

# Controversies Over Mosques and Islamic Centers Across the U.S.

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This [interactive map](#) shows the locations of 53 proposed mosques and Islamic centers that have encountered community resistance in recent years. Below are brief overviews of each project, based on news reports, organized alphabetically by state and then by city. In many cases, the opposition has centered on neighbors' concerns about traffic, noise, parking and property values – the same objections that often greet churches and other houses of worship as well as commercial construction projects. In some communities, however, opponents of mosques also have cited fears about Islam, sharia law and terrorism.

While the map shows only projects that have met resistance, many mosques and Islamic centers have been built in recent years with little or no opposition. See, for example, an article in the [Chattanooga Free Press](#) about a mosque that opened in August 2012 in Chattanooga, Tenn.

By the end of 2011, there were at least 2,106 mosques in the U.S., according to the [U.S. Mosque Study 2011](#) (PDF), which was sponsored by a variety of research groups and religious organizations. [The Mosque Study Project 2000](#) (PDF), which was conducted a decade earlier using the same methodology, counted 1,209 mosques across the country in 2000. This suggests that more than four-in-ten mosques in the U.S. have opened since 2000.

Hyperlinks to news sources cited are provided whenever possible, but some articles are no longer available online.

**Location:** Lomita, Calif.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of the South Bay

**Background:** The center sought permission to replace eight one-story structures in a residential neighborhood with a two-story building including classrooms, offices and a prayer space. Some residents objected to the building's size and said the project would increase traffic. Proponents said the expansion would not increase traffic because it was intended to better serve current worshippers, not to attract new ones. The Lomita City Council unanimously rejected the proposal in March 2010, citing traffic concerns, despite a city planning commission report finding that the project would improve area parking and traffic flow. In November 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice launched an investigation of city officials regarding possible discrimination.

**Current status:** The center filed suit against the city in federal court in March 2012, alleging discrimination.

**Source:** The Daily Breeze, [KPCC: Southern California Public Radio](#), Los Angeles Times [March 2010](#), [November 2011](#) and [March 2012](#)

**Location:** Morada, Calif.

**Proposed by:** Masjid Umar Farooq

**Background:** In April 2009, San Joaquin County supervisors approved construction of the Madina Center, including a 13,820-square-foot mosque. The Morada Area Association, a residents' group, filed a lawsuit on environmental grounds; an email from the group also cited the mosque's "social and cultural implications." Other residents supported the project, saying it could reduce illegal dumping and vandalism in the neighborhood. In August 2010, the county Board of Supervisors agreed with the county's Grand Jury that officials had sufficiently studied the mosque's environmental impact and had given adequate notice of a public hearing, thus clearing the way for construction.

**Current status:** As of mid-October 2011, construction at the site had started but was on hold for lack of money to complete the project. It was unclear when the center would open.

**Source:** Lodi News-Sentinel [August 2010](#) and [October 2011](#), [The Record](#)

**Location:** Ontario, Calif.

**Proposed by:** Al-Nur Islamic Center

**Background:** In December 2011, the San Bernadino County Planning Commission gave the Islamic center permission to build a 7,500-square-foot mosque in an unincorporated residential area near Chino. Some residents appealed the decision, citing concerns about traffic and changing the look of the neighborhood. Others, including some members of a nearby Mormon congregation, showed support for the proposed mosque. In February 2012, the county's board of supervisors denied the appeal. The same group of residents filed a lawsuit in March 2012 in San Bernadino Superior Court to delay or cancel construction, alleging the mosque would have a detrimental effect on the environment. The suit asked the court to revoke the approval and to require the county to complete an environmental impact report.

**Current status:** The suit from mosque opponents is pending. In August 2012, three pig legs were thrown onto the site while nightly prayers were in session during Ramadan. Pigs are considered unclean according to Islam. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim advocacy group, has asked the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate the incident.

**Source:** [San Bernardino Sentinel](#), [Contra Costa Times](#), [Los Angeles Times](#)

**Location:** San Martin, Calif.

**Proposed by:** South Valley Islamic Center

**Background:** The center has been seeking permission to build a community center and mosque on a vacant lot for six years. Opponents say the center would cause water problems in an area prone to flooding. Mosque supporters allege bigotry, noting that the site has already passed many environmental tests, including for water, soil and septic tanks.

