Our Principles

Diyanet Center of America,

• Is committed to providing religious services, away from the realm of politics.

• Relies on true knowledge based on the Qur'an and authentic traditions of the Prophet and takes into consideration various religious interpretations, tendencies and traditions and evaluates them in the light of mainstream understanding and rational approach.

• Is committed to protect the Muslims' religious and cultural roots in the face of assimilationist policies.

• Aims to preserve all the differences in belief and culture in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual respect.

• Conceives the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the other religions as well as the preservation of the religious and cultural diversity respecting values from the past, all prerequisites for the exalted tolerance of Islam.

• Supports freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

• Condemns all types of violence and terror, regardless of the perpetrator and its victims. DCA regards all terrorist acts as a crime against humanity.

• Encourages dialogue between faith communities.

• Defends equal and complementary rights and responsibilities for men and women.

WHO WE ARE

The Diyanet Center of America (DCA) is an operating name of the Turkish American Community Center (TACC), a non-profit organization (501(c)(3) status) located in Lanham, Maryland. The community center was established in 1993 by a group of Turkish-Americans to provide religious, social and educational services to Turkish immigrants and Muslims living in the United States of America. As an umbrella organization, DCA has 22 local chapters with affiliations across America and works in full coordination with the Religious Affairs Division of the Republic of Turkey (Diyanet). The imams and female chaplains of the mosque are appointed by Diyanet. DCA has a policy to hire local imams as well.
Following TACC’s foundation as a non-profit organization in Prince George’s County, Maryland, its first activity was to purchase 16.5 acres of land for a community center where Muslims could conduct their religious, cultural, social, educational, and fitness activities as well as inter-faith programs. From 1993 to 2008, the local Turkish American community held regular Friday congregational prayers, iftar dinners, eid celebrations and various activities in a modest building adjacent to a small masjid on this location. In the year 2008, a group of fellow Muslims living in the Washington DC Area collaborated with the members of TACC to commence planning and the development of a concept that gave rise to an institution; a dream that became a reality – The Diyanet Center of America. Among the others, the project proposed by HASSA, a Turkish Architectural company, was approved by then Prime Minister and now Turkey's President, The Honorable Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Professor Dr. Mehmet Gormez, the president for Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey. Plan revisions and an arduous building permit process took approximately three years. In order to expedite construction, a design-build project delivery method was preferred. The construction started on September 23, 2012 and a ceremony for the laying of a ceremonial stone on mihrab (prayer niche) section, was held May 15, 2013 with the participation of the Turkish Prime Minister and other dignitaries. The mosque first opened its doors to worshippers and visitors in the Spring of 2015. By the 30th of October, 2015 this historic project was successfully completed.

HASSA, a Turkish architectural company, was the consultant firm who prepared conceptual designs of all the buildings and supervised the artistic works in the field. Mr. Muharrem Hilmi Senalp, the president of HASSA, was the design architect of the center. Mr. Steve Kunin, of Fentress Architects, was the architect of record. Balfour Beatty Construction, as general contractor, undertook the tasks of the massive construction process. Approximately, 90 Turkish artisans, like stonemasons, calligraphers, carpenters, roofers, gypsum/stucco craftsmen and a number of Turkish companies played a key role in completing the unique and ornate artistic finishes of brick, marble, wood and stone.
FOREWORD

Islam is a path of wisdom that began with the call of *Iqra*’, to read. It was the first command of God to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This command gives life to everything wherever it reaches and whomever it touches. Within its way of life, Islam established a civilization of balance and ethics cultivating the relationship between humanity and Allah, between society and nature. The mosque, as a place of worship, is the most essential element of Islamic civilization. As the hub of both civic and spiritual life in society, the mosque in the Islamic city is very similar to the heart in the human body. Those believers who come together in the spiritual climate of the mosque enjoy a reunion with other fellow human beings and feel the joy of connecting with Almighty God through salat, the daily prayer and recitation. The call from the mosques and its graceful minarets rising into the sky is a call to peace, appreciation, brotherhood, justice, and tolerance. The purpose of the wisdom repeated in divine messages whispered into our hearts and souls is to give to the faithful a sense of elation, hope and to provide spiritual healing in this world and the hereafter.

