.

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<sup>60</sup>"M14 growth," by George. Detroit Free Press. March 18, 1991.

The area surrounding the parcel contains an upscale residential area, Plymouth Commons, which is currently under construction (Figure 31). The luxury homes of this housing subdivision will cost between \$300,000-500,000. It seems unlikely that this Islamic Center will suffer the fate of the centers in the Southend and Eastend of Dearborn because the local development trends of this Plymouth area ensure a certain level of financial promise. In the long run, maintaining an upscale image is crucial for a center that hopes to become the ambassador of Islam to the non-Muslim community as well as the spiritual home of the Muslims in the area for future generations.

**Figure 31:** These are some of the homes that have been built in the developing Plymouth Commons, the residential community adjacent to the potential Islamic Center development site. They exemplify the standard of living in the area that would be costly for some congregation members.



A few miles to the northeast, following the M14 highway, lies the site of a quickly developing high technology park.<sup>61</sup> The combination of the proximity to the high technology park, airports, and Ann Arbor, an intellectual hub and location of the University of Michigan campus, will give the future Islamic center exposure to intellectuals, scientists, business people, and international travelers.

Potentially, the development around the M14 could be similar to what a Joel Garreau defines as an Edge City:

...tall buildings, bright lights, office space that represents white-collar jobs, shopping, entertainment, prestigious hotels, corporate headquarters, hospitals, even population...  
Edge City is any place that has five million square feet or more of leaseable office space (the workplace of the Information Age), has 600,000 square feet or more of leaseable retail space, has more jobs than bedrooms, is perceived by the population as one place, and was nothing like "city" as recently as thirty years ago.<sup>62</sup>

Edge cities are large acreages where jobs and other urban functions are centered, almost like a large scale downtown.

Despite the similarities, the development around the M14 is incompatible with the Edge City definition. Unlike most of Garreau's

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<sup>61</sup>Isuzu, Mitsubishi, Michigan Bell and American Koyo all began construction on high tech facilities in 1990. The site will also include offices for Dow Corning Corporation and Graco Robotics.

<sup>62</sup>Garreau, Joel. Edge City: Life on the New Frontier. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988, pp. 5-6.

edge cities which contain some off-highway residential areas surrounded by large areas of retail facilities, the development around the M14 will contain many smaller commercial and technological facilities, residential communities, and a few religious sites. The growth along the M14 is more compatible with the late 20th century trend of development from city to suburb. Plymouth lies approximately at the midpoint between Detroit and Ann Arbor, along the M14. The development that is occurring along this highway fits the pattern of a gradual infill of the suburban and ex urban areas in between these two cities. The commercial developments in the area appear to be specialized strip areas connected by a " main street," the M14. The residential developments around the M14 are similar to the suburban subdivisions that have become a prevalent part of American suburban form. The proposed Islamic community resembles a gated community within a suburban setting. Except that instead of walls, the boundaries will be roadways and dense landscaping, and instead of a guard, the deterrent to access will be the proposed long and roundabout way to reach the Center. This physical isolation is viewed by the planning committee as a way to maintain control over the character of the site, regardless of the future developments of the surrounding areas.

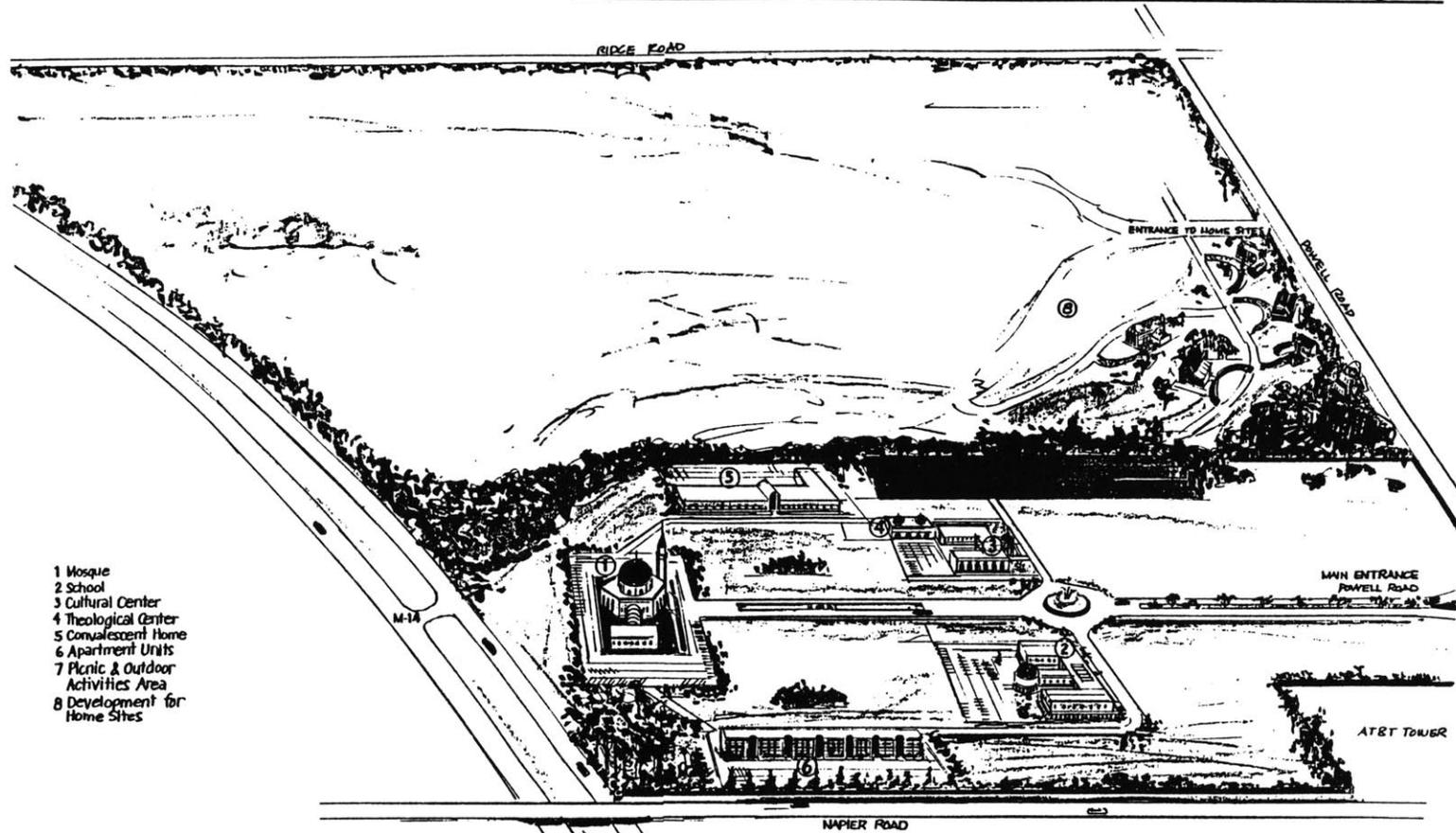
In future phases of the development of the Islamic Center of America, its location will make it easier to develop academic dimensions which attract top intellectuals from the Ann Arbor campus. Currently the University of Michigan does have an Islamic Studies department which,

in the future, may provide support in the development of an Islamic Studies Center within the greater Islamic Center of America complex.

In sum, the location of the parcel coincides completely with the larger vision of creating a religious and intellectual hub for Muslims of all races, nationalities, and sects, which will take the local Muslim community well into the 21st century and will make it visible to the mainstream American society.

### **Developing the Vision for a New Islamic Community**

The move to Plymouth is a deliberate one on the part of the planning committee and one with a far-reaching strategic vision (Figure 32). The committee is hoping to transform the community by physically disassociating it from the deteriorating Dearborn area. They want to break the pattern of architectural chaos which perpetuates a weak image of the community to the mainstream and, most importantly, a stagnant self-image. In essence, the planning committee hopes to reposition the local Islamic community within the context of American society. It is the belief of the planning committee that financially the Dearborn community has already achieved a high position and is constantly improving. "A new generation of congregation members are starting to reach their prime in terms of earning power. Too often centers rely on a select, few older members who are known to be millionaires but their longevity is limited. We must attract the up and coming younger



- 1 Mosque
- 2 School
- 3 Cultural Center
- 4 Theological Center
- 5 Convalescent Home
- 6 Apartment Units
- 7 Picnic & Outdoor Activities Area
- 8 Development for Home Sites

**Figure 32:** This is an informal and physically inaccurate sketch from a planning committee member. Although this has not been developed into a formal Masterplan, it still provides some indication of the image that the committee would like to portray, and the one into which they would like the congregation to evolve. This drawing also shows an example of what the committee thinks serves the congregation's long-term needs. The vision in this sketch focuses on the procession to the mosque. It entices the highway traveler by a distant image. It takes him a few miles on various roads until he reaches the Center's entrance, 180 degrees from his first sighting. Within the complex, he must first travel on a long axial path. This seems more like a procession to a castle or fortress than to a religious institution. Many religious buildings in the Middle East might include a difficult approach, especially if in they are in the mountains, but only a few include both this and such a grand entrance path. This drawing goes beyond using the Islamic architectural symbols of the dome, minaret, and fountain. Here the mosque is a direct imitation of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. This has implications for the nature of true their identity.

congregation generations,... the young people of the community who are growing up, who are getting advanced degrees want to have a sense of prestige and pride associated with their identity."<sup>63</sup> By attracting and involving the new generation the committee hopes to facilitate the translation of the undoubtedly high financial status to a more refined and progressive way of expressing their Islamic values. Finally they hope that distancing the new center from the Dearborn one will provide the opportunity to break the artificial dividing lines between foreign born - not foreign born, Lebanese - non-Lebanese, Southern Lebanese - Northern Lebanese, and so on. As one committee member expressed:

I do not want my children to encounter prejudice because they can't pronounce an Arabic word accurately or because their great grandfather came from the "wrong" Lebanese village.<sup>64</sup>

Currently these artificial divisions are a form of intracommunity prejudice and unnecessarily create tension and dilute cohesion among the local Islamic population.

As mentioned previously, the overall vision for the Islamic Center of America on the Plymouth, Michigan property is to include a mosque, school, cultural center, theological center and school, elderly housing, and possibly apartments and home sites. However, at this point, the planning committee is concentrating on phase I. They believe that phase I will be the mosque.

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<sup>63</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>64</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

A mosque is a place that you should be able to go into at anytime and pray. For the first phase we want a center/ a mosque that will give us this. One that aesthetically makes a tremendous statement, also from a functional standpoint, one that would be second to none. We want a center that will attract people from far away to come and see it.<sup>65</sup>

They are not sure yet whether the design will incorporate monumental or vernacular Islamic architectural design or whether these styles will be combined with a contemporary American architectural design. They will rely on the architect to "know what is the most appropriate for [their] vision and site, and believe that the right design will depend on hiring the right architect."<sup>66</sup> They seem most concerned that an architectural statement is made as to who they are and what Islam is. That is, they intend to use architecture as a means of cultural, or, to be more precise, subcultural representation.

The statement that the building makes architecturally for people who don't know very much about Islam is important. We want people to come to the center. We would like to have a center that's used as an example for schools to have field trips we want people to say 'Look what these people are about; they're intelligent, committed, they have a lot to offer as far as culture and art are concerned.'<sup>67</sup>

They want a mosque design that takes into account not only Islamic architectural proportions, but also the terrain and the people around the

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<sup>65</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>66</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>67</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

site. They want the center to be a place that the mainstream community is curious about and interested in, but not intimidated by. Ultimately, they want a design that is "strong, but inviting." They like the fact that the Ahmadiyya mosque "looks great from every angle." Because there have been site, economic, legal, political, and social issues which have restricted or shaped the design of other centers, the planning committee has tried to foresee and eliminate as many of these restrictions as possible so as to "free the design." They also mentioned that they wanted monumental longevity; one member even made comparative references to the great cathedrals in Europe.

