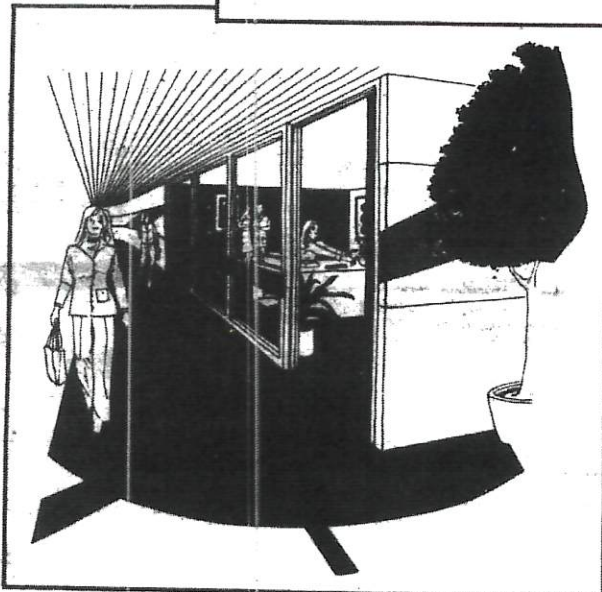
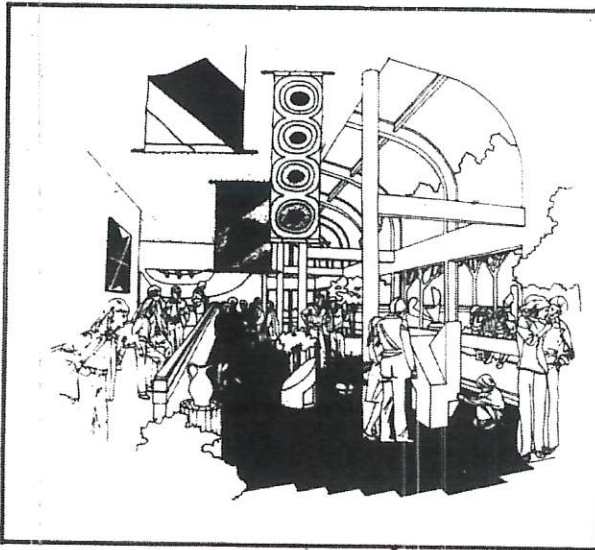


The Community Center: Room for Meeting, Eating, Art And More



The glass-walled exhibit area and galleria, above, would provide a showcase for community artists. At left, community agencies and service groups would find a new home in office space created on the upper level of the remodeled Fishinger School building.

Center Could Handle Simultaneous Events

Ed. Note: Upper Arlington residents will be asked June 2 to approve spending \$2.5 million to renovate Fishinger Elementary School and \$250,000 annually to operate it as a community center.

Just what will residents get for their money?

This week, and continuing for three more weeks, The News will detail what that center would look like inside, how it could be used and who might be using it.

In this first installment, reporter Sue Wilson examines the building's basic features — meeting rooms, a renovated lobby and office space.

In future weeks the proposed youth center, theatre and dining lounge will be reviewed.

An Upper Arlington community center has long been a dream of city officials, civic leaders and residents. They've talked about it for years.

Turning Fishinger Elementary School into such a center means some remodeling for Upper Arlington's oldest school building, if voters approve the center's two funding issues on the June ballot.

If and when the remodeling begins, it will be guided by innovative plans designed by Brubaker/Brandt, the architectural firm hired by the city.

According to firm member Noel Blank, input into development of the plans was a team effort and came from several sources including city officials, recreation leaders and the Community Involvement Pro-

gram director. This team sought advice from various community and civic groups — the Chamber of Commerce, cultural arts groups and senior citizens.

The Community Planning Laboratory report was used as the basis for space allocations, and the entire design, Blank said, accommodates most of the 24 major community needs identified in that report.

