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SOUTH BRUNSWICK: A transformative step

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The Islamic Society of Central Jersey broke ground Sunday on an expansion project for phase one of a new, 86,000-square-foot, pre-K through 12 school that also will add hundreds of new parking spaces for the existing mosque.

"This expansion is transforming the ISCJ from a place of worship and very small educational facility to a complete integrated Islamic center and institution for the Islamic community in the area," ISCJ President Aly Aziz said.

The 17-acre site located at the corner of Route 1 and Promenade Boulevard currently has parking to accommodate 194 cars. After the expansion the lot will be able to hold 600 cars, with new entrances and exits installed on Promenade Boulevard and Route 1. Later phases of the project call for the construction of a 42,000-square-foot office complex.

Expansion of the mosque area would allow the current space, which accommodates approximately 500 people for prayer services, to accommodate 1,100.

The cost of the expansion plan is expected to be approximately \$25 million, according to Mr. Aziz. The money will be raised through community fundraising, grants and contributions, he said, with each phase dependent on the availability of funding.

Phase one of the plan includes the new entrances, parking spots and the infrastructure for the expansion of the current Noor-Ul-Iman school, which currently teaches around 500 full-time students, according to ISCJ Chairman of the Board of Trustees Parvaiz Malik.

The school currently has more than 50 students on a waiting list but is unable to enroll them due to size limitations, as the current school is conducted in three mobile trailers on the property.

"So many families move to South Brunswick because of the quality of education we provide," Dr. Malik said. "We provide a balanced curriculum that is the same as the New Jersey state curriculum while mixing in Islamic education."

The school, which has been in existence for 16 years, will soon graduate its sixth class, comprised of 14 students. Graduates from Noor-Ul-Iman have gone on to such institutions as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton University, Harvard University and Rutgers University, according to Dr. Malik.

"Our location is strategically located between Princeton and Rutgers universities so we have a lot of visitors come to learn about Islam and use our library," Dr. Malik said.

"We're active in interfaith dialogues and work with local churches and synagogues. We have a productive relationship with this community with our Saturday clinic that's open to the entire community, where anyone can come and get treated for free."

For more information on the expansion project and the services offered by the ISCJ, visit www.iscj.org.

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