



BAHÁ'Í CENTER ASSISTANCE

Lessons Learned #2

The Bahá'í Center Assistance Corp. (BCA) is a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States to support the growth and development of the Faith by providing a systematic program of education, training and technical assistance to communities whose goal is to lease or purchase and maintain Bahá'í Center Properties.

The article below is one in a series of case studies that present lessons learned from situations that local communities have experienced.

Scenario: A large urban community is struggling to raise funds to construct one large, multi-million dollar Center to serve several Local Spiritual Assemblies and many nearby Bahá'í groups.

Lesson Learned: The National Spiritual Assembly has provided guidelines for Bahá'í Centers in a letter to all Local Spiritual Assemblies dated November 28, 2007. In this letter, the Assembly states:

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. Therefore, before taking action to acquire, expand, or renovate a Bahá'í Center, Assemblies need to give careful consideration to the question of whether such action would support or detract from their communities' core activities and pursuit of the other elements of the Plan. ... In most situations, communities should, before purchase, first consider leasing a property for a Bahá'í Center. Experience has shown that facilities of grandiose or extravagant proportions rarely meet the needs of an expanding community committed to decentralization and growth at the grass roots. Rather than permanent fixtures, the best facilities for local Bahá'í purposes at the present time are those that allow for maximum flexibility in their use and in the financial arrangements made to secure them. Moreover, Bahá'í communities committed to growth would do well to anticipate the time when most activities will take place at the neighborhood level.

With the increased emphasis that cities will have multiple Feasts and multiple programs in smaller areas as Bahá'í population grows, the development of one large Center to which everyone is expected to commute may need to be re-considered.

Possible Solution: The community may want to reflect on these issues and may want to re-evaluate whether their current Center plans supports Five Year Plan activities and meets expected future needs in light of this guidance.

More information: The full text of the National Spiritual Assembly's letter is available at www.usbnc.org under Communications and in the preface of the newly revised Local Centers Technical Assistance Manual available at www.bahaicenterassistance.org. Consultations with members of BCA can be arranged by an Assembly or registered group request by emailing info@bahaicenterassistance.org or calling 847-425-7940.