

THE NEW DARBE MEHR PROJECT

THE INITIATIVE :

In 2001 DMZT purchased the lovely 3.32 acre Pomona property, with a building which had been a Jewish cultural center, at a cost of \$1,200,000 with the help of individual community member donations. The property is perfect with sufficient land but the building facilities are less than adequate and in need of major capital repairs. During the last 10 years we have looked at various options and there were multiple efforts to build a new Darbe Mehr. A new initiative was undertaken after the 2010 DMZT-AGM and a group of 17 'diehard believers' formed the New Darbe Mehr Initiative, LLC (NDMI) to jump start the project. NDMI, a business entity was capitalized with \$500,000 and monies would be spent, without using the DMZT Building Fund, to take the project from idea to reality. It would develop a design, obtain costs, present the details to DMZT/IZA/ZAGNY and initiate fund raising, After DMZT conducts it's due diligence it would seek the community's approval, and construction would begin. This in turn would re-excite the community to contribute even more, assuring quality completion with required outdoor improvements.

THE PROCESS :

WHAT : Build a New Darbe Mehr on the current, beautiful Pomona property. The building would be designed to reflect a strong Zoroastrian ambiance and be a welcome meeting place for Zoroastrians, and their guests. DMZT/IZA/ZAGNY identified the following needs for the building:

- Prayer Hall with traditional content and related ritual and storage requirements.
- Main Function Hall with comfortable dinner seating for atleast 340 persons.
- Kitchen and Serving Area.
- 4 Class Rooms and 3 Meeting Rooms.
- Recreation Room for youngsters.
- Other support areas such as Coat Room, Rest Rooms, Storage Areas, Green Rooms, Elevator etc.

WHY: The existing property is outstanding but the building is inadequate for our needs and most importantly it is void of a Zoroastrian look and ambiance. The specific reasons include:

- Size is inadequate both for large celebrations and religious classes/meeting days.
- Maintenance/Energy costs are high and major CAPEX items are overdue.
- Prayer Hall and Building Façade leaves much to be desired.
- It lacks the elegance to attract members to use it for Navjotes, Weddings, and other celebrations.
- Expansion and Renovation costs would be close to that for the new building because of the additional square footage, need to meet current codes and it would still lack an optimum design and ambiance.
- The current Darbe Mehr has served us well for the past 10 yrs and *it is now time to build for the next Generation.*

WHY NOW : It is never a perfect time but the current timing has some significant benefits.

- The Building Fund is stagnant, earning minimum interest, while costs continue to increase.
- Building costs have moderated significantly because of lack of construction in the current economy.
- The gradually improving 'stock market' will encourage larger donations.
- *Lets 'Just Do It !' Start asap and monies will follow.*

DESIGN & COSTS: The Building has been designed to incorporate the identified functional needs and reflect strong Zoroastrian ambiance. After six designs and almost 300 hours of design time we arrived at an optimal design which DMZT/IZA/ZAGNY unanimously endorsed. These are proudly displayed in the Newsletter and also in the Darbe Mehr for you to become a believer and a major donor. The initial rough cost estimate we have received are as follows:

- Basic, Decorator Ready, Building Structure : \$ 3,000,000
- Quality Upgrades and Customization: \$ 500,000
- Outside Improvements : \$ 500,000

The initial estimate for the Operational and Maintenance costs is that it would approximate current expenditures. The new building would be larger but also more energy efficient and demand maintenance would be much less. Site planning, permitting process, detailed design and contractor bid package are all in progress.

FUND RAISING STATUS AND PLANS:

At the current time the seed money collected and pledged are as follows:

Existing Building Fund	\$ 680,000 (\$ 880,000 less \$ 200,000 reserve)
NDMI Funds	\$ 500,000
Mr.Pallonji Mistry Pledge	\$ 200,000
New Collection	\$ 47,500
New Pledges	\$ 40,000
TOTAL	\$ 1,467,500

NDMI/DMZT/IZA/ZAGNY committee members and each one of us are responsible for actively supporting the project and helping to obtain donations and pledges from the community members and other well wishers. However, a Fund Raising Committee and a Youth Sub-Committee have been formed to provide structure, define ground rules for this effort, and contact specific potential donors.

The existing Darbe Mehr donation recognition board will continue to be displayed at an appropriate place in the New Darbe Mehr. Donors for the New Darbe Mehr will also be recognized appropriately at various donation levels. Individuals donating \$100,000 or more will have Room Naming rights as follows:

- \$ 100,000 - Individual Class Rooms and Meeting Rooms (7).
- \$ 200,000 - Library, Recreation Room, Kitchen or Serving Area (4).
- \$ 500,000 - Main Hall or Prayer Room (2).

The funding gap between projected cost of \$ 4,000,000 and current Collection/Pledges of \$ 1,500,000 is \$2,500,000. With about 200 active Zoroastrian families we would need to collect an average of about \$12,500, and preferably \$15,000 to account for contingencies. For those who cannot commit lump sum we humbly suggest each family to consider 10%(7%with tax benefit) of their annual salary for a period of 3 years, similar to what a number of other religions and communities do on a routine basis.

An audio visual delight was shown at the May 1st community meeting. The video takes us through memory lane reminding us of our common heritage, the fun times we have had together, the problems and sad times, and the role our Darbe Mehrs have played in our collective Ups and Downs. It high lights that progress is evolutionary and that we have an historic opportunity to build for the next generation. In short the *'future is now'*. It is a sensitive and moving video and will bring tears of joy to many viewers. Imagine the joy when we walk into our New Darbe Mehr.

We have an historic opportunity. Please donate generously from your heart. "If not now, When?"

TIME LINE :

May 2010 – May 2011: NDMI formed, building specifications were defined, preliminary design of the building unanimously endorsed by NDMI/DMZT/IZA/ZAGNY. Presentation to the community on May 1st.

June 2011 – August 2011 : Site plan to be developed to enable starting of the permitting process which is expected to take about a year.

Detailed building design to develop a construction bid package. Obtain bids from atleast two if not three contractors and the building committee would then select the preferred contractor.

A major Fund Raising effort which will allow us to categorically confirm the success of the project.

At or around our August dinner functions provide an update to the community with more specific information about the costs, fund raising progress and potential building schedule.

August 2011 – December 2011: Make good progress with respect to permitting, have clearly defined construction costs with selected contractor, make sufficient progress in fund raising to enable DMZT and community to give us their final vote of confidence.

2012 : Ground Breaking and start of construction. It's too early to forecast a particular target date but we certainly feel that some sort of event could be coordinated in conjunction with the August 2012 NAC Congress

"It is in dreaming the greatest dreams

Seeking the highest goals

That we build the brightest tomorrows."