The planning committee would like phase I to include prayer, wudu, and maybe some administrative areas. They estimate this phase to occupy about 30,000 sq. ft. The main focus of this part of the development will be on prayer. They want to create a comfortable facility "so that you could almost put yourself in a state of meditation."<sup>68</sup> They desire a prayer space which could accommodate a minimum of 2,000 people, although they are not really sure how many will attend regularly. Two of the planning committee members discussed a prayer hall that was adequate not just in terms of size, but one that was equally comfortable for men and women.

We want to accommodate people and make them as comfortable as possible. We want to create an atmosphere where people feel good about themselves

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<sup>68</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

and when they go to pray their minds are clear and ready to pray.<sup>69</sup>

They discussed having the prayer hall for the women on a mezzanine level, similar to some of the other mosques they visited.<sup>70</sup> They seem to be especially concerned with the internal circulation of the building, especially since they have witnessed mosques with poorly designed internal traffic flow. They also want special attention to be paid to as many details as possible, such as shoe racks, changing areas for babies, and prayer hall acoustics. Some congregation members think that the mosque should include a preparation room for the deceased. Others feel that paperwork and preparation should occur at the nearby funeral home, and then the body should be brought to the mosque.<sup>71</sup>

Based on the experiences of the centers visited, construction time for a similar phase I, from the groundbreaking to the completion of construction, is usually about twelve months. The planning committee has allowed themselves about a year and a half before they are ready to hire an architect. This is scheduled to occur in the fall of 1993. Because they have witnessed the cost of poor design in other Islamic centers, the

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<sup>69</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>70</sup>During Salah, the imam, or prayer leader, should be positioned either below or on the same level of the people, never above. Therefore, he should never be on a mezzanine level.

<sup>71</sup>Some mosques have places to prepare a deceased body for burial. In other cases, a funeral home vehicle picks up the deceased from a home or hospital and takes it to the funeral home to be prepared. In Islam, a dead body is given a wash before it is buried. It is then covered with white sheets and fragrant herbs are spread all over it. A funeral prayer is conducted before the burial in the mosque.

committee believes that the planning process should be considered slowly and carefully.

If you have enough money and space you can fix almost any problem, but we want a project where we can face our congregation and say that we maximized every dollar that you gave us... The more scrutinizing you are about every little issue, down to the type of fixtures you use, the better the end result you are going to have.<sup>72</sup>

The planning committee is very concerned with achieving aesthetic and economic value. The choice of appropriate materials will minimize future maintenance costs and assure the long-lasting aesthetic integrity of the center. Additionally, intelligent material choice can minimize construction costs. The committee believes that it is imperative to have an architect who is creative and informed enough to achieve a durable and cost-efficient design, and a site manager who will supervise the execution of the plans.

Phases II and III would include a school, retirement home, cultural center, everything previously mentioned except homes. The issue of parking has not yet been explicitly addressed, however, the planning committee would like to avoid expensive underground structures. Based on the lessons learned from the Islamic Center of America's current facility and those visited, the planning committee believes that integrating multiple uses in one building creates undesirable congestion. They want their new facility to be in the form of separate

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<sup>72</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

buildings connected by open or glass-enclosed walkways "because this leaves the mosque as a mosque."

If you want an area to accommodate 2000 people for fund-raising or religious dinners you can develop it in another building with a kitchen. We'd like a gymnasium that can be quickly converted into an activities area. We want separate units that are connected. People are more controllable and predictable when the space governs how they should act...If we design the center properly, we will act differently.<sup>73</sup>

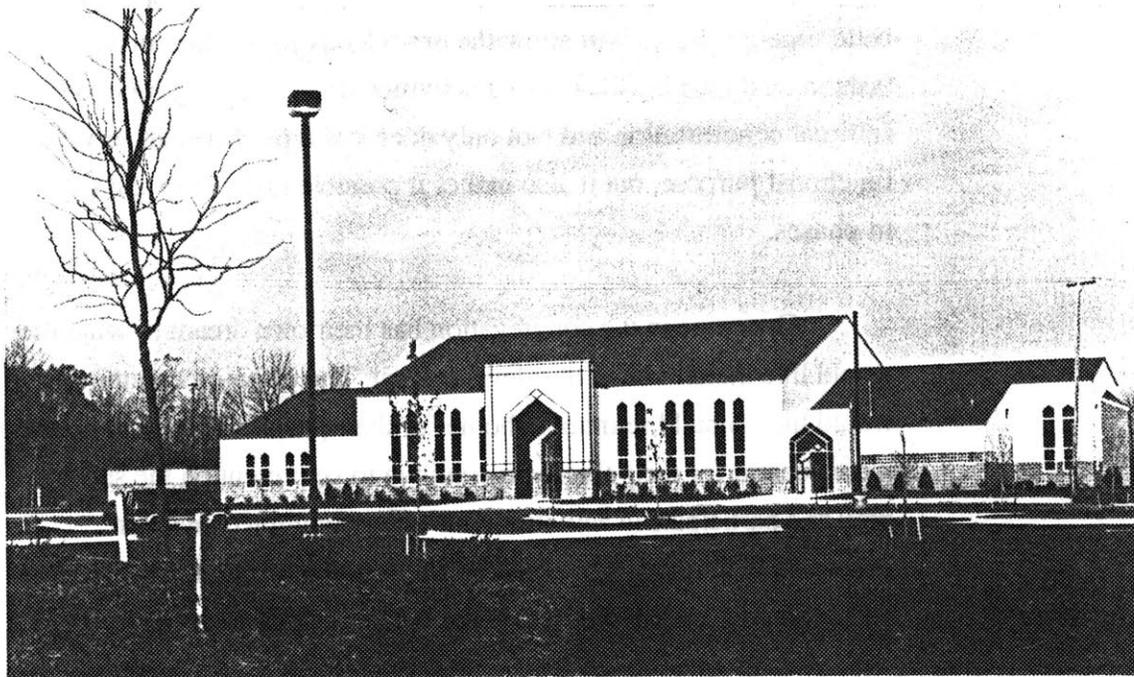
The committee believes that architectural design does affect behavior. They think that the chaotic traffic and noise within the current center are a result of crowding and poor design. In their view, more space and better interior design will allow the new Center to function in an orderly fashion, and thus facilitate social activities without infringing upon spiritual concentration and Not only does this type of design serve a functional purpose, but it also makes it possible to develop and finance in phases.

Everyone in the congregation has their own dream of what they would like there to be in this development. The planning committee would like to build retirement home for their people. They want to make it convenient for their elderly to continue to be present on the site and pray and participate in activities. One older committee member expressed that he would there to be a retirement location at the site where he could walk within the complex and go to the mosque six to ten

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<sup>73</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

years from now. The issue of a retirement home is an example of adjustment to the American conditions. In the Middle East, the family structure caters to the elderly within the home and therefore, the notion of a retirement home is a solution of last resort, rather than a commonly accepted way for people to spend their last years of life. The inclusion of a retirement facility indicates the changes in mentality and in family structure that have taken place during the evolvement of this Islamic subculture in America.



**Figure 33:** The Crescent Academy, Canton, MI. Although this is an Islamic school, it looks similar in form to other schools in the area. As of this stage in the development, there seems to be no effort to make the school "look" Islamic. With respect to religion, more of an emphasis is included in the internal operations of the school.



**Figure 34:** This picture is from a brochure that is given to the parents of potential students. The racial integration shown emphasizes the school's desire to unite all children of Islamic faith. The planning committee members of the Islamic Institute of America regard this as a good example after which to model their proposed school.

Although no specific plans have been made yet about the form that the school will take, the committee's insistence on showing me the Crescent Academy, an Islamic school in Canton, Michigan,<sup>74</sup> and their comments about the school demonstrated their intentions regarding education in the new center (Figures 33,34). The main priorities will be to develop a core curriculum which meets federal and state standards, but also includes courses on Arabic, Islamic studies, and Koran. The planning committee envisions a school that will be integrated across racial and ethnic lines, with religion as the only common denominator

The planning committee is split on the issue of developing housing on the Plymouth site. Some committee members think that the congregation should not let go of any of the land for anything other than the project. They believe that this would ensure land availability for future expansion of the Islamic Center. Others want part of the land to be used for sale or housing development. One of the committee members who lives in a predominantly non-Muslim suburb, 35 minutes from the current center, described what he perceived to be the direct benefits for his own children of developing housing:

I notice that as my children are getting older, they feel pulled between the Arab Muslim and American communities. I would like to see the completion of the new center and move nearby. In this way, I think that I will be able to allow my children to explore what is out in mainstream American society, but I will also make sure that they have a sense of religious self-identity and a

<sup>74</sup>See Appendix IV.

place or group of people to which they can turn to in order to feel secure and get the support they need.<sup>75</sup>

This same committee member thinks that if available, many of his peers would move to a home within the Plymouth site and he thinks that if the environment is available, raising their children together would create a positive bond among the next generations.

One of the committee members indicated that housing development may not be discretionary, but rather necessary in order to generate funds for the project and alleviate some of the monetary pressures on the congregation. Some committee members believe that the land should be developed and offered to the community so that "we could have our own people living there and at the same time generate some revenue."<sup>76</sup> Another committee member suggested that the tax base that housing will bring could be used to convince town to allow rezoning. Right now the parcel is zoned for agricultural use. The committee does not see an immediate need to change this because then their property taxes will increase. When they first apply for rezoning, they are not going to propose housing. They will just go to the town with a plan for a religious institution (there are plans for other church developments in the area).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>76</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

<sup>77</sup>On July 30, 1990, The Detroit Free Press reported that in the western corridor (which includes Canton Township and the Plymouth and Norvill areas), "members and millions of dollars are being poured into shining new (religious) sanctuaries."

If the city refuses because they want to be able to gain revenue through taxes, we will propose the housing development within the property and hope that this will allow us to obtain the rezoning we need. Housing development is the ace in the hole. It's our bargaining chip to get the mosque and center to happen.<sup>78</sup>

The pragmatism with which the committee plans to address potential town politics and adapt to the tax system indicates how the Islamic subgroup has adapted to the American political and legal systems.

The committee agrees that the congregation would prefer to have some control over who lives in these homes and how they conduct themselves. Although deed restrictions could be placed on the lots and houses which limit who could buy the property, racial restrictions would not hold up in a court of law. In 1948, the United States Supreme Court ruled that, under the fourteenth amendment, racially restricted covenants or deed restrictions are unconstitutional and therefore unenforceable. Whether or not it is possible to control the residents' behavior through the formation of a housing association which has bylaws, rules, and regulations is also an issue. For example, a member of the committee stated that the habit of wearing bathing suits away from private backyards and pool areas during the summer will be contrary to the Islamic community's practices. On one hand, such behaviors could be regarded as offensive and indecent; on the other hand, such restrictions of behavior could be viewed as the regulation of personal taste. If seeing scantily clad people is considered offensive to a

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<sup>78</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

Muslim's eyes, is the smell of pork roasting in someone's backyard offensive to his nose? Restrictions on behavior are difficult to define and even more difficult to enforce.

