

Lawsuit: Landmark designation for planned Yonkers mosque site is discriminatory

Muslim group claims city is being pressured to prohibit building

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Members of an Islamic group in Westchester are suing the City of Yonkers over the construction of a mosque.

The Islamic Community Center of Mid Westchester bought a property last year to build a mosque. But the group claims the community is pressuring city officials to prohibit them from proceeding with the plan.

The group says that when they bought the land with an old medieval revival mansion and told the city about the mosque plan, the city labeled the property as a landmark. A landmark status tends to mean delays for renovations.

Members of the Muslim group believe their community pressured city officials to make it a landmark to prevent the mosque from being built.

“Every single little fix has to go through the Landmarks Board, and that would be an issue because it’s not just one or two problems: it’s one dozen or two dozen. It’s a lot and for each problem to have its own process its own due course, it would take a lot of time, money and energy,” says Zaid Nakadar of the ICCMW.

Yonkers residents who were in favor of making the property a landmark say they just want to preserve a piece of Yonkers history.

“It’s a gorgeous house and our fear was that it would have been changed. The mosque is there. There’s no problem with the mosque, it’s the fact that it is a gorgeous house and we just want to keep it that way, that’s really the reason that everybody went,” says local resident Al Perez.

The Muslim group is now calling the landmark decision discriminatory and suing the city, the mayor, the Landmark Preservation Board and members of the City Council in federal court.

Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano was quoted Wednesday stating: “The city will help the group build the mosque. But just like everyone else, they must follow the rules of a landmark property.”