

## Conservatives will appeal 'Ground Zero mosque' approval

Alfredo Garcia Religion News Service | Aug. 4, 2010

A conservative religious law firm plans to appeal a decision that grants a green light for the construction of an Islamic community center two blocks from Ground Zero.

The Washington-based American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) opposes the construction of the Cordoba House in lower Manhattan because the building currently at the site "stands as an iconic part of the cultural and historical fabric of America."

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission on Tuesday (Aug. 3) voted unanimously not to grant historic status to the site, eliminating a key hurdle that allows planning and construction to go forward.

The ACLJ, which represents a retired New York City firefighter, called the vote "deeply offensive," adding that they are "poised to file legal action on behalf of our client to challenge this flawed decision and put a stop to this project."

Tension has mounted in recent weeks regarding what critics call the "Ground Zero Mosque," while proponents say it will not be a mosque and that it is not at Ground Zero.

As Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, CEO of the Cordoba Initiative, told Reuters, the future project will be a community center -- which includes a prayer hall -- modeled after the YMCA.

The ACLJ, however, said in a press release that the vote ignores "the fact that this is a historic and hallowed site that should not be destroyed to build an Islamic mosque."

In a July 20 letter submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the ACLJ said its opposition "is not based upon fear, hostility or prejudice, but rather the unique architectural and historical characteristics of the building and the public's interest in preserving the history of the September 11th events."

Rauf, in a statement, thanked the commission for its "careful and thoughtful consideration," saying he was grateful to them and local elected officials for

?their commitment to the democratic and constitutional ideals we all hold dear and which the community center we hope to create on the site will honor.?

The joint statement from the New York Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU praised the decision for ?promoting our nation's core values and not letting bias get in the way of the rule of law.?

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