Since the very beginning of Islam, mosques have served, not only as a place of worship, but also as centers of knowledge, learning, wisdom and consultation. It is my belief that the mosque as the religious epicenter is the continuum of the other buildings at the Diyanet Center of America’s campus. Within a few short step you will find the cultural center, auditorium, library and exhibition halls; directly across from the mosque you will see the social hall and cafeteria; on one side, the Turkish Baths including swimming pool and sports facilities; on the other side, guest residences and DCA education center; under the mosque, the museum and last, but not the least, on the eastern edge of the campus beautifully styled residential homes. Together with the complementary buildings around, the mosque at the Diyanet Center of America shares the same inspiration that built the great Islamic civilization of the past. It will serve as an abode of peace and a tranquil refuge for Islamic and interfaith endeavors. With God’s grace, as DCA leadership, we will take an active role in building bridges among Muslims, as well as interfaith communities. This campus will be a symbolic landmark, not only for the Muslim Americans, but also for the broader American community as well. We are very proud to bring about this great vision.

Regards,

Dr. Yaşar Çolak
President, Diyanet Center of America
The Mosque in Islamic Civilization

The mosque has an important place in Islamic civilization and in the development of its architecture. Mosque architecture began in Islam with the Masjid al-Nabi in Medina. While retaining its basis and spirit as established by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), it has evolved over history. The Masjid al-Nabi, was at the same time the first madrasa (Islamic school) for Muslims.

At the time of the prophet there was a section at the mosque for Ashab al-Suffa (People of the Portico), where all Muslims were taught that Islam could not coexist with ignorance and that the enlightenment of society derived from knowledge and wisdom. In Islamic civilization, the mosque or masjid is considered as bayt of Allah, meaning “the house of God.” This point of view expressed the importance of mosques and masjids and the sanctity that was attributed to these places.

This concept ensured that the most beautiful and largest buildings in Muslim lands throughout history would be the mosques. They were built at the center of the city and worked as a catalyst for settlement of the rest of the city. The most recent innovations discovered in art and architecture were reflected in the mosques; each mosque became an example of this tradition which flourished over the generations. Mosque architecture, developed as an example of beauty representing each era.

At the same time the mosques occupied a special place in the intellectual and moral life of society as centers for knowledge, particularly religious and spiritual ones. The principles and concepts which breathed life into Islamic civilization were developed and taught at these centers. Spirituality at places of worship has fostered a deeply rooted noble civilization which called upon humanity to be brothers. Wherever it spread, tranquility, peace, and brotherhood prevailed.
The Mosque
As the Heart of the Center

Because the Diyanet Center of America is a mosque-centered project, the building at the very heart of it is the mosque. The mosque was built in the style of sixteenth-century Ottoman architecture.

Architecture of the Mosque

The most important feature of sixteenth-century Ottoman architecture is its combination of aesthetics and functionality. The most significant feature of the mosque architecture in that period, according to many architectural historians, is the central dome system. Much larger and centralized spaces compared to the previous eras were achieved by this central dome supported by adjoining half-domes and other smaller domes.

The plans of the Diyanet Center of America’s mosque were designed to provide spacious place for the Muslims to perform congregational worships. At the mosque, an open, enlarged, single interior space is achieved by the use of a half-dome on the qibla-side (the side facing Mecca) of the central dome and eleven small domes on the other three sides. The weight of the dome is transferred equally on four “elephant feet” (pillars) as in traditional Ottoman architecture. The large and small domes are supported by arches, again in conformity with traditional architecture. Each of the four marble columns are brought from a different city in Turkey famous with its marble quarry; namely Istanbul, Bursa, Afyonkarahisar and Tokat. This large space accommodates up to 760 people.

The mosque has two minarets each of which has two galleries. It has the distinction of being the only mosque in North America with two minarets.

In the interior decoration and ornamentation of the mosque, traditional motifs are used. In order to add further grandeur, gold leaf technique has been used over Arabic calligraphy. The mihrab (prayer niche) and the walls on each side of it are covered with tiles. Calligraphy is not considered just as decoration but also as a thought provoking element. Therefore, it is made sure that each calligraphy work is legible within the depth of the domes. Muqarnases (“stalactite” decoration), on the other hand are used for the transition to different geometric shapes, such as from quadrilateral to spherical.

