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Courtesy photo

The Muslim Student Association is working on raising funds for a new mosque. Construction is set to begin in 2007.

Islamic mosque to be remodeled, placed near campus

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Construction on a new Islamic religious place of worship costing about \$4 million will begin in the spring of 2007, said Khaled Mansy, one of the main designers of the facility.

A house donated in the 1980s by a past Muslim Student Association member was converted into what serves as the current mosque, located on north Washington Street, said Mounzer Al-Harake, Muslim Student Association adviser.

"We're planning to build a new mosque center because this one is 20 years old and the needs of 20 years ago are different than what the needs are right now," Al-Harake said.

The new mosque will be five times larger than the current mosque, measuring about 19,400 square feet and 30 feet tall in some places, according to the mosque design plans.

Because Muslims pray five times a day, having the mosque practically on campus will make the process of going to class and attending daily prayers easier for the 370 Muslim students at OSU, Nasrat Touqan, said Muslim Student Association president.

Al-Harake said OSU will be the first public university in Oklahoma with a mosque adjacent to its campus. The university's borders don't currently extend to the area of the new mosque's location, but they will after the completion of the five-year plan of the Campus Master Plan.

The Campus Master Plan was developed about two years ago to expand OSU's campus with about \$700 million in projects for new athletic, academic and student life facilities planned in the first five years, according to OSU's Web site.

The new mosque will be northeast of the new parking garage and surrounded by various athletic facilities, according to a map of the current Campus Master Plan.

To be able to expand, the Islamic Society of Stillwater purchased properties to the west and to the north of the current mosque, Al-Harake said.

Because the Islamic Society doesn't currently have all the funds for the new mosque, Muslim Student Association members, also members of the society, are helping with fundraising.

"We're trying to go to other Islamic communities who are willing to sponsor it," Touqan said. "It used to be that other Islamic

communities would have their own projects of mosques and come to our place and fundraise and so now it's our time to go there and ask them in turn for the same thing."

Al-Harake said the group will build as much of the design as allowed with the funds raised.

"We don't borrow money from banks to build anything," Al-Harake said. "If we have the money we will build. If we raise a million, we'll build a million. We'll see what the priority comes first and then we'll go from there. Later on we'll expand."

Mansy said the new mosque will be built in three phases. The current buildings will be demolished one by one. A new building for activities will be built first and the daily prayers will be moved to that structure after the old prayer hall is demolished.

Al-Harake said the new mosque will be built with brick similar to the brick used in buildings on campus.

The current mosque design also compliments buildings on campus because the group doesn't want the mosque to look out of place, Al-Harake said.

"We've always felt like we're part of a campus and we want it to stay that way," Al-Harake said.

The first floor of the new center will have a men's prayer hall where more than 200 people can fit, and a women's prayer hall able to hold about 50 people, along with a cafeteria, a kitchen, an Islamic school and various other rooms, Mansy said.

On the second story there will be a library with information on Islam available for anyone who visits, administrative offices, study rooms and family activity rooms, Mansy said.

There will also be four apartments built whose rent will go towards paying the utility cost of the building.

Mansy said he tried to design the mosque to be energy efficient and therefore environmental friendly.

"All of the spaces are day lit, so there is minimum use of electrical lighting systems," Mansy said.

Mansy said rather than using one piece of equipment to heat and cool the entire building smaller devices will be placed throughout the building.

The new mosque will not only be a place of prayer, but also a gathering place for students with interaction between people of different parts of the world along with the general public, Al-Harake said.

Al-Harake said the new center brings opportunities for the Stillwater community to grow.

"It's a chance to interact, discuss, understand, and gain the best from both sides, and if you do that in an educational environment that fosters learning, I think we'll all be in a better world," Al-Harake said.