One way to have some control over who moves onto the site is to limit the access to information about available properties. That is, assuming that there is no immediate need to generate revenue, the planning committee could inform only the congregation and other Muslims about the availability of lots and houses. What the planning committee hopes is that enough of an Islamic presence will be created on and around the Islamic Center site that it will deter anyone who would not be interested in becoming part of the community from residing here.

Our hope is that the land around the site will be developed and inhabited by our people. If however the land ends up being sold to people outside the Muslim community, we really have no control over the people who move in.<sup>79</sup>

Even though this scenario is a possibility, the committee believes that their project is going to be one that develops the atmosphere of the area. They are hoping that after this, the people of their congregation will bring their families, businesses, and services to or around the site.

To anticipate the possibility of a housing development, the mosque will most likely be placed in the northwest corner of the parcel bordering Napier Road and the M14 highway. Housing development

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<sup>79</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

would probably occur on the eastern end of the site. The separation between mosque and the possible housing would provide enough space for future expansions of the center. The committee is planning to separate the eastern edge of their lot from the bordering Plymouth Commons housing subdivision through landscaping. This form of restricting access implies a desire for a somewhat closed community.

The planning committee expects phase I alone to be a \$5 million project. The other centers they visited cost between \$2.5 and \$3 million. The group estimates the architect's fee to be approximately \$250,000. Their congregation is financially able to undertake this project once they internalize its merits for their descendants and for the spreading of the message of Islam. The committee feels very strongly against accepting any outside financial aid, especially from funding groups and organizations, because they fear compromising their independence. Although this information was not readily accessible, it seems that the other centers visited also avoided outside financing. Financial independence seems to assure the committee that it can keep its vision for this center:

We want our center to be one that makes a very strong statement from the outside and also makes a strong statement from an internal standpoint in terms of organization, structure, progressiveness, and interacting with other communities, and getting involved in proactive activities so we can promote ourselves. It is an example of how we can move within the society and not just by association with a certain ethnic group... We want to give the message that this is a real live movement,

something that anyone can attach to, that anyone can find interest in and maybe even want to become a part of. We don't knock on the door to sell our faith. We want people to come to us and see what we have to offer. No facility is going to do that because it's beautiful. It has to be hand in hand with a program and with the organization that is as beautiful as the architecture of the building... Our intention is not just to educate ourselves and our children, but to make a statement and advance Islam in the country by enticing people to want to know about us.<sup>80</sup>

The planning committee's research process and expressed priorities make it clear that they are envisioning a project that balances the maintenance of cultural identity with extensive communication to and exchange with the mainstream American society. This type of balance is a delicate one. To achieve it, the planning committee will have to first persuade a wide enough section of the current Dearborn community to allow the development of the new center and, at the same time, skillfully communicate its intentions to the outside (i.e. the town of Plymouth, the local academic community, and the local press). Even more of a challenge will be for the Islamic Center of America to extend a credible welcome to all Muslims regardless of ethnicity and to non-Muslims that are genuinely interested in understanding Islam.

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<sup>80</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.



# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Evolution of the Street, the Evolution of the Community

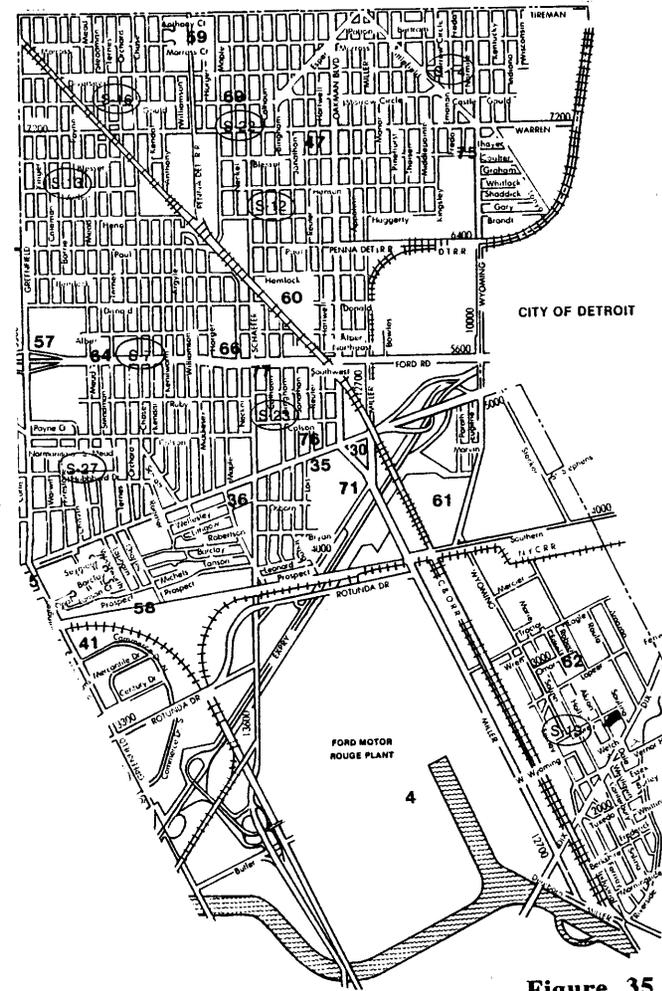


Figure 35

## **CHAPTER 4: The Evolution of the Street, the Evolution of the Community**

### **Street Patterns - Cultural Patterns**

The examination of a Dearborn map makes the differences between the Southend's irregular street patterns and the grid-lined ones of the Eastend more apparent (Figure 35). Here, the issue of the interaction between social behavior and built form is an important one to explore. For decades, sociologists, architects, and planners have studied human behavior in the built environment in order to try and make predictions or generate some pattern of behavior for certain kinds of people/ environment situations. One prominent social science position is best summed up by Herbert Gans who assigns priority in the people/ environment equation to "human values, beliefs and expectations," and who has continually asserted, along with many of his colleagues that the physical environment has much less effect than planners assume because people often circumvent the designer's intentions through non-conforming uses. These uses are consistent with certain behavior patterns and cultural predispositions. The phenomenon of transforming intended use to accommodate cultural patterns is most evident in the study of the street.

The streets of Dearborn were designed as a result of the invention of the horse and buggy and later the automobile. That is, they

were originally defined to be throughways or travel paths. Yet if we trace the behavior in the streets through films, literature, and popular culture expressions (such as magazines, advertising ads etc.), we see that traditionally, the street was more than a passage way, it was a locus, a place for activity and interaction. It was a place for children to play, adults to stop and talk, and merchants and grocers to sell their goods. Neighborhoods were in part defined by their street activity. Today, the increase in crime, coupled with telecommunication technology, the demise of small personal businesses, and the increased prevalence of the automobile, has left the many once lively streets almost vacant.

Historical examination suggests that the street has always been both a tangible expression of the structure of relationships of the culture in which it appears and a tool by which the evident relationships could be considered and challenged or maintained.<sup>81</sup>

Los Angeles residents are often stereotyped as people who drive to visit a neighbor down the street. Is this movement of activity away from the streets due to any major redesigning of streets by planners? As the original activity so prevalent in streets was a product of the residents and the culture, so is the lack of activity. "Since man is less a creature of instinct than of habit or culture, what he is and how he develops depends largely upon the opportunities for interaction that are present in his environment."<sup>82</sup> It becomes the goal of architects and planners to

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<sup>81</sup>Anderson, Stanford. On Streets. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 228.

<sup>82</sup>Anderson, Stanford. On Streets. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 235.

create flexible and adaptable designs for a variety of people/  
environment interactions.

In many societies, architecture can be used as a mechanism of communication, in order to "inform the entire group of the state of interpersonal relationships and to set into motion the system of sanctions by which order is maintained."<sup>83</sup> In her chapter in *On Streets*, Gloria Levitas addresses the example of the Mbuti pygmies. In this culture, a woman may orient her hut to express liking, indifference, or dislike for a neighbor. This positioning of the entranceway acts as any other communication device to arouse an appropriate response within the group.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, the gateway and boundaries to a cultural enclave may be oriented or demarcated in ways that attract or deter outsiders to that community. In such primitive societies, streets did not exist because there was no reason to link destinations. These villages usually had a circular form, a form that although egalitarian was less than efficient in performing tasks.<sup>85</sup>

The emergence of the street, then seems to symbolize or express a gradual awareness of the separation of private and public, family and larger community. Competition and intensification of production rather than cooperation and stability of production emerge within the street. The

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<sup>83</sup>Anderson, Stanford. *On Streets*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 228.

<sup>84</sup>Anderson, Stanford. *On Streets*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 228.

<sup>85</sup>These villages probably took a circular form for defense reasons in addition to the manifestation of the close social links among households. Also, physical proximity also facilitated economic transactions.

state of disequilibrium prerequisite to change is thus apparent in spatial organization.<sup>86</sup>

To explain the concepts of public versus private and family versus community, Levitas compares two types of Middle Eastern housing. The first type is the rectangular house, often found in farming villages. It has a courtyard in the middle almost as to emphasize the subcommunity of the family. This configuration is similar to that of the primitive villages of circular form. It suggests the importance of family, privacy, and some degree of egalitarianism within the family structure. The second type of housing is linear (one side facing water, the other facing the road) and can be found in maritime villages. The configuration of these houses is based on the intermittent need for cooperation between many families during heavy fishing times. This mechanical solidarity provides the physical structure for each family to undertake a task in order to maximize the well being of all in the village. The linear arrangement enhances privacy and work efficiency, but may compromise egalitarianism by allowing differentiation through spatial positioning.<sup>87</sup> In both types of Middle Eastern villages, the nature of human relationships depends upon technological ability and habitat. Both villages emphasize the family as the basic unit of production, and both grant privacy to the family; however, the degree and the consistency to which these take place varies.

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<sup>86</sup>Anderson, Stanford. On Streets. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, p. 229.

<sup>87</sup>Anderson, Stanford. On Streets. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, p. 229.

### **Applying the Street Evolution Model to the Islamic Community**

In the case of the three Islamic sites under analysis, the Southend and Eastend of Dearborn, and the potential Plymouth development, the street is a built form element that exemplifies changes in the community. A theoretical way to explain the evolution of the Islamic population of Dearborn is Gloria Levitas' street evolution model. This also illustrates where Plymouth fits in the progression of the social and city forms of the local Islamic community. According to this model there are six stages of physical street form which reveal the underlying social, economic, and political development of a community.

1) The street and settlement pattern of which the street is an integral part reflect and help to maintain particular forms of social organization necessary for adaptation. Streets maintain a particular way of life or structure or relationships by providing barriers and linkages that help regulate the amount of social interaction among groups. Streets and settlement patterns also appear to have some effect on limiting social interaction among groups. The importance of the street as a center of information wanes with the increase in literacy and the development of communication devices.

2) The emergence of the street marks the emergence of a concept of privacy, private property, and seems inseparable from the intensification of production necessary to create a surplus.

This part of the model clearly exemplifies the role of the street in the Southend in Dearborn. For one thing, the Southend, through its street configuration and physical position within the city is set off from

the rest of Dearborn. The center of the Southend Islamic community is at the intersection between Dix Road and Vernor Highway. The Southend mosque and the main branch of ACCESS are located here. These form the religious, social, and physical centers for the community. Within a one and a half square mile area, there are also many shops, services, and professional offices. Many of these buildings are two story, and often the owners make their homes above their businesses. On any given day, there are old men conversing and children playing in the streets. Mothers with small children are often seen talking to other mothers on the way to run their daily errands. They all share an outward appearance and conduct that reflects their shared culture.

