Building Islam in Detroit is a research project that documents the growth of mosques and Muslim communities in greater Detroit over the last century. Since the project began in May 2004, members of our research team have visited over fifty mosques and Islamic associations, photographing them, recording their histories, and interviewing the people who established them.

This exhibit explores “building” as a process that creates both physical objects and social worlds. Mosques are ideal examples of this creative process. They are sites at which Muslims give collective, material expression to their religious beliefs. As architectural forms, mosques reveal the cultural identities of their builders. Their locations tell the history of Muslim arrival and settlement in Detroit. Mosques are also works of art, where sacred words, images, and sounds intersect to produce spaces of unusual beauty. Most important of all, mosques are places where Muslims come together to strengthen their community through teaching and communal prayer.

We hope this exhibit will help you appreciate the historical richness, diversity, and influence of Islam in Detroit. Shaped by experiences of displacement and opportunity, of discrimination and empowerment, the building projects on display here are the groundwork for a Muslim American future.