Today, over 125,000 Muslims live in Metro Detroit, and they worship in over 50 mosques. Most of these mosques are located in renovated banks, warehouses, storefronts, and churches. Others are purpose-built, multimillion dollar facilities with attached schools, recreational facilities, social service programs, and grand banquet halls. Since 1990, the number of mosques in Detroit has doubled, with new mosques appearing in the outer suburbs and the inner city alike. These building projects are the work of congregations composed mostly of immigrants and their children, or converts and their families. Islam in Detroit, circa 2005, is widely perceived to be “new” or “foreign,” and recent surveys find that over two-thirds of the city’s Muslims were born outside the US.

Few people realize that the rapid growth of Islam in Detroit is based on foundations laid by much older Muslim communities, some of which date back to the late 19th century. Detroit’s first mosque was built in Highland Park, in 1921, when the local Muslim population was said (in newspaper accounts) to be 16,000 strong. The city’s oldest continuously occupied mosque, the American Muslem Society, was established in 1938. By the mid-1930s, African Americans, Arabs, Afghans, and Indians had prayer spaces on Hastings Street, in or near “Paradise Valley,” Albanians established their first mosque in 1950. At Roseland Cemetery, tombstones engraved in Arabic script mark the graves of Turkish and Syrian Muslims who died in the 1910s, before the first mosques were built.

Imam Bizzy was a Shi’i Muslim (a tradition that asserts the special status and leadership role of the Prophet’s family and their descendants). Imam Karoub was a Sunni Muslim (a tradition that locates authority and leadership in the Sunnah, the Prophet’s example) Mufti Muhammad Sadiq was an Ahmadi (a tradition that asserts the special status of Ghulam Ahmad, who proclaimed himself the Promised Messiah of Islam in 1891).

“Allah Ho Akbar! I am a good citizen of America. I believe in Allah and in the teachings of the Prophet.”

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (from India)
(Detroit News, Thursday June 9, 1955)

“Imam Khali Izzy (right) embraces a member of his congregation, circa 1934.”

Detroit area mosques, circa 2003

Islamic Association of Greater Detroit

Masjid Al-Noor, Detroit

The Highland Park Mosque, circa 1927

Masjid Al-Noor, Detroit

The Buhannadin Mosque, Farmington Hills

Masjid Noor, Dearborn

American Muslim Banka Center, Dearborn

Masjid Umar Bin Khattab, Downtown

Masjid Al-Noor, Detroit

Masjid Al-Noor, Detroit