The Southend was settled at the early part of the century, and consequently, its physical form reflects the technology of that time. Everything there is closer together than in other parts of the city. The streets are narrower and most of their travelers are pedestrian. The residential areas are closely clustered around the merchant strips, making passage across a backyard or on a small footpath between two buildings a common event. Because of this behavior among the residents, outsiders are quickly noticed. Some of the Southend residents respond to outsiders by hurrying in another direction, some just observe from afar, but others are bold enough to inquire what the outsider is doing there. Such reactions emphasize the tightly-knit nature of the community and the cluttered city form. Because this community was developed in the early 1900's, when America was still a newly

industrializing nation, the immigrants had the opportunity to imprint the village street pattern on the Southend. To a large extent, this street pattern has survived until today because the Southend community still retains its immigrant station status. New Muslim immigrants come to this community first and bring with them cultural needs similar to those of the original immigrants. When their needs change, usually after reaching a certain level of financial independence and assimilation into the American culture, they often leave the Southend. As a result, the physical form of the Southend has remained stable reflecting the little changed cultural patterns of the population over the years.

3) As we move along the scale of social organization and technology, specialization in other areas of life is reflected in growing specialization of the street. An increase in the number of institutions creates a cross cutting web of social relationships that helps knit society together; at the same time proliferation of organizations and sodalities creates more and more private or exclusive institutions. This development too is reflected in the street with the emergence first of guild streets and later of specialized work areas, separate residential zones, and streets used only for commercial or entertainment purposes.

4) Development of stratified class systems further specializes the streets, creating separate neighborhoods for different classes within the city. Streets that serve different classes reflect the classes they serve by the nature of their amenities and by differences in their daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms.

5) Increasing centralization of power asserts itself in rearrangement of the city form. Initially, the

emergence of a separate political sphere correlates with the presence of grid systems or radial or ward plans. Later, streets are widened and perspective view and outlook favored. The city is no longer a self-contained entity but a node in a national network. The capital city, commonly radial in plan, symbolizes central power and control.<sup>88</sup>

As members within the Southend prospered, they began to move outside of the community to areas such as the Eastend of Dearborn. This part of the city consists of ordered grid-lined streets which separate the community into almost uniform block areas. The development of this neighborhood occurred as the automobile became a prevalent part of American society. This is quickly realized by the wider streets and dispersement of the land. This section is spread out over several blocks (40-45 sq. blocks) and the residential and commercial zones are not grouped together. The main commercial strip is on Warren Avenue from Schaeffer to Appoline. There are some shops and services beyond this area, but the majority which cater to the Islamic community are here. Perpendicular to Warren Avenue, there are many residential streets. The Islamic Institute and another branch of ACCESS are the major social and religious centers of the Eastend community, although physically, there is no central core. Many of the residents also go to the Islamic Center of America. The Eastend is more diverse than the Southend, both ethnically and financially. It differs from the Southend in that the residents are wealthier and fewer of them are recent immigrants. The

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<sup>88</sup>Levitas, Gloria. "Anthropology and Sociology of Streets," *On Streets* (Stanford Anderson, editor). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, p. 232.

dialectic relationship between culture and subculture is evident in the Eastend, leading to increasing adaptation of the community to America. This is reflected in the more sophisticated types of shops and services and in the tidiness of the residential zones. The element of intracommunity politics is more advanced in the Eastend than it is in the Southend. Many community members have often conflicting opinions about how America works and how their community should operate.

6) Just as old forms of adaptation and social organization are reflected in particular street forms and village and town layouts, so we might expect that new levels of technological adaptation and increasing centralized control will demand - and are demanding - adjustment throughout all our urban institutions. Gradual encroachment of central government functions into state and city affairs is apparent even now, and the effects of these shifts, as well as the effects of an automated technology, will be evidenced in the street. ...The influence of this centralization of power on the streets is only too obvious in the emphasis placed on the street as linkage rather than locus. Such an emphasis destroys smaller group boundaries and with them the organic relationships characteristic of these groups.<sup>89</sup>

Following the progression of Levitas' model, the Islamic community plan for the Plymouth, Michigan site is a logical next step. The plan for this is to create a sub-community of religious, educational, and social facilities that caters to the Islamic population in the area. The loci of interaction are to be the buildings for various activities, with the

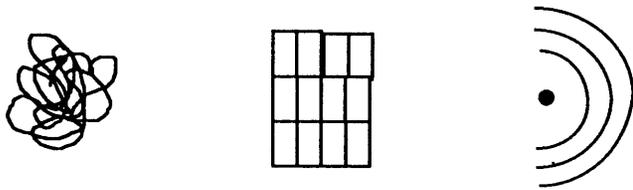
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<sup>89</sup>Levitas, Gloria. "Anthropology and Sociology of Streets," On Streets (Stanford Anderson, editor). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, p. 232.

mosque as the focus. The procession up to these buildings is to be a combination of parking lots and wide streets. The facilities are to include very sophisticated audio-visual, technological devices which can aid in crossing language barriers and, with the help of satellite technology, crossing oceans in order to bring the message of Islam to people of all ages, races, and ethnicities. Dearborn is a limited environment; Plymouth is the reaction to Dearborn. It strives to break out of the confinements of Dearborn and introduce ethnic and ideological diversity into the community while maintaining religion as the unifying force. Plymouth is an expression of self-confidence on the part of the Dearborn community. The community feels confident enough in their own culture to not worry about its erosion through interaction with the mainstream culture. They are also convinced of their culture's value, and therefore, want to share it with those who are ready and willing to benefit from it.

Levitas' model and the suburbanization model imply that the Plymouth development may tend to become a large-scale suburban mass: a very large, monumental mosque, social and conference facilities designed to accommodate hundreds of people, and large ground-area parking lots. These are consistent with the planning committee's desire to accommodate the fast-growing congregation and the intention for the center to be grand and look appealing to the highway traveler. Because of the large scale surroundings, the Islamic community may be inclined to follow the large-scale development trend. In such an environment one loses perspective of the human scale. Such

a large-scale environment is not consistent with the close-knit social and spiritual nature of the current Islamic community in Dearborn. To avoid the impersonal, car-governed environment, the design of the new Islamic Center of America should include elements of community form which are broken down to the human scale. This could result in developing sections that follow the scale and street patterns of the primitive Middle Eastern villages or the Southend, that is, places where people can park their cars, walk around, and enjoy the Center from the ground. It also calls for flexible environments, ones that can cater to a variety of weather conditions, and various numbers of people. (i.e. it is nice to have an area that people can walk around, but in the middle of January, it is also necessary to enable people to enter an enclosed environment quickly and easily). Hence, the tendency for development which reflects the evolution of the Islamic community of Dearborn is to move from a street-based culture to an car-based one. The architect or planner must head off this tendency and redefine the streets within the new community as enclaves rather than just throughways. In other words, the scale and pattern of the streets and their surrounding space should facilitate social interaction, much like the street patterns and building orientation do in the Middle Eastern village. Merely having a large parcel and building separate structures on it over time, could jeopardize the development of a walkable, human scale site. Devising a complete urban plan of the new Islamic Center of America, rather than one solely of a mosque is crucial in achieving cohesion within the site. It is at least as important to resolve issues regarding the connection of the various facilities of the Center as it is to design the individual buildings.



**CONCLUSION**  
**A New Understanding of Subgroup**  
**Evolution**

## **CONCLUSION: A New Understanding of Subgroup Evolution**

The melting pot ideal of assimilation assumes the eventual formation of a single American culture that will be derived from the fusion of the dominant, mainstream culture and the smaller subcultures. Implicit in the melting pot model is the expectation that the mainstream culture will retain its integrity, and that it will be the responsibility of the "stranger" to compromise and adjust his subculture. This thesis proposes an alternative model for viewing the coexistence of the mainstream and subcultural groups. This alternative model replaces fusion with a dialectic relationship between culture and subculture. This relationship is sustained by the tension resulting from the differences or "strangeness" between the two groups. Culture and subculture influence each other in a continuous feedback loop without either one necessarily surrendering its identity and integrity. Over time, the dialectic dynamic can bring culture and subculture closer together. Although there is an expectation that the subgroup will adjust in a pragmatic fashion in order to be functional within the economic, legal, and, to some degree, social systems of the mainstream, the subgroup is not made responsible of surrendering its identity and independence.

On another level, the dialectic tension between culture and subculture is mapped upon and influenced by city form. This defines yet a second dialectic relationship, and one which has important

implications for designers. The impact of culture on city form not only defines the street and building layout of a community, but also shapes the community's physical character through the non conforming use of built elements. In turn, culturally-induced behavior patterns cause the reinforcement or change of the built form. The ongoing cycle of adjustment between culture/ subculture and city form results in the evolution of both the social and physical community. The dynamic interaction between culture/ subculture and city form necessitates that architects and planners create flexible and adaptable built environments.

**Agglomerate, Grid, and Radial Development: Stages of Assimilation**

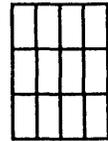
The Islamic community of Dearborn, Michigan is a subgroup defined by religion and ethnicity. It constitutes an example of the social and physical form that results from the combination of the two dialectic relationships described previously. The socio-economic evolution of the Islamic community over the past century is reflected in the physical form of the Southend, the Eastend, and in the vision for Plymouth.

The Southend is an agglomerate development. Commercial and residential buildings, social/ religious institutions, and streets are closely intermixed, but without a distinct pattern or order. The dominant image is similar



to that of the Middle Eastern village and this is consistent with the fact that the community consists primarily of first generation Muslim immigrants from the Middle East.

The Eastend consists of primarily of second and third generation Middle Easterners. In this community, the dialectic relationship between culture and subculture has transpired over several generation and has



lead to a more assimilated stage of the subculture. The Eastend can be characterized as a grid development. It has separate, specialized areas for commercial and institutional buildings, and for residences. The street form comprises of ordered and equally-sized blocks. The center of the Eastend is not a point location, but rather a six block strip of retail, commercial, and professional services.

The Southend and Eastend each reflect a stage of the community's economic, social, and educational development, and reflect a certain degree of assimilation into the American society. The two communities primarily cater to the generations of people who created them or those with similar needs to these founders. Physically and socially both the Southend and Eastend resist change. Space restrictions discourage physical renovation, while social resistance opposes ideas that diverge from the community's norm. In short, neither community represents a flexible and adaptable urban environment. Therefore, when the needs and desires of their respective community members changed, these members often moved. Because

the influx of new immigrants and the turnover of second and third generation immigrants is continuous, these two neighborhoods have retained somewhat constant populations.

The Plymouth project is envisioned by a group of Muslim Arab-Americans whose heritage in the United States followed the Southend-Eastend migration pattern. They are financially successful and relatively comfortable with the American culture. Many of them have left the Eastend for surrounding suburban neighborhoods. They perceive the Southend and Eastend as limiting communities in that, while maintaining subcultural identity, they do not facilitate assimilation with the American society. To them, the potential Plymouth development is an attempt to create a community which can be responsive to their evolving search for balance between retaining subcultural identity and achieving complete assimilation. They believe that this balance is appropriate for the whole Dearborn community and want to be the "catalysts"<sup>90</sup> for the changes which they feel are necessary for their people to succeed within the American society. They regard Plymouth as a fresh start for the whole Dearborn congregation, although they realize that not everyone will choose to follow. The proposed Plymouth site will follow a radial development pattern. The pivotal point of the site is intended to be the mosque, the key. Other institutions (schools, cultural center, etc.) and residential areas will be developed in



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<sup>90</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

arc-like zones around the mosque. It is assumed that another zone of commercial and retail facilities will develop immediately around the proposed site. The mosque as a key institution will drive the urban form of the new Islamic community in Plymouth.