The mosque, which is the most important structure in the project, covers 20236 square feet. The mosque building is a reinforced concrete structure with stone and marble cladding.

The acoustics of the mosque interior have been assured by the “voids in the domes,” a method which has been used for thousands of years.
In Ottoman mosque architecture, the mosque consisted of two primary sections, the sanctuary (hareem) and the courtyard. The primary place of worship, which is covered, in a mosque is called the hareem. In the dictionary, hareem has the meaning of something “forbidden, protected, inviolable, holy, and having a sense of respect.” The indoor space in the mosque is called the hareem because it is set aside as a place of worship and thus is sanctified. The section attached to the hareem, the top of which is semi open and in the middle of which is an ablution fountain, is called the courtyard. Each of the four sides of the courtyard is covered with five small domes. These domes rest on marble columns. When the congregation is large, the courtyard can be used for prayer as well.
**MIHRAP**

The place where the imam (prayer leader) stands in order to lead the congregation during prayer is called the mihrab. While praying, one of the obligations of prayer is to turn toward Mecca, the holy city of Islam. Mihrab shows the direction towards which one should turn during prayer.

The *mihrab* is made of marble and gold leaf is used to decorate it. The upper part of the *mihrab* and both sides are adorned with tile from Turkey. On the pediment of the *mihrab* is a figure of “the tree of life” which symbolizes the 99 names of God.

**MINBAR**

The place to which the imam ascends by steps to recite the sermon to the congregation on Friday and on Eid is called the minbar. It is located on the right side of the mihrab when facing it to pray. The speech that the imam gives to the congregation from the minbar is called the khutba. The *minbar* of the mosque, made of marble, was manufactured in Turkey and assembled in its place by the Turkish artisans.

**KURSI**

The place from which the imam addresses the Muslims in the mosque is called the kursi (pulpit). The *kursi* of the mosque is composed entirely of wood and was made in Turkey. For the adornment of the *kursi* the *kundakari* technique is used. This traditional art of wood decoration is composed of the tongue-and-groove paneling of polygons and stars set in a strap-work skeleton with inlaid mother-of-pearl.
**Qur’an Case**

As the reflection of their respect and high appreciation for the Holly scripture, Ottomans built delicate ornamental cases for the Qur’an. These Qur’an cases are the rare and finest examples of elegant handcrafts, mother-of-pearl inlays, and ornate workmanship.

Inside our mosque there is a Qur’an case on which the art of inlays was meticulously implemented with mother-of-pearl, ivory, ebony and other fine materials.

**Mahfel Area**

The spaces designed for various purposes in the sanctuary section of the mosques are called the mahfel (assembly or meeting area). In historic mosques it was common to set aside special galleries for the use of the muezzins (the one who calls to prayer) and sultans. The area where the women worshiped was also called the mahfel.

In DCA mosque there is a mezzanine level mahfel with an area of about 1400 square feet. The ceiling of the mahfel is covered with five small-scale domes. The domes are decorated with geometric patterns.
Mahfel of the Muezzin and the Place at the Back of the Congregation

The mahfel of the muezzin is the name given to the special place used by the muezzins while praying with the congregation. In order for the voice of the muezzin to be easily heard by the congregation, this place is usually somewhat elevated. Those who cannot pray with the congregation perform their prayers in a specific area called “the section at the back”. The section at the back of the congregation have been designed, respectively, for the areas to the right and left just inside the main entry door of the central mosque. The ceiling of these spaces are decorated with wood in geometric patterns.

Domes

In traditional architecture, the architectural element in the form of a half sphere which was used to create large covered spaces was called the dome (qubba). In traditional Ottoman architecture, domes became an indispensable element. According to Turkish Islamic tradition the concept of the cosmos or all creation was reflected in mosque architecture where the dome symbolized the firmament. Over the area of the sanctuary, there is a main dome on three sides of which are eleven small domes. In order to provide light inside the mosque, there are windows around the rim of the main dome. This dome is adorned with Arabic calligraphy, one of the traditional decorative arts of Islam. The chapter of al-Ikhlas in the Qur’an, which contains the fundamental assertion of God’s unity, is inscribed in the center of this dome. As for the small domes, they are also adorned with traditional decorative elements.

