

101 Uses of Bahá'í Centers (To Advance the Five Year Plan)

The following list contains many ideas for use of a Bahá'í Center that each community will immediately think of and other ideas they may have never considered. Hopefully, the numerous ideas from other communities with Centers will spark the imagination of your community on how you can increase your Center's usage, enhance the vitality of community life and give it a more outward orientation that will assist in the expansion of the Faith. No community will utilize their Center in all of these ways, but hopefully each assembly with a Center will regularly be looking at ways to make their Center more useful. The numerical order of ideas is not significant since ideas are not arranged in any priority.

Use or rental fees may be charged for some of the uses listed. Assemblies should check with attorneys or accountants prior to renting facilities, with special attention to maintaining their tax exempt status and assuring adequate insurance coverage.

To keep these ideas in perspective, we refer you to the National Spiritual Assembly's letter of November 28, 2007 to all Local Spiritual Assemblies. A few statements from that letter are quoted here:

As we prosecute the Five Year Plan, Bahá'í communities and the Spiritual Assemblies that serve them are responsible for aligning their resources in support of the core activities of the Plan. A Bahá'í Center is obviously one such resource. Experience has shown that it is the friends' focus on the core activities that determines the extent to which a Center furthers the aim of entry by troops and promotes growth in a community. (¶ 2).

Bahá'í communities across the United States are engaged as never before in efforts to advance the process of entry by troops.... The most precious and telling attribute any organized group of Bahá'ís possesses is the vitality of its community life, for the world will increasingly measure our success as a religious community by the vibrancy and joy it reflects. (¶ 1).

Please forward your suggestions for additions to this list to Bahá'í Center Assistance at info@bahaicenterassistance.org.

The Individual

1. A room for private meditation and prayer
2. Bookstore
3. Reference or research library
4. Lending library
5. Prayer garden

6. Personal retreat (place to simply get away for people who live in turbulent or crowded conditions)
7. Tranquility Zone, with meditation and Writings of different Faiths to relieve stress

The Community

8. Children's classes
9. Devotions
10. Study Circles
11. Junior Youth programs
12. Firesides
13. Deepenings
14. Feasts
15. Holy Days
16. Cafe Ruhi (combination of study circles and coffee shop)
17. Ruhi practices; Anna's presentation practices
18. Spanish (or other language) devotionals
19. Persian (or other language) study circles
20. Youth workshop practices and deepenings
21. Pre-dawn breakfasts during Fast and Dawn Prayers; break-fast suppers
22. Preparing for Fast program
23. Program on Bahá'í burials (for funeral parlor personnel as well as Bahá'ís)
24. Memorial Services
25. Weddings
26. Choir and/or band practice; music lessons
27. Summer day camp
28. Conferences
29. Race Dialog; Center for study of racism
30. Black Men's Gathering
31. Jazz Nights with live musicians and a cover charge to pay musicians
32. Open Mike Nights within certain guidelines
33. Regular Children's Theater classes and presentations; Little Theatre
34. "Meeting of the Minds" nights with sharing of ideas on a specific subject
35. Poetry Nights, with live readings of new poetry
36. Multi-cultural events
37. Coffee shop
38. Book club
39. After school tutoring for at risk students
40. Special programs for gifted and talented or accelerated students
41. Rental to day care center or charter school
42. English as a second language classes
43. Literacy classes
44. Spanish/Persian/other language as second language class
45. Yoga, Tai-Chi or other meditation classes
46. Calligraphy classes
47. Esperanto classes

48. Art classes, computer classes
49. Greening your home
50. Flower arranging/cake decorating
51. Ethnic cooking classes
52. Life management skills
53. Marriage preparation; Marriage counseling
54. College prep for Bahá'ís; Moving away from home; Career counseling for youth; Preparation for SAT
55. Prosperity workshops or meetings (spiritual principles and practical application); personal debt management class; financial planning class
56. Writing a will
57. Parenting classes
58. Children's play groups (with parents' full participation)
59. Mother's Day Out programs
60. Hobby Sharing: Quilting, scrap-booking, knitting, sewing, model ship, airplane, car building
61. Toastmasters
62. Senior Citizen gathering
63. Pilgrimage, pioneering or travel teaching stories
64. Other travel reports
65. Emergency Preparedness; Self Defense; First Aid
66. Neighborhood watch; Emergency Response Team
67. Blood Drive Day; Community Health Check Up Day
68. Disaster relief shelter
69. Neighborhood Association meetings
70. Newcomers' Meetings (to help acquaint them with the city)
71. Anniversaries of community highlights: visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, first Bahá'í in area; first assembly, etc.
72. Special days: Race Unity Day, World Religion Day, Juneteenth, Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo, Quincenero celebration
73. Plays, Concerts
74. Game nights; Movie nights
75. Volleyball, basketball, etc.
76. Family reunions, baby showers, wedding showers
77. Other social gatherings
78. Use by groups with compatible aims, such as interfaith groups, United Nations chapters, etc.
79. Use by recover groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al Anon, Narcotics Anonymous, Families Anonymous, with appropriate restrictions
80. Use by children's/youth groups such as Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H, Campfire, etc.
81. Special interest groups – young professionals, young families, retirees, etc.)
82. Showing of local artists' works
83. Charity fundraisers
84. Identification (signage outside center); other silent teaching
85. Free literature for seekers (inside and outside)

86. Educational displays in hallways
87. Display of archival materials
88. Memorial wall
89. Outdoor classroom
90. Vegetable garden
91. Peace garden
92. Participation in garden tour

The Institutions

93. Reflections Gatherings and other cluster meetings
94. Tutor gatherings or meetings
95. Meetings of Auxiliary Board assistants
96. Huqúq'u'lláh presentations
97. Assembly meetings
98. Committee meetings
99. File storage
100. Archives
101. Office