The potential Plymouth site, if developed, will be part of a trend towards the suburbanization of the area between Detroit and Ann Arbor. The land around the site is currently becoming an affluent residential and business suburb. Placing the new Islamic Center project in the middle of suburban America is a deliberate one, on the part of the planning committee. By examining the identity of the planning committee members, the proposed move to this community can be better understood. The people who are envisioning the Islamic Center project in Plymouth have a middle to upper-middle income and are currently experiencing suburban life. Through Plymouth they are trying to bridge the American suburban lifestyle with their Islamic heritage.

Although these people come from southern Lebanese, Shi'ite Muslim ancestry, they have reached a relatively high level of "Americanization." To some congregation members, this is a move towards liberalism, to others, it is a move towards pragmatism. Going beyond these judgments, Americanization implies certain amenities and behaviors which are an integral part of life in midwestern America. For instance, the assumption of automobile and road infrastructure availability in the planning committee's vision for Plymouth is a powerful example of adjustment and assimilation to the American

environment. Also, incorporating the effects of the tax system into their strategy for building housing indicates a level of mastery of the American legal system. Finally, the inclusion of a retirement home in the committee's plans for Plymouth corresponds to American social and family structures. In the Middle East, not everyone has a car, the tax system is weak and usually not enforced, and the family structure nullifies the need for retirement homes except when medical supervision is necessary. Although the Plymouth community emphasizes maintenance of the Islamic community, it incorporates elements that are consistent with and necessary for its function within the American environment.

### **Critique of Planning Committee's Vision and Efforts**

The move to the Plymouth site includes a conscious effort by the planning committee members to transcend the limitations of the Dearborn community and design a new community that is more open to interchange with the mainstream culture. In planning the new Islamic Center of America, the committee members have exhibited much sensitivity to their congregation's spiritual, social, and educational needs. They have also spent a considerable amount of their own time and money to research other Islamic centers, which proves their genuine intentions towards the project. They are enthusiastic about their project and seem eager to share their findings with anyone who is genuinely

interested, as exemplified by their hospitable attitude and time commitment to this thesis.

Although the planning committee stressed their desire for a community that would encourage free interchange with the mainstream society, their vision contains several elements that are contrary to their professed notion of community openness.

First, they want the Center to be visible from the M14 highway, but at the same time, they do not want easy access to the site. This indicates that although they are eager to attract attention and convey a visual message to the American society, they still want to distance themselves somewhat from the mainstream. They are envisioning Plymouth as a "look, but don't touch" community. Whether this is an indication of mixed intentions, or just a matter to be resolved with detailed plans of the project site, is not yet clear.

Second, the planning committee expressed their concern for a cohesive community, yet they talked about designing in phases. Phase construction is an acceptable and usually economically necessitated form of development, but phase design often leads to an architecturally disjointed site. While the committee members may not understand the importance of a Masterplan, their lack of one may also have other implications. The planning committee seems to believe that the mere size of the proposed site will grant them flexibility. They do not seem to recognize the value of creating a master design with contingency plans

as a more appropriate way of creating a cohesive and yet adaptive environment to serve their congregation "for the next 100 years."<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the committee's verbal vision of the project includes a functionally and aesthetically cohesive site which caters to Muslims as well as non-Muslims. Their phase I design places an emphasis on the mosque, despite the claim that educational, cultural, and social facilities, that would serve their congregation and create links outside the community, were of equal importance. The priority of building a mosque first, rather than perhaps a cultural center, indicates that they are more interested in fulfilling their congregation's needs than promoting interchange with the non-Muslim community.

Third, the members of the planning committee stress their desire to integrate with the area and people surrounding the Plymouth site and to welcome all people who want to learn about Islam. Despite this, they have guided the Board of Trustees to buy the homes and barns on the site so that they can maintain control over who lives there (Figure 36). The committee members also expressed their preference to control who lives in the potential home sites and how they behave. Although one committee member was positive about the lack of a street between their site and the Plymouth Common property, he followed by discussing the type of dense landscaping that would be placed along the edge of the two as a boundary. As much as they would like to be fully integrated

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<sup>91</sup>Interviews with planning committee members March 28-31, 1993.

with the non-Muslim Plymouth community, they envision the Plymouth site as a bounded one.

Finally, the new Islamic Center of America is envisioned to be for all Muslims but the site is situated on expensive real estate and the surrounding residential areas are for relatively high income families.



**Figure 36:** These are barns located on the Plymouth site. They are owned by the Islamic Center of America. The one on the left is being renovated and will be used for congregation social functions. By doing this, the planning committee wants to get members of the congregation motivated and used to traveling the distance to reach the site. The planning committee hopes to lessen the resistance to the site based on its distance from Dearborn.

Judging from this, from the current living conditions of the planning committee members, and from their vision for the home site and school,

it is clear that their homes will be fairly costly and their Islamic schools, private. This translates their vision for the center to be one for Muslims only of a certain socio-economic class.

Although they may have good intentions, the planning committee is being idealistic in thinking that they can transcend ethnic differences. The congregation members retain attitudes of prejudice and clannishness that are counterproductive to the committee's vision of ethnic equality. In the present Islamic Center of America, there is much controversy over the presence of an Iranian Iman. Many congregation members do not want him there, not because they doubt his charisma and dedication, but merely because he is Iranian and they are Lebanese. Such clannishness in a new Center which included Muslims of various ethnicities would prompt the formation of factions within the Center that would vie for the power to make financial and social decisions for the entire congregation. Currently, despite the intentions of the planning committee, there appears to be no genuine, widespread desire of the congregation to overcome ethnic and racial lines and unite under an Islamic umbrella.

How the current congregation will react to a multi-ethnic and, possibly, a multi-racial one at the proposed Plymouth site is unclear. This leads to many presently unanswerable questions. Is the planning committee's progressive vision enough to make this project materialize despite the fact that the current congregation of the Islamic Center of America may not be ready for such a move? Given that a quick revision of

conservative, ethnocentric, and isolationist attitudes is unlikely, is the planning committee intending to attract only the progressive section of the current congregation to Plymouth? Or will the planning committee eventually have to dilute its vision in order to maintain the current congregation intact? Even if the current congregation does accept the progressive vision of the planning committee, does the greater non-Muslim community of Plymouth have to be ready for the change or will the determination of the Muslim congregation be enough to make this happen?

If the planning committee does intend to try and unite various ethnic Muslim subgroups, where will the architectural precedent for the new Islamic Center of America come from in such a potentially diverse community? From their surveys and comments, it is obvious that the planning committee is aware that architectural images impress certain ideas upon the people who see them. In realizing this, they are committed to paying careful attention when creating the designs for their new Center. However, what they seem not to be aware of is their own biases that are a result of being a Muslim in America.

### **Image-Making and Identity: the Importance of a Fixed Physical Environment**

During the course of discussion with the planning committee members, there were two images of Islamic architecture that were suggested (one directly, one indirectly). One was the Taj Mahal, in Agra

(Figure 37). This image was associated with the Islamic Center of Toledo by a truck driver who saw it from the highway. The fact that this truck driver knew enough about the Taj Mahal that he could relate it to the character of the Islamic Center of Toledo makes a statement about the types of images of Islamic architecture that get projected, especially by the media, to the United States. Additionally, the design of the Islamic Center of Toledo indicates the impressionable Islamic images in the minds of the congregation and architect who designed the Center.

The other image which was alluded to in the informal vision sketch given to me by a planning committee member was that of the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem (Figure 38). Again, it is no coincidence that this image was the one used for the mosque in the sketch. In reality, the Dome of the Rock is not a mosque, but a tomb; yet it is one whose image has become so closely associated with Islam that, in this case, it has been transformed into a mosque.

Both of these structures are ones which are fully documented monuments of classical Islamic architecture. The Dome of the Rock (completed in AD 691) and the Taj Mahal (completed in 1654) are both images that have been presented in the United States as Islamic monuments. It seems unlikely that the same two structures would be the predominant images of Islamic architecture in the mind of a Lebanese village woman. The mosque form in the United States reflects the transformation of Islamic monuments and the combination of their elements to create a new form of Islamic architecture. The designs for

Figure 37

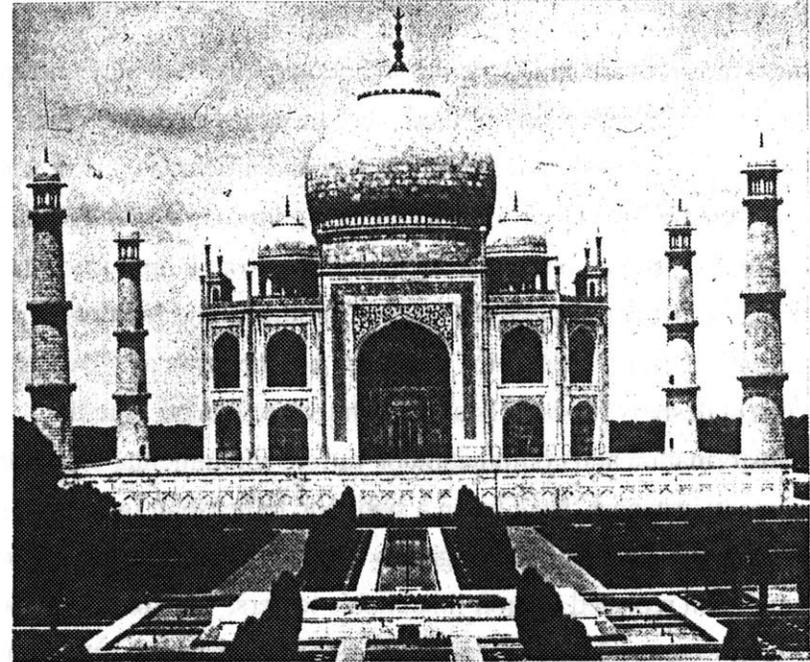
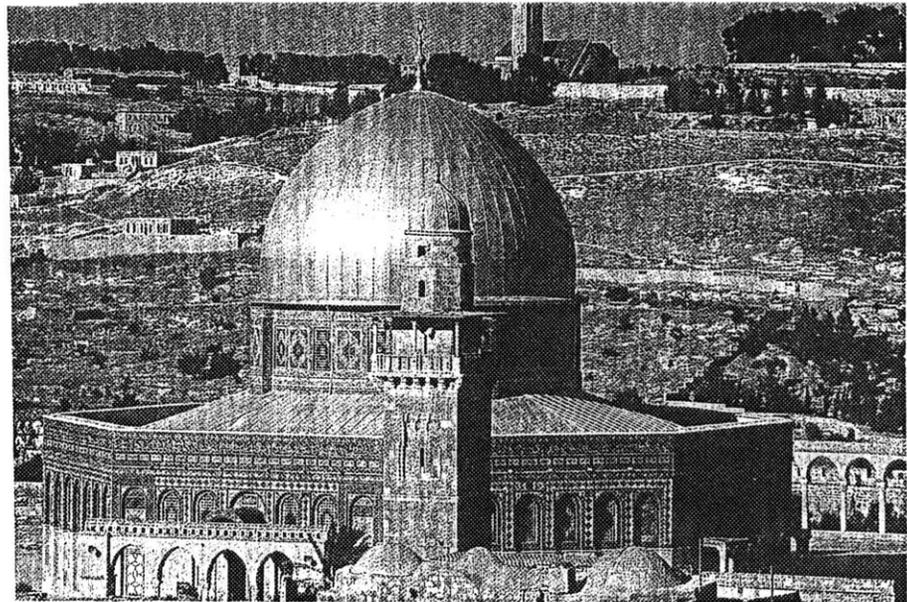


Figure 38



these mosques are similar to the architectural trend of state mosques in the Islamic world. Many of these state mosques have been built where the emphasis on Islamic identity is new and urgent, as it is in America. The state mosque environments are being used as symbols, similar to the image that can be seen from a distance, from a highway. The aspects of culture which inspired the original architects and builders to create the various mosques around the world are not the same as what inspires the current designs. Today's Islamic architecture has become the transformation and combination of various monumental elements which, in many instances, have taken a symbolic rather than functional role. The minarets which were originally created to facilitate the call to prayer, have been replaced by non-inhabitable towers. The fountains and basins which were originally provided for religious cleansing have been functionally replaced by modern, high-tech facilities, but are still found in many mosque designs. Thus, the designs of today's mosques in the United States have arisen from an evolved perception of the historical immigrant culture.