Arches

The arch is the connecting vault which ties two columns or pillars to each other in the form of a half circle overhead. It allows the weight of the walls above to be transferred to the pillars on both sides. The arches are painted white and green as part of the decoration of the mosque. Muqarnases, which contain different geometric patterns, are used to ensure a gracious transition between the columns and arches.

Muqarnases

The muqarnas is a form of decorative arts in Islamic architecture. It is a decorative art consisting of geometric forms employed at the transition of different planes and surfaces. In the DCA mosque, the wall to dome transitions and the column to arch transitions are decorated using the muqarnas technique.
WOOD DOORS
The wood doors of the mosque in DCA demonstrate traditional Islamic decorative arts. The doors are made using the kundakari technique of woodworking. This traditional technique is used to create decorative flat surfaces by bringing together, without the use of nails or glue, small pieces of wood cut in such shapes as octagons, pentagons, and stars. Mother of pearl is used to further enrich the decoration. The mosque has six wood doors which open to three sides of the sanctuary and three sides of the courtyard.

BIRD KIOSKS
In the traditional Ottoman Turkish conception, birds are believed to be animals that can ascend to the upper heavens. Possibly, as an inspiration for the man’s internal spiritual ascension kiosks for the birds have been built on the exterior walls of the mosques. Following this tradition, six bird kiosks are placed at DCA mosque.

MINARETS
In the religion of Islam, all Muslims are required to pray five times a day at five different time intervals. The call to prayer is called adhan in Arabic. Minarets, allowing a high vantage point, have allowed the call to be heard over a wide area. The mosque at DCA has two minarets, with two galleries each. The galleries are adorned with muqarnas.

MAHYA
The luminous writing strings stretched between the two minarets of the mosque are called the mahya. The mahyas were made from oil-lamps in the era of the Ottomans. Today they are made from LED bulbs. In addition to conveying the divine messages to the people and promoting righteous deeds, it creates a festive environment particularly during the month of Ramadan.
SHADIRWAN

Fountains, called the shadirwans, are usually built in the middle of the mosque courtyards for ablution. In addition to the ablution function, they are also built for aesthetic purposes and to add spiritual tranquility to the space with the sound of water. In the courtyard of DCA mosque there is a shadirwan made of marble. The copper faucets are made in traditional style.

The Museum

Just below the Mosque, there is a museum space for rotating exhibitions to display Islamic civilization, history, arts and culture from around the world. This section has audio-visual equipment, digital screens, interactive applications and projection boards.

Ablution Rooms

The washing up ritual before prayer is called ablution or wudu. It is compulsory to have ablution or wudu before performing prayer in the mosque. For this reason, there are ablution rooms in every mosque, one for men and one for women. At DCA, they are located below the courtyard, at the foot of the stairs.
The Cultural Center has been constructed in Seljuk architectural style which flourished in Anatolia and made an important contribution to the civilizations that had developed in that region. In Seljuk architecture stone, wood, and tile ornamentation are paramount. While the exteriors of the buildings of this period are simple, the interiors are richly ornamented.

Depending on the materials that were used, these buildings emphasized stone and wood construction and exhibit rich examples of decoration. The Cultural Center at DCA has a usable area of 19900 square feet and can accommodate educational activities, including conferences, seminars, and lectures.
AUDITORIUM
There is a multi-purpose auditorium with 210 seats in the Cultural Center. The auditorium has an advanced sound system and includes rooms for simultaneous translation. This auditorium is available not only for lectures or conferences but also is equipped for artistic and cultural activities.

EXHIBITION ROOM
In the Cultural Center, there is an exhibition room designed for artistic and cultural activities. It may be used for local and international exhibits. The room can be separated from the main venue with foldable wood panels.

ART STUDIOS
There is an area in the Center where traditional Turkish Islamic arts can be taught. Here Arabic calligraphy, paper marbling, and gold inlaying can be taught by master artisans.