According to calculations made by Parks and Recreation Director Ken Thompson, 20 of those 24 needs would be served in some way by space in the proposed center. Most of those needs would be served many times over, he stated.

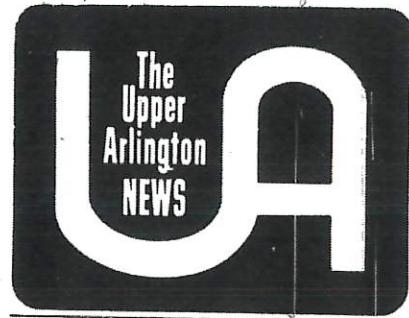
The only needs not met in at least some way are league and intramural sports and drop-in basketball (these center shortcomings will be discussed in a later article), senior citizen housing and educational resource services.

The task confronting the design team was to convert the 61-year-old two-story school building (and its more recent one-story addition) from a single-use facility to a multi-use facility for adults and youth.

Providing for many simultaneous activities that wouldn't interfere with each other was an important consideration in the planning.

Several different entrances to the building are planned; this will help insure success of the concept of

(Continued on Page 2A)



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FOR THE MOST PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY IN OHIO

FLIGHT FROM AFGHANISTAN

Passion for Freedom Brings Refugees Here

By Sue Wilson

Her eyes are apt to well with tears when she thinks about the family she left behind in a country half a world away.

No letters, no phone calls, not a word dare be exchanged over the thousands of miles separating them.

Jamila Noor and her husband, Ahmad, and their two children, fled their native Afghanistan in secret a few months ago to escape the oppression of Soviet occupation. They're now living in the Tri-Village area.

Ahmad and Jamila Noor are not their real names; the details of just how they escaped must remain a secret.

They have asked for protection of their identities in this exclusive interview. The News has agreed.

The reason for the request is literally a matter of life and death, Ahmad says.

His and Jamila's families still live in Afghanistan; so do many of the friends and associates who helped them escape.

"Even our mothers didn't know we were leaving. They don't know where in the world we are and we don't know what goes with them either," he adds.

Fear of severe government reprisals against their compatriots, in the form of imprisonment or worse, makes it impossible for the Noors to reveal all the facts.

But the story of what led to their flight and their subsequent resettlement here after being granted asylum in the United States is a story of intrigue and devotion.

It's also the story of a passion for freedom.

Leaving family and friends, home and possessions behind, taking not much more than the clothes they were wearing, the Noors joined the estimated 1.7 million refugees who have fled Afghanistan since December 1979, when invading Russian troops poured over the borders.

CHICKEN'S LIFE

The 16-month-long Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the regime of President Babrak Karmal have continually met stiff resistance from rebel bands operating throughout the countryside.

But realities of life inside a Communist-supported country are harsh, according to Ahmad.

"If we say a word against the Russian puppet government," he explains, "that government punishes us and our relatives very severely."

"And they never give warnings to people," he adds.

Offenders are put in prison and their relatives never know whether they are dead or alive.

Ahmad's sure many people who have disappeared are actually dead and their relatives will never know what hap-

(Continued on Page 2A)

News Carriers Collect This Week

It's collection time for your Upper Arlington News carrier. This is the last collection period in which the carriers can receive points and win trips to Cedar Point Amusement Park.

Be sure you receive your receipt for payment for delivery of The News entitling you to \$1 off the price of a classified ad. Thank you for your support.

• CENTER

(Continued from Page 1A)
simultaneously shared space (51 percent of space in the proposed center will be shared). Each entrance will have access to driveways and parking.

People going to meetings and activities, to the theater or a dinner, and youths dropping in at the youth center can all get into the building through separate entrances.

And residents going to offices in the front section can enter through other more private doors.

Adding entrance ramps for the handicapped and enlarging and adding to restroom facilities will bring the building up to code.

"The architects spent a lot of time making sure circulation (patterns) are good and feasible," Thompson said.