Why is it so important to the planning committee to have a fixed physical environment which expresses their identity? The planning committee realizes that future generations will have the option to completely assimilate into the American society. The fear of future generations losing their identity because of this option provides a sense of urgency for the current generation to design physical structures and social systems that will illustrate the value of the immigrant culture and will allow it to be perpetuated. It is important that these structures and

systems are flexible and able to evolve with the Islamic community which will naturally and inevitably continue to respond to the American context. If the execution of the new Islamic Center of America successfully manages the tensions between openness and maintenance of identity, the friction between culture and subculture will become a productive one and contribute a more harmonious, culturally pluralistic society. However, myopic execution will lead to misunderstandings by the mainstream about the nature of the Islamic community. The Plymouth project will then be perceived as a rejection of the mainstream American culture and as voluntary segregation.







## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX I : Survey and Questionnaire on North American Mosques/ Islamic Centers**

**North American Mosque Survey**

Date: / / 92

City \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:**

Cross Streets: Present \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Past \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

From Last Mosque:

Distance \_\_\_\_\_ miles  
Time \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Seen From Freeway:

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Quick Access To Freeway:

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_  
Distance \_\_\_\_\_ miles

**Previous Mosque:**

Time at Previous Mosque: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Reason For Moving: Deterioration of Area \_\_\_\_\_

Outgrown \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Project:**

Planning Start: Year \_\_\_\_\_

Start \_\_\_\_\_ End \_\_\_\_\_ of project  
(Project Construction Time \_\_\_\_\_)

Approximate Cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (phase 1)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (phase 2)

Approximate Size \_\_\_\_\_ (square feet)

Determinate Factors for Present Location:

How Long Will Present Location Serve the Community  
Both in Size and Programs \_\_\_\_\_ yrs.

**Congregation:**

Size: \_\_\_\_\_ Present \_\_\_\_\_ Past

Composition: Gained / Younger Generation \_\_\_\_\_

Lost/ Previous Members \_\_\_\_\_

Gained in Both Areas \_\_\_\_\_

New Location Created Turmoil \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Relocation (of members) Closer to Mosque Area  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Complaints (of Leaving Old Site):  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Old Mosque:**

In Existence (being us \_\_\_\_\_)

Sold \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Suggestions:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## NORTH AMERICAN MOSQUES - PHONE SURVEY RESPONSES

	Toledo phase 1 / phase 2	Cleveland	Toronto
<b>PROJECT</b>			
Started	1980 / 1990	1991	1990
Completed	1983 / 1991	1993	1992
Construction Time	2.5 yrs.	1.5 yrs.	2 yrs.
Number of Acres	48	7.5	10
Square Footage	26,000 / 14,000	26,000	?
Total Acreage	40,000	26,000	?
Total Cost	\$2.3 mil/ \$1.4 mil	\$2 mil	?
<b>FREEWAY</b>			
Exposure	YES	NO*	YES
Quick Access	YES	YES	YES
Distance From	2.5 miles	2 miles	1 mile
<b>OLD MOSQUE</b>			
Distance From	10 miles**	25 miles	15 miles
Time From	15-20 minutes	25 minutes	20 minutes
Time At	41 yrs.	23 yrs.	10 yrs.
<b>REASON FOR MOVING</b>			
Surrounding Area (Deterioration)	YES	YES	YES
Outgrown	YES	YES	YES
<b>FAMILY MEMBERSHIP</b>			
Old Mosque	200	100	?
New Mosque	290	?	?

\* Would have preferred freeway exposure if available

\*\* Geographically/ Socially, Toledo's 10 miles is equivalent to 20 miles in the metropolitan Detroit area.

### Visitation Questionnaire

#### A. - General

- 1) Tell me a little how you got started
- 2) What initiated the move to a new location?
- 3) If you had to do it again, would you change anything?
- 4) Did you have any problems convincing your Board of Trustees?
- 5) Did you do a survey amongst the congregation and what type?
- 6) What kind of demographic information did you use? from where?
- 7) Knowledge of other "new" centers

#### B. - Architecture

- 1) How did you get to the decision to hire someone?
- 2) Who was that person?
- 3) How did you work with them? (financial)
- 4) Was it a fixed fee or a % of the project cost?
- 5) Do you have any leads for us on an architect of Muslim origin?

#### C. - Facility

- 1) How did you arrive at the type of facility -- size, aesthetics etc.?
- 2) What kind of services/ needs did you address at your facility?
- 3) Is there anything you would like to add to your facility?

### **Critique of Survey and Questionnaire**

The previous survey and questionnaire were developed by the planning committee members as research tools. None of the members had any previous experience compiling such documents, and consequently, the contents of the survey and questionnaire were the results of long brainstorming sessions with all the committee members. The planning committee used the answers to the phone survey to help them decide which centers to visit. They also believed that the creation of a visitation questionnaire would enable them to efficiently address issues of concern for them and their congregation. Although only some of the responses are recorded here, the committee visited about half a dozen centers, all of which had established congregations before they moved to their new site.

The questions of both the survey and questionnaire reflect the planning committee's awareness of certain needs, desires, and problems of their current congregation and center. Questions about the congregations of other centers indicate a level of sensitivity to the dynamics within the committee's own community. At the bottom of their phone survey results, they have noted (with a \*\*) a similarity in socially defined distance perceptions. This implies awareness of certain social values and the cultural perception of time and distance. Questions about visibility and access verify the committee's interest in the perceptions of members and non-members of their congregation. They seem very concerned with aesthetics. Much care and attention was given

to addressing issues about the architect and the aesthetics of the various centers. This implies that the committee members believe that aesthetic images play a large role in people's perceptions of them and of Islam. Such attention to cultural perceptions, whether conscious or unconscious, reveals a certain level of sophistication and concern that the planning committee members have towards their project. It is also a product of living within the diverse American society, and coming into close contact with people whose cultural perceptions, expectations, and behavior are different from one's own.

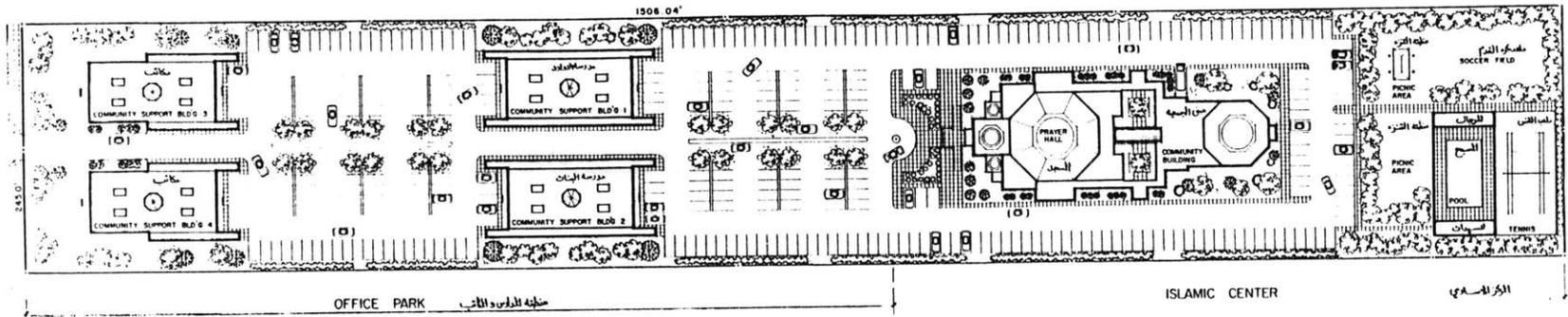
The survey and questionnaire are clear reflections of the planning committee's own concerns. The survey is not one that allows the respondents to be unrestrained with their answers, but it takes them through the planning committee's agenda. The committee approaches their potential respondents with specific questions more than allowing them to openly speak about their center and experiences. For example, they do not ask, "What were your priorities in choosing a location?" Instead, they list their own priorities in and reasons for choosing a site and question whether the center being visited fits these. Although it is still somewhat directed, the questionnaire is more open-ended and allows the people visited to tell a little bit more of their own story. Going into an interview or visiting a research location with a firm set of intentions and ideas, is a useful approach because it provides a sense of direction. In the planning committee's case, it ensures that the matters which they feel are important within their own community are addressed. However, having such a strictly defined agenda may cause

issues to be overlooked that could potentially enrich one's perspective on the project.

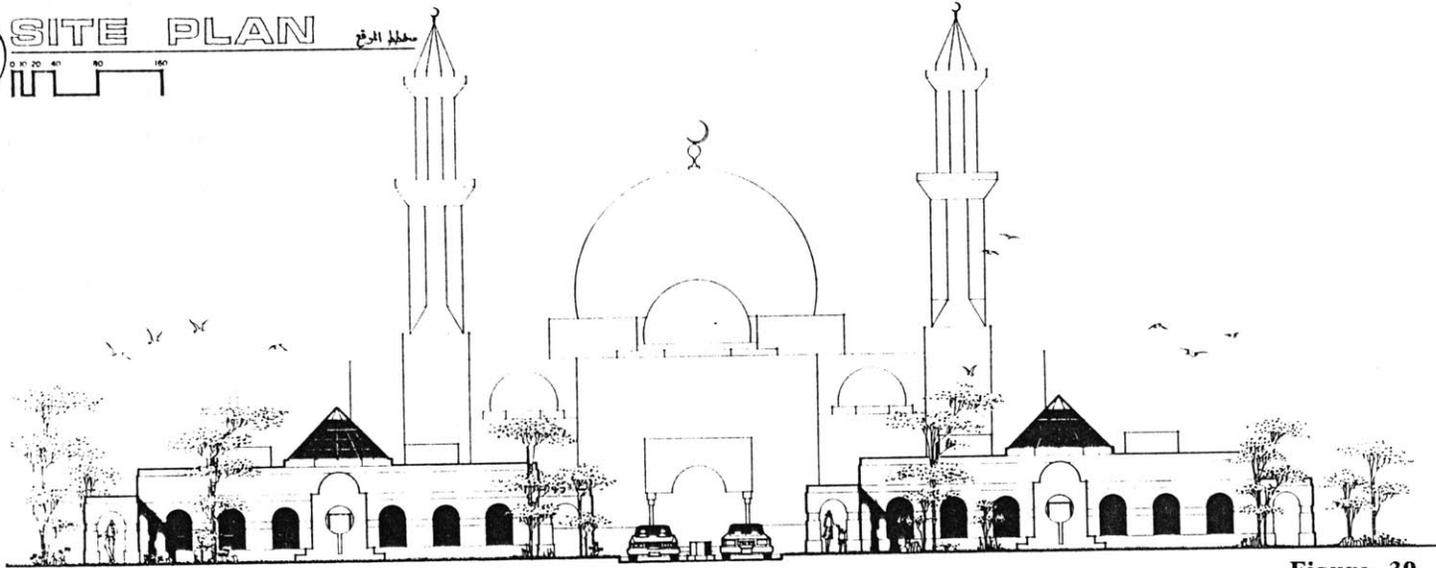
## **APPENDIX II: Cleveland Mosque Project**

The following recounts the practical issues surrounding the development of the Cleveland mosque in Ohio. It is taken from excerpts of an interview with the architect and site manager for the project, Mohamed Najjar. This project is an example which shows the type of issues and details that must be considered in developing a mosque, and may prove useful in illuminating the lessons that the planning committee is hoping to carry over to the Plymouth project. In this particular case, adjustments to the original design had to be made in order to obtain a zoning permit. These adjustments resulted in the removal of certain aspects of their congregation's vision for a new Islamic center. The remaining part of the Cleveland project's original plan includes the mosque building and some recreational facilities.

