

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MOSQUE

Primary Architectural Features

These features are architectural elements and spaces that any mosque structure should have regardless of context in order to function as a place of collective prayer.

1. The qibla wall and mihrab: these elements define the orientation of prayer. The qibla wall faces Mecca, the holy city of Islam. The Mihrab, or prayer niche, is located in the qibla wall and functions as the spiritual center of the mosque, where the imam (head of prayer) stands to lead the prayer. Traditionally, its niche-like form has served aesthetic as well as acoustic functions.

2. The haram (sanctuary): the space where prayer activities take place. The haram is directly adjacent to the qibla wall. It has no specific size or form.

3. The Mida'a (or wudu area): a space for washing before prayers. It can be inside the mosque, typically near the entrance, or in separate space nearby. Worshipers spiritually and physically cleanse themselves here before prayer.



The interior of Al-Islah Jame Masjid, illustrating the relationship between the qibla wall and the haram



Interior in the mida'ah (the ablution area) of the Islamic Center of America



Interior view of the main haram of the Islamic Center, focusing on the mihrab, oriented toward Mecca

Secondary Architectural Features

These features have long been associated with mosque architecture. For traditional symbolic, functional, and aesthetic reasons, they have been accepted as standard features of mosques. However, they are not necessary and differ across regions.

1. The minaret: a tower or column from which to broadcast the call to prayer. Although they can still be used for this purpose, most minarets in the Detroit area are decorative.

2. The dome: the importance and prominence of domes differs regionally. The dome's appeal derives from its association with Persian and Ottoman cultures, but today its popularity among Muslims is nearly universal.



Exterior view of the dome of the Islamic Center, painted in the traditional green (*al-quba al-khadra'*)



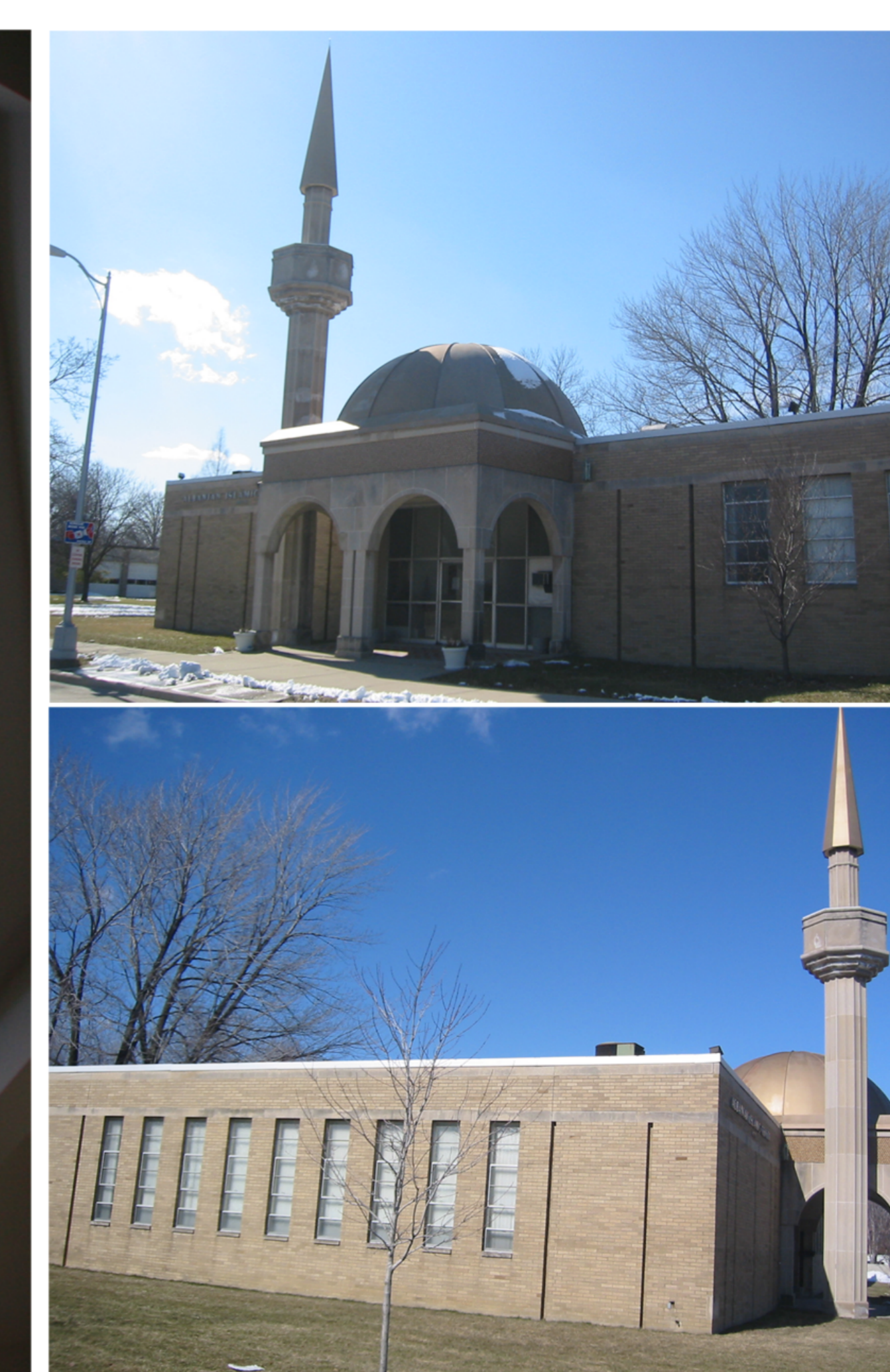
a double minaret influenced by Ottoman forms



Former church tower transformed into the minaret of Masjid Mu'ath Bin Jabal



Interior of the dome of the Islamic Center



various views of the Albanian Islamic Center