CONTROL CENTER

The school lobby on the south side of the building will become the control area or information center.

Building users can check in with the receptionist for meeting and activity locations; space reservations and program registration will be handled here.

Putting staff offices behind the information counter will make this a core area from which all center activities will be directed.

GALLERIA

An exhibit area and vaulted gallery for displays by community artists will be located next to the information counter.

This exhibit space would be used extensively by community arts groups, according to William Baird, chairman of the U.A. Cultural Arts Commission.

"We'd be ecstatic," Baird said, if the community center becomes a reality.

The gallery's glass walls will allow a view of an outside walled courtyard with seating space, a reflecting pool and landscaping.

More than just an amenity, the front lobby and gallery area will also house ramps and access to offices and meeting rooms on other levels.

MEETING ROOMS

Turning school classrooms into meeting rooms is a logical conversion.

Folding partitions in every other room will create five single rooms accommodating 25 to 30 people or two larger rooms accommodating 45 to 60 people.

New carpeting, new insulated windows and new ceilings with fluorescent lighting will make the building energy-efficient, Blank said.

Air conditioning with individual controls can be turned



The new ramp, above, would provide entrance at the rear of the community center.

off in rooms not used; the existing heating system will be retained.

Stacking chairs and folding tables will be used throughout the building. Center planners said nothing will be so permanent that it can't be moved around.

OFFICES

Fishinger's upper level will be converted to office space for public and quasi-public agencies.

Community health services, the Chamber of Commerce and the U.A. Historical Society have already indicated interest in using some of this space.

Jennifer Malone, executive director of Northwest Mental Health Service, said she is pleased the community recognizes the importance of mental health (it was given top priority in the Planning Lab report).

She thinks some of NWMH's services, such as the outreach to older adults program and some child and adolescent services, would "fit very well into the overall scheme of things" at the center.

"The whole spirit of shared space and complimentary use is good," Malone added.

CERAMICS

The school's present kindergarten area will be converted to a ceramics center separated from the main building by an open, covered walkway.

Arlington ceramists anticipate the new center will provide space for permanent

equipment and storage of supplies.

Storage and space limitations are also a real problem at the Senior Citizen Center on Ridgeview Road, according to Liz Brownell, center director.

She said two or three activities usually go on simultaneously and there's often an overflow of people who must find other places to meet. Confusion sometimes results when people don't know where they're supposed to go.

Flexible meeting space in the new community center would make this kind of juggling unnecessary.

Although senior headquarters will remain on Ridgeview Road, the new community center would give this growing city program some added space and continuity, Brownell said.

NEED?

Is there really a need for additional meeting space? Isn't the municipal building adequate?

In answer, Thompson said, "A lot of people didn't feel this building was needed," but a recent survey shows 44,398 people in 1,491 groups scheduled meetings in the municipal building over the past year.

Many groups who wanted to meet there were unable to because all space was taken.

City officials see this as a good indication of the community's need for more meeting space; the committee campaigning for the center hopes it can get this message across by June 2.

Next week the proposed youth center will be examined.

Training programs serving persons of all ages handicapped by some form of mental disability are appealing for volunteers. If you could spend a few hours each week giving these persons the individual attention they need, call the Volunteer Action Center at 224-3535.

• NOORS

(Continued from Page 1A)
pened to them.

"You have to see it," he continues. "If someone had told us what passes on the people of Afghanistan, we would not have believed it."

"It's the worst kind of life. It's just like a chicken's life because people die like chickens."

Ahmad compares the Communist regime to a weed or "dangerous plant" which is difficult to control. "It must be rooted out in the beginning before it gets started," he adds.

CRITICISM FORBIDDEN

Ahmad says the present government allows one to "shout as much as you like as long as it's in praise of the government."

But he found it impossible not to criticize or speak out about government rule; he couldn't continue to live under such suppression.

"I could hardly keep my mouth shut. A thousand things happen and you never know who your friends are" or whom you can trust, he says.