The architect's initial proposal for the Cleveland Islamic center development was rejected because the property was supposed to generate revenue for the city. The long, narrow parcel was originally zoned for research and manufacturing, so the Islamic community negotiated to build office buildings on their site in order to bring income back to the city (through taxes). Although they are currently being redesigned to match the mosque, the four offices on the plans were



**SITE PLAN**  
مخطط الموقع



**FRONT ELEVATION**  
الواجهة الأمامية

Figure 39

designed at the last moment in order to get the city to approve their proposal. No occupancy permit for the mosque will be issued until offices are built. The architect's objective is to complete the mosque and office buildings at the same time (approximately 8-10 months from now). He wants the offices to be only one story so as not to obstruct the view of the mosque. Because such a design will occupy so much ground area, the original plans for social halls and a school will not be carried out (Figures 39,40).

Like many other Islamic centers and mosques, the congregation of the Cleveland Islamic Center does not want to finance their project externally. There are many financially able people in the congregation who are willing to donate whatever is necessary to complete the mosque. The architect thinks that if the prospect of the office buildings is presented as an investment to the members of the congregation that will give them a return, they will participate and get their name on the building. Some doctors and dentists of the congregation have expressed interest in setting up their offices on the site.

The Islamic center will also install the utilities and construct a road on the site. Additionally the plans require that part of the land is used for parking for the office buildings. There will be two way traffic throughout the parking lot. The city proposed that they hire someone else to develop on the land in front of the mosque, but the Islamic center has chosen to develop it themselves. They want to maintain control as to for what it will be leased and to whom. They are concerned about the



types of establishments that would be built if they relinquished the control of the land to the city. One congregation member (the brother of one of the Islamic Center of America's planning committee members) said the following, "If we gave someone else control over what would go there, we might end up with a two-story building or retail shops, video stores with Madonna etc.."

The design of the project integrates handicap facilities; handicap arrival is at the same point as non-handicap entrance to the buildings. Although the main entrance is in the front, women can also enter from right, men from left. There is a fountain just inside the main entrance, which the architect has included as a way to disperse the crowd. He uses many geometric symbols that evolve from Islamic design theory (see Appendix on the Design Process of the Cleveland Mosque) such as an eight point star on the floor of fountain and an octagon-shaped mosque. Initially he was given instructions to orient the mosque in one direction. Later it was realized that the correct orientation was 17 degrees off so he had to change the orientation by moving the focus of the prayer hall over one wall to the left and re-orienting the mezzanine. On the ground floor of the prayer hall there are plans for 4'5" carpet strips of interchanging colors (blue and off-white) to organize prayer hall and orient people in correct direction (NE) for prayer. Mr. Najjar also believes that the octagon is a good shape for acoustic reasons. The placement of a sound source within the built structure was carefully determined. "Everything is related to everything else architecturally. The design reads in 45 degree angles in three dimensions. The dome is

dimensioned like the Dome of the Rock. Its diameter is about 35 feet." The architect took 10% of the total intended height for the dome and devise a cylinder. He then started a curvature, which ascended 70 degrees before it was leveled off. The vertical elements step down gradually. The architect's focus is on symmetry, balance, and harmony.

Near the right side entrance, there is a stairway which goes from wudu area for women straight up to women's prayer mezzanine. (Handicapped women will be accommodated on first floor). Second floor has offices but this area is divided by a wall and is not accessible to/by women's prayer mezzanine. There is a Koran reading room off of the prayer hall and the architect has plans to build the columns inside of prayer area with platforms so that a person can rest his elbows.

What is interesting about this aspect of his design is that it represents a return to the structural configuration of the ancient mosques. In the past, the lack of technological knowledge as well as the bulk and weight of building materials necessitated the use of columns to support the dome and other ceiling parts. Often, Muslims would lean up against these columns while reading from the Koran. The lightness of many current American building materials and the structural engineering knowledge is such that building roofs can be erected with fewer support columns. Instead of taking advantage of such technological innovations, Mohammed Najjar decided to construct many columns and went one step further in accommodating Muslim needs by providing a platform from these columns, at elbow or Koran resting level. This would

provide a more comfortable situation for the Muslim who reads the Koran in the prayer hall as did his ancient predecessors. While the placement of platforms on the columns reflects an old use of mosque architecture, the design of a Koran reading room represents a new adaptation. This room was designed for people who want to go somewhere quiet, sit down, and read the Koran.

Furthermore, the Cleveland mosque design includes a mortuary, shoe closets with accordion doors, carpet area when you come out of wudu so that your feet can dry, and a shower and changing room for the women. The HVAC ducts are to be as invisible as possible and there is to be warm fluorescent lighting onto the dome. There is an apartment for the Imam to live at the mosque. Finally, there are to be dual podiums in the prayer hall: one for the Imam, the spiritual leader, and one for the social or political leader of community.

### **APPENDIX III: The Design Process For the Cleveland Mosque**

The following is a summary of an interview with the architect for the Cleveland Mosque, Mohamed Najjar. This goes through the process in which he took to develop his design. More specifically, this discussion highlights the geometrical essence of Islamic design as well as examines different eras in which Islamic architecture has achieved monumental proportions.

"The president of the Islamic Center contacted me on Thursday night at 11 o'clock and said that the congregation was doing this project and that they had a deadline of that Saturday at 11 o'clock for design presentations. (36 hrs.) There was no clear cut program at the time and if there had been, I couldn't have laid my hands on it because of the time crunch. I just got some basic ideas from the president and then I had to develop a certain program from knowledge or research of needs and requirements of the local community here. The requirements of the people here are different from those of the old country (he had worked in Jordan for a few years)."

The architect had done research to this end at an earlier time when he was doing his graduate architecture degree at Kent State. The mosque design for the Cleveland Islamic Center is an adaptation of his thesis. "So [he] used this as a guide as well as some common sense to

determine what they may need (being an Arab Muslim himself)." He tried to establish a program and presented some basic ideas about the execution of such a design to the congregation's jury. Their decision for choosing his design was not necessarily for his program as it was for "the form and flow of things and the circulation, how the project functioned and looked at the same time." Then the plan for the mosque/center went through a design and development phase where more aspects of the program were altered and developed and incorporated into the design.

"After I got my bachelor's degree, I went back and worked in Jordan. I was fortunate enough to have designed/ worked on two of the newest mosques in Amman, and by virtue of that I acquired some more information about Islamic architecture. Four months after I came back to the States I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to submit the Cleveland mosque proposal. After the proposal was submitted, I started doing the theoretic research. The design scheme which I came up with was based on an artist's rendering in one of the mosque books that I had come across (this was the artist's idea of the ideal mosque - he did not know the ethnicity of the artist). I also tried to incorporate aspects of other mosques I had studied into the design. There were no floor plans of this rendering; it was just a black and white perspective. I started to see its function just by seeing this outside. I started to employ the utilities and facilities that the community needs into that concept. In this particular design, I started letting the function follow the form, as we went on they started to go together simultaneously. In the Design and

Development phase, the design was altered to meet other requirements for the ADA, fire codes, etc. Then we started facing problems with the city with zoning, which dictated upon us bringing in concepts like office buildings which is were in some way on the minds of the congregation because they wanted to do something that would generate income. A project of that size has a lot of expenses; they were putting that concept off: 'let's just concentrate on the mosque for now and worry about the rest later.' But when the city came back and required that some structure that would generate tax revenue be erected, it became a sooner occurrence than they had intended. So we had to come up with a quick concept for the office buildings. That's why they are pretty straight forward rectangular forms, maximize leaseable spaces."

In an interview, Mohamed Najjar described the six chapters of his thesis below. He explains the key points of his study which enabled him to develop the Cleveland Mosque design.

"Chapter one includes the meaning of geometry, what it means, how it is generated, how we create point, line and plane in Islamic architecture. The point being the center of everything and the smallest geometric form. And once something is projected out of it in a straight path, which is what Muslims should live by, it.<sup>1</sup> You project it in the

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<sup>1</sup>The following is an excerpt from the Fatihah of the Koran (this is similar to the Lord's Prayer of the Bible): "All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Universe, the most Merciful, the most Kind; Master of the day of judgment. You alone we worship, from You alone we seek help. Guide us along the straight path - the path of those whom You favored, not of those who earned Your anger or went astray."

straight line, straight path. Once we, as Muslims, follow that and once we believe that everything in the world revolves around Allah. Allah is the center of the universe, everything revolves around him. We take this straight line that we've come up with and revolve it around this, we come up with the circle. From the circle, if you use multiples of circles, you will get for instance three circles touching each other at the outermost edges, we get the equilateral triangle. And this evolves further into the octagon etc. From the octagon we get an eight angled star and that is where all of the geometry that we get in Islamic architecture is generated from. So the origin of everything as we Muslims believe is the center of everything and that is Allah and geometrically speaking that is the point which is the smallest form of geometry. Everything is generated from the unity of Allah.

Chapter 2: Focuses on the Umayyad Architecture because this is the basis of where Islamic architecture started emerging. It is the first era in Islam that leaves us any architecture in today's world and that is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. We took the configuration of this and all the others in this study and looked at it as a whole and at the elements of each separately and took the elements and put them together to see how they work together. It is so interesting that this leads us to derive a lot of interesting things that we don't really see in any other type of

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Another Koranic verse states "Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path." and another states "And He (commands you, saying): This is my straight path, so follow it. So not follow other paths, which will separate you from His path." The Muslim believes that if he follows the Koran it will provide a clear and straight path which leads to progress and fulfillment in life and the attainment of Allah's pleasure (Heaven).

architecture except Islamic architecture. Architecture is a derivation of different meanings. Everything in architecture has a meaning.

Chapter 3: Analyzes the Taj Mahal (Mughul). The Taj Mahal has a lot of hidden secrets, and it is a presentation of love in the world today and it is also a very good representation of what Islamic architecture is, how we go about it, what it means, looking at the geometry (45 degree angles), and the use of materials in conjunction with all the other aspects of design. From there you come to the conclusion that a building is only a piece of architecture if it combines all these different elements and makes them one unit that cannot be seen in the form of its individual elements, but as a whole it makes one hell of a statement. If you lose one element, for instance say a minaret or any of the doorways or you change the configuration or the shape or form of the arches you start to lose some of the strength of that design; that is very evident in the Taj Mahal. The interior material/exterior material is all the same, a special kind of limestone. It changes color three times a day: morning - blue, midday - white, early evening-yellow. Again the approach to the building is interesting if you look at the different aspects.