LIBRARY
There is a library in the Cultural Center. Here select classical and contemporary works related to the Islamic sciences can be found. It will serve as a reference library above all, for those doing research in the field of the Islamic sciences.

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON ISLAM
There is a Research Center on Islam in the Cultural Center Building. This center will focus mainly on different aspects of Islam in the United States and religious diplomacy. Within this framework, it will not only translate and introduce works of Turkish religious heritage, as well as other works of other Islamic Cultures, but also translate into Turkish important works published on Islam in the United States. The Research Center will also advise students coming from Turkey who are seeking an undergraduate or graduate degrees in the US.
Conference Room
In the Cultural Center there is a conference room which can be used for small-scale meetings. Traditional architecture has been taken into account in furnishing this room.

Office of Ifta
There is an ifta office in the Cultural Center where people question in their religious and social matters. Traditional architecture has been taken into account in furnishing this room as well and it exhibits examples of delicate tile decoration.

Gift Shop
There is a shop in the Cultural Center where gifts made in Turkey or in other Islamic countries can be purchased.

Reception Area
There is a spacious reception area at the entrance of the Cultural Center. It presents a high, bright two storey atrium space with a glass roof. The decoration, which is inspired by the traditional tile work, adds a certain authenticity to the space. The fountain inside the reception area will ensure, with the sound of water that visitors will relax in a distinct atmosphere.

Social Hall
The Social Hall was constructed according to the features of Ottoman architecture. There is a dining hall which will serve traditional Turkish food; a room called diwan designed in the style of an Oriental reading room; and there are shops that sell gifts and products from Turkey. The social hall is a 9850 square feet, one storey building.

The ornamentation and the design of this building highlight traditional architecture. On the ceilings are examples of traditional wood decoration. An additional layer of sophistication is added by the use of gold leaves on the ceiling patterns.

Dining Hall
There is a dining hall in the social facility which can accommodate up to 180 people. Here visitors will be offered traditional Turkish food. The dining hall has been designed so it can be used for social and civic activities, such as weddings and engagements.

Diwan Room
In the Social Hall, there is a room furnished in the style of an Oriental Diwan room. Its ceiling reflects artistic wood ornamentation. There is a small fountain in the center of this room. Here visitors will be offered cold and hot drinks, including Turkish coffee and tea.
**SHOPS**

One side of the Social Hall building is lined up with shops. The idea is to meet shopping needs of visitors of the campus and help them find halal products.

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**GUEST HOUSE**

Accommodation of guests is an act of piety which plays an important role in Islamic tradition and custom. The guest has been called “the guest of God”. Whatever is necessary is done to please a guest no matter who he is, regardless of religion, language, or race. In a given traditional Turkish house, there is a guest room which is reserved only for the guests.

DCA has guest quarters, which was designed to assist students coming from out of state for study purposes or to provide accommodation for the families who want to spend some time in the great spiritual atmosphere of the campus. It is a three-storey structure with sixteen spacious one bedroom and studio units. It has a total area of 18500 square feet.

The ground floor of the guest house is designed for educational and cultural activities for different age groups.
TURKISH BATH AND SPORTS CENTER

The Diyanet Center of America is blessed to be the largest and only Islamic campus in America which houses a Turkish bath, swimming pool, fitness center, saunas, multi exercise room, multi-level stadium seating for athletic events, and spaces for associated activities. The area of these spaces have been estimated at 43,450 square feet. At the main entrance of this building, there is a cafeteria where guests can enjoy hot and cold drinks and light meals. Traditional architectural features are reflected in this lounge.

TURKISH BATH (HAMAM)

Purity of one’s soul and physical state, in essence, is a form of devotion and worship in Islamic faith. Through the centuries Muslims embellished the practice of their physical bodies being clean through habitual sanitary living including ablutions before prayer. This religious concept was the main inspiration for Islamic communities developing the hamam or bath culture.

Although the bath culture extends back to the early times in Anatolia, it became more common with Ottomans. These buildings usually have two symmetrical sections for the separate use of men and women. Bathing is a form of social life and is the place of physical and spiritual purification. The body and skin are cleaned and purified from toxins and grime. In this therapeutic process of cleansing, the blood circulation increases, the immune system is stimulated. With these features, the Turkish hamam has been and continues to be a popular center of attraction.

