

Beat: Miscellaneous

HAMTRAMCK U.S. CITY TO BECOME THE FIRST TO ELECT A MUSLIM-MAJORITY CITY COUNCIL

KNOWN FOR BEING POLISH-CATHOLIC ENCLAVE

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USPA NEWS - Hamtramck residents have elected a Muslim majority to its city council, symbolizing the demographic changes that have transformed the city once known for being a Polish-Catholic enclave. In last Tuesday's election the top three vote-getters were Muslim,...

Hamtramck residents have elected a Muslim majority to its city council, symbolizing the demographic changes that have transformed the city once known for being a Polish-Catholic enclave. In last Tuesday's election the top three vote-getters were Muslim, while the bottom three were non-Muslim.

Hamtramck was originally settled by Germans, but Polish-Catholic immigrants flooded into the area when the Dodge Brothers plant opened in 1914. At that time, Irish and German Catholics dominated the Detroit political scene, so Poles gravitated to Hamtramck.

But the Muslim population in Hamtramck has grown steadily due to immigration, said University of Michigan-Dearborn associate professor Sally Howell, who has written a book on Michigan and U.S. Muslims. Dearborn has many Arab-American immigrants, but Hamtramck likely became the first city to have a Muslim-majority population in 2013. She estimates that about 50 percent of the city is made up of Muslims, and the city has at least seven mosques, more mosques per capita than anywhere else in the country. (Washington Post)

The U.S. Census Bureau doesn't track religion, but Howell estimates Hamtramck, which has around 22,000 residents, is roughly half Muslim. As Poles and others left the city in the last several decades, she said, it attracted many immigrants, including those from Yemen, Bangladesh and Bosnia. Between 1990 and 2000, the city's Arab population jumped more than fivefold, while its traditional Polish population dropped by more than a third. (DetroitNews)

'Hamtramck is famously a city that was known for being a real stronghold for the Polish community,' Howell said. 'Hamtramck was important to the Poles for the same reason it's important to these Muslim groups today in that they got to have a place where they could be the hegemonic voice. ... People were happy to have Hamtramck as a place that could really represent them. And I think that this is true today for the newer immigrants.' (DetroitNews)

Almost all of the Yemeni-Americans in Hamtramck are Muslim, while the growing Bangladeshi-American community in Hamtramck has Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. The city has a Bangladeshi Hindu temple and Bangladeshi mosques... Three of the Muslims on Hamtramck's City Council are of Bangladeshi descent, while Alasmari is of Yemeni descent. The council's only other Arab-American Muslim in its history was Abdul Algazali, who died in February. (UStoday)

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