Chapter 4: Examines the Andalucia architecture which is the Islamic architecture in Spain. I think the best example is the Al-Hambra Palace in Granada. This is not only a good example of the art and architecture but also the engineering of things that is evident in the 365 windows around the building and the way the light enters the building at various points in the day. There are also fountains and the distance of

the water coming out of the lion's mouth indicates how close you are to the hour. On the hour no water comes out.

Chapter 5: Looks at the Gardens of Kashmir wondrous that the water travels upwards without any pumping but through the knowledge of the Islamic engineers of hydraulics and physics.

Chapter 6: Puts different elements of these together to come up with a concept for a mosque for an Islamic community in the United States. The communities here are different from those in the old country - so we looked at the different needs of the communities. This time for Muslims in America is very much like the time when Mohammed went from Mecca to Medina. When he did this the very first thing he did was build a mosque, because a mosque was where everything was done: prayer, announce war, solve social and psychological problems etc. And this is exactly what is the role of the mosque today in the United States."

When I asked Mr. Najjar how could a tomb, royal city/ fortress, set of palaces, and group of idiosyncratic gardens provide the "principles" for the design of "mosques," he referred me to Basil Al-Bayati's book, *Community and Unity*. Here, the author analyzes various concepts, such as Gateway, Time, Intermediate Space, Dome, Movement, Protection, and so on , which he feels lead to the unified Islamic community. Mr. Najjar wanted to choose monumental Islamic buildings which spanned time and region and which, he felt,

incorporated as many of these concepts as possible. By looking at how these monumental structures architecturally dealt with these concepts, he felt he could better understand the physical manifestation of the Islamic "principles."

## APPENDIX IV: Crescent Academy School in Canton, Michigan

The Crescent Academy has been in operation for two years and currently has 250 students. Although it now educates grades only K-7, it is intended to contain elementary, middle and high school levels, a library, and a playground (Figures 41 to 44). The curriculum meets federal and state standards and also includes classes in Arabic, Islamic studies, and Koran, and students perform daily Salah at 2:30pm. Most classes contain 16 students, and the largest contains 20. Currently, only what will be the future gymnasium and administrative offices is constructed. The classes are conducted in the future office spaces. Most of the children from the surrounding suburbs travel on one of four school-owned buses or two vans to get to the school. On the day I visited, the students were having a party to celebrate the religious holiday, Eid. They had also invited students from two other Islamic schools in the area to join them.

The school attracts many wealthy professionals (mostly Arab or Pakistani) who are afraid to send their kids through the school system, especially the public one. These families also donate considerable amounts of money to further the development of the school. Unlike other Islamic schools in the area which tend to be divided along ethnic lines, the Crescent Academy wants to integrate across ethnicity and race, with religion being the common denominator. Integration is an issue that

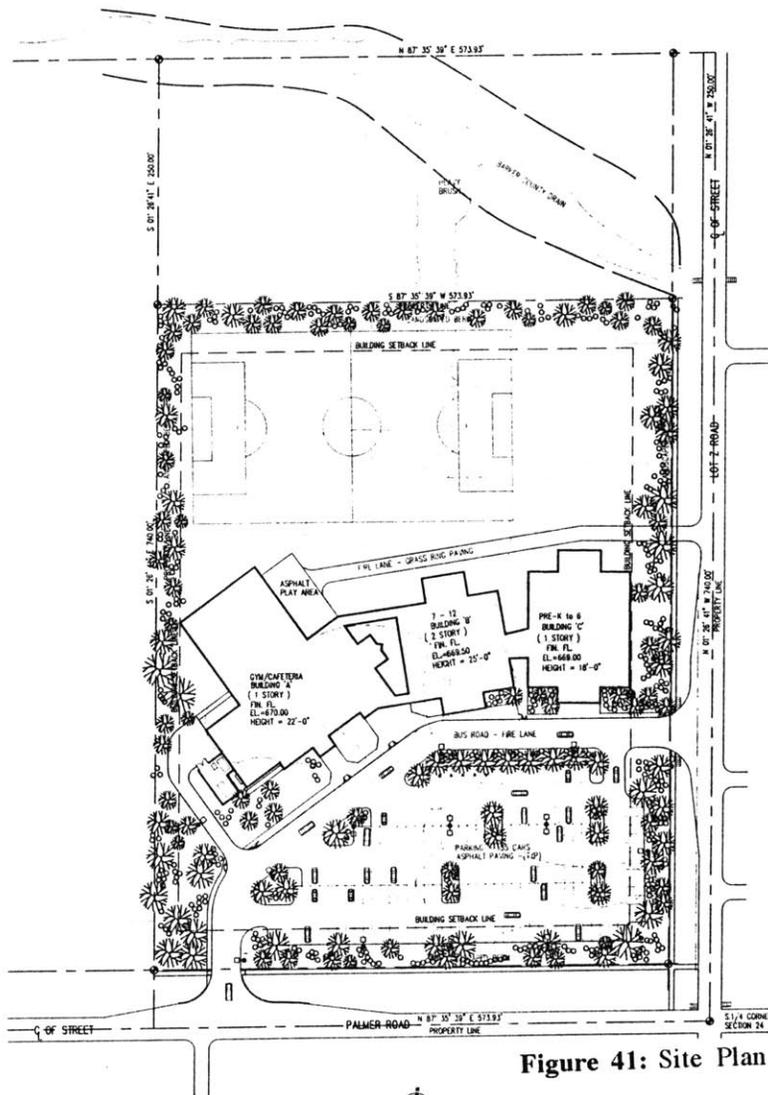


Figure 41: Site Plan

the planning committee finds important and plans to pursue in the proposed Plymouth site school (Figure 45).

The cost of tuition is \$2100 for the first child and \$1600 for the second, third etc. Although not all the teachers are Muslims, they must all adhere to Islamic codes of conduct and dress. The salary range for teachers at this school is between \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year. This can be compared with the average salary for a parochial school teacher in Michigan (\$15,000) and the average one for a Michigan public school teacher (\$28,000).

The school publicizes on the radio and television; they were even featured on CNN. They also have a public relations administrator who runs occasional open house sessions and who has developed full color brochures about the school. Despite these various methods of publicity, the most successful way of relaying information about the school has been word-of-mouth.

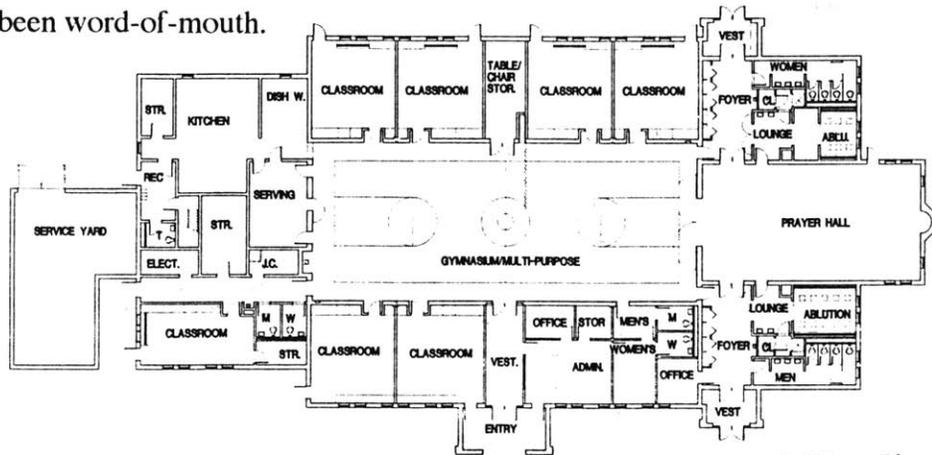


Figure 42: Phase I, Floor Plan

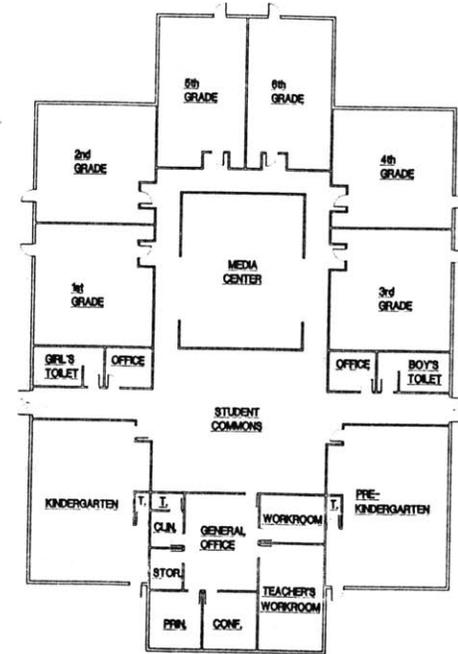
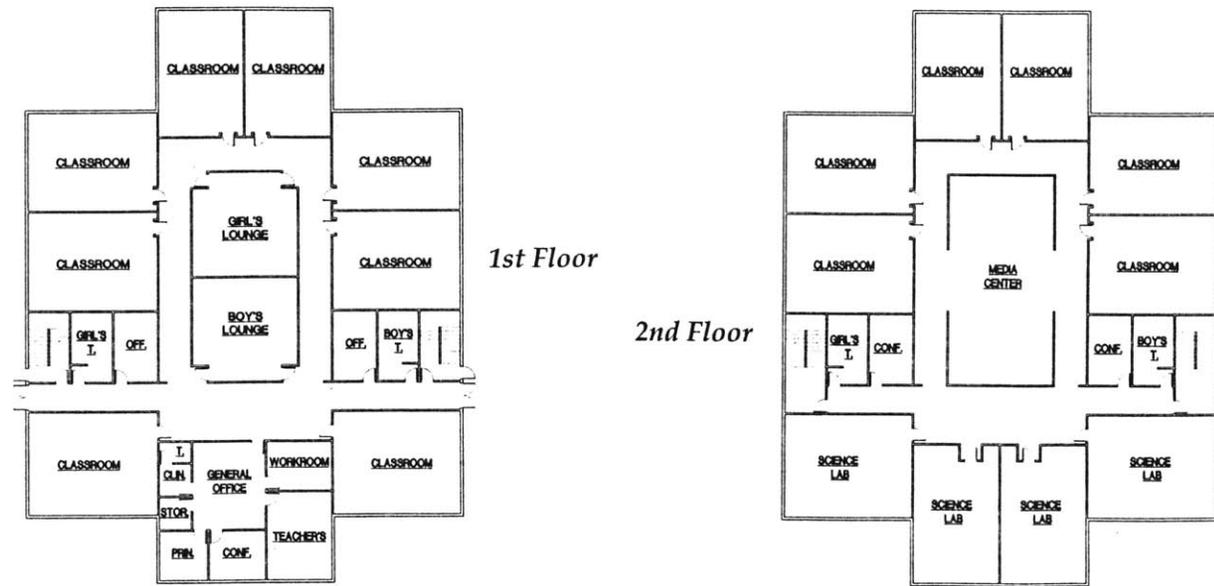


Figure 43: Phase II, Floor Plan



**Figure 44:** Phase III, Floor Plan, First and Second Floor

**Figure 45:** This is a girl scout troupe at the Crescent Academy. Support of activities such as these facilitate integration with the mainstream culture.





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