The Turkish bath is the first structure that one encounters upon entering the main gate. This location of the twin domed building symbolizes that one should prepare for worship by cleansing oneself of physical and moral impurities before entering the mosque. The DCA hamam has a symmetrical plan; one side for men and the other for women’s use. Similar to the classical examples throughout the Muslim world, the Turkish Bath House at DCA has three sections; bathing chamber, cooling room and relaxation room.
**Bathing Chamber (Hamam)**

Both of the Turkish baths have a dome in traditional architectural style ensuring a spacious interior. The cup-shaped glass covers over the light holes in the domes provide a dim light for the hamams. There are eleven faucets in each chambers of the bath house allowing that many people use the chamber at a time. Their arrangement reflects the spatial artistic refinement of the traditional chambers. The space is warmed up by a special heating system under the floor.

**Cooling Room**

The place between the bathing chamber and the relaxation room is called the cooling room. It is the place where one can relax for a short time after leaving the bathing chamber.

**Relaxation Rooms**

After washing in the bath, it is not healthy to immediately go outside. Therefore, the interior architectural structure of the bath has been designed to take the health of visitors into consideration. After one leaves the bath, he passes through the cooling down room and then goes to the relaxation rooms.

**SPORTS CENTER**

**Fitness Center**

There are separate fitness centers for men and women in the first lower level of this building. These rooms have modern exercise equipment.

**Saunas**

There are separate saunas for men and women in the first lower level of the building.

**Swimming Pool**

The pool in the second lower level is 98 feet long and its depth varies from three to 5 feet. On certain days of the week it will be reserved alternately for men and women.

**Multi-purpose Room**

There is a 164 feet wide and 98 feet deep multi-purpose exercise room in the second lower level of the building. In this space, athletic activities, such as basketball, volleyball, and soccer, and large-capacity conferences, and social and cultural events can be held. All the facilities are handicapped accessible.
Traditional Turkish Houses

There are, in the Center, ten houses that exhibit three different traditional styles of Turkish domestic architecture from three different periods. The houses were designed to have two storeys and a basement. Each has about 4800 square feet of usable space. The houses are of wood construction. The traditional wood ornamentation in the ceilings of the rooms brings an additional refinement to the houses.

The houses in the Center will be used predominantly as guest quarters for short-term lodging.
**Islamic Garden**

The landscape of the complex has been in conformity with traditional Ottoman styled architecture and design. Cypress trees were planted proportionately throughout the complex to symbolize the Monotheism within an Islamic ambiance. The Islamic Garden placed between the mosque and social hall reflect traditional architecture and landscaping.

*Water has an important place in our culture. Ottomans treated patients with the sound of water. The therapeutic sound of bubbling/cascading water was also used for the relaxation of students in the madrassas. Since the Seljukian times, a fountain or Shadirwan has been in middle of the mosque’s courtyard and madrasas. As a continuum of this tradition, there is a modest fountain in the middle of the garden of this complex. The fountains are adorned with marble and stone according to a certain symmetry and geometry. Each section is decorated with traditional garden plants and flowers.*

**Ottoman Fountains**

*Throughout time, fountains are very important in the Turkish-Islamic civilization. Almost every corner of the cobbled stone streets in ancient Ottoman cities, people could find a fountain to drink water and a few to offer ablution stations. In the fountain architecture both aesthetics and functionality has been combined and seamlessly merged. Following this tradition, two fountains were placed on the southern side of the DCA campus. The first fountain is topped with a dome, while the other is with an ornamental roof. Each fountain is cladded with marble and gold leaf used to decorate. The upper parts of the fountains are adorned with Arabic calligraphy on their tiles which consists of Qur’anic verses referring to importance of water to sustain human life.*

**Basketball Court**

DCA has been designed to meet the basic needs of life. In this context, in order to carry out sporting activities, one outdoor basketball court was included in the campus.

**Garage**

There is an underground parking garage at DCA for 310 vehicles. The garage have direct access to the basement levels of all of the buildings in the Center. Two ramps provide both entry and exit.