Everyone works for the government in Afghanistan. There are no private jobs. In Ahmad's opinion, "The people who report to the government do so to protect themselves.

"You have to keep your mouth closed," he continues. "And this is not easy — maybe for one week or one month, but not for a lifetime."

Ahmad is sure of one thing — "I would have been prosecuted. That was certain."

ESCAPE

Ahmad tells of planning to leave Afghanistan for two years. He worked out several different methods of escape. "One of them worked."

The United States is not completely foreign to the Noors. Ahmad came here seven years ago to study at a Midwestern university. He finished his graduate program before returning to Kabul.

The Russians invaded shortly after his return. After many months of living under Soviet domination, Ahmad knew he had to get out; familia knew she and the children would go with him.

The Noors made contact with some friends in the Upper Arlington area and came here to look for jobs and a place to live.

A newly-found friend offered them use of some space in her U.A. home until a permanent residence could be located.

Ahmad calls his hostess of the past few months "more than a family friend. She extended her hands to us in a willingness to help."

FCCHELPS

And more help from the Trivoli large community came from First Community Church.

The Rev. Howard Huntzicker of the FCC staff organized a church effort to find jobs in the community and a home for the Noors.

Ahmad now works at a food service job (it's only for the interim until he can find employment suitable to his training) and Jamila works for a local dry cleaner.

Church members responded to Rev. Huntzicker's SOS. One member donated an automobile (with no strings attached to the deal); many others have given assorted furniture, a range and refrigerator, a washer and dryer, as well as clothing and household items.

Another FCC member donated much of a whole household of useable furnishings — necessities such as pots and pans, dishes, linens and drapes.

Then a five-man moving team from FCC helped collect the donated items a weekend ago and moved them in two pickup trucks into the Grandview Heights apartment located by Rev. Huntzicker.

CHILDREN

The younger members of the Noor family are doing just fine in their adopted country. They've attended a U.A. elementary school (where the principal says they've adjusted nicely) and "fit in real well" on the playground "in the lunchroom and in the neighborhood."

"They rough and play with the other children and have little difficulty making themselves understood."

Both children are fluent in three languages: Persian, Pashto (spoken in Afghanistan) and English; their language troubles have been all right.

"We've been very happy to have them," the principal adds. "They are fine children, a fine family. We're sorry they'll relocate to another area — our loss is their gain."

Although Ahmad and his

family are settling into their new apartment and feeling more at home here, their thoughts often return to their troubled homeland.

REFUGEES

They wonder how their relatives are coping with life under Communist rule. They wonder how the other refugees are faring — the ones who are leaving Afghanistan, Ahmad estimates, at an average rate of 30,000 a day.

These refugees must travel over perilous mountain routes on pack donkeys, and find their way through tribal areas along the 350-mile border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It's a hostile route ruled by Pathan tribes — wily guerrilla fighters and custodians of the fabled Khyber Pass which slices through the area's midsection.

The code there is "an eye for an eye."

It's the Pathan guerrillas who've led a determined resistance to the invaders, fighting Soviet helicopter gunships with rifles.

PAKISTAN CAMPS

The refugees' mountainous trek to Pakistan takes several days. After reaching Pakistan they must stay in tent camps where living conditions are very trying, Ahmad says.

The Pakistanis adhere to the Pathan Code — *pashuwalli* — which requires asylum be granted to anyone who asks for it.

Afghan refugees there are truly citizens of nowhere, waiting for help from the United Nations and the rest of the international community; they also wait for the day when they can safely go back home.

Although the United States cannot directly help the Afghan people still inside Afghanistan, Ahmad says, it can help the refugees in Pakistan by sending military aid, medicine and food.

He hopes the Reagan administration will take some action on this issue soon.

"We certainly would like to return" to Kabul and our homeland, Ahmad says. "If the situation improves — whenever our freedom fighters succeed in pushing the Russians out and our country is free from Russian occupation."

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