**Current status:** In August 2012, the Santa Clara Planning Commission unanimously voted to grant the construction permit. In late September 2012, the county Board of Supervisors rejected several opponents' appeal of the decision. The board also rejected the Islamic center's appeal to further expand their building plans.

**Source:** [ABC News](#), [San Jose Mercury News](#)

**Location:** Santa Clara, Calif.

**Proposed by:** Muslim Community Association

**Background:** The city government had previously approved the Muslim Community Association's plan to add a 64-foot-tall minaret to its mosque in Santa Clara, but the expansion was appealed by a local businessman. He contended that the structure was incompatible with the surrounding area, focusing on the architectural quality of the minaret rather than the mosque itself. Another opponent of the project was quoted in a local news report citing concerns about "Islamic domination" of America. The city government rejected the appeal and approved the building of the minaret in August 2010.

**Current status:** Construction of the minaret has been completed.

**Source:** Contra Costa Times, [KGO TV](#), [NBC Bay Area](#)

**Location:** Temecula, Calif.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Temecula Valley

**Background:** A Muslim community in Southern California proposed building a two-story, 25,000-square-foot mosque for 150 to 300 congregants near two existing churches. Opponents' objections ranged from concerns about traffic to fears about Islam. At a small rally in July 2010, some protesters brought dogs in a deliberate effort to offend Muslim sensibilities. In January 2011, three opponents handed out more than 100 fliers to high school students, claiming in part that Islam was not peaceful and thus the constitutional rights to freedom of religion, assembly and speech did not apply to its adherents. But other groups expressed support for the mosque.

**Current status:** The Temecula City Council approved the proposal in January 2011, overriding an appeal by a citizen group opposed to the mosque. A ground breaking ceremony is scheduled for Sept. 28, 2012, and construction could be finished by 2015.

**Source:** [Time](#), The Huffington Post [January](#) and [February](#) 2011, North County Times [January 2011](#) and [August 2012](#), [The Press-Enterprise](#)

**Location:** Middletown, Conn.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Society of Monmouth

**Background:** The Islamic Society of Monmouth proposed to expand its parking lot and to build a 5,300-square-foot community center on recently acquired property next to the group's existing mosque. More than 100 people attended the Middletown Planning Board's public hearing on the proposal in June 2012. Neighbors raised concerns about privacy, lighting and property values. Members of a group called Radical Islam alleged that the Islamic Society of Monmouth has ties to a terrorist group.

**Current status:** The planning board unanimously voted to approve a revised plan at a meeting on Aug. 15, 2012.

**Source:** Independent [June](#) and [August](#) 2012, Middletown Patch [July](#) and [August](#) 2012

**Location:** Wallingford, Conn.

**Proposed by:** Tariq Farid

**Background:** Farid petitioned for a zoning variance to build a mosque on residential property. Many residents voiced concerns about traffic and parking, contending that the site should remain residential. One neighbor also expressed worries about Muslims' treatment of women, and proponents of the project suggested that the opposition was biased.

**Current status:** The town's Planning and Zoning Commission unanimously rejected the variance in October 2008, citing concerns about traffic and parking.

**Source:** The Record-Journal [May](#), [July](#) and [October](#) 2008

**Location:** Boynton Beach, Fla.

**Proposed by:** Al-Amin Center of Florida

**Background:** In April 2011, the Palm Beach County Commission approved construction of a 17,000-square-foot mosque in an empty lot previously intended for a church. Subsequently, residents raised objections, including displeasure with the building's design, especially a 60-foot-high spire and 50-foot-tall dome. Others cited traffic concerns. Several expressed frustration that they did not hear about the project until final approval had already been granted, and some said they have concerns about who might be funding the mosque. But other residents emphasized that they have no objections to having a mosque in the area.

**Current status:** A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Sept. 30, 2012.

**Source:** Sun-Sentinel [May](#) and [June](#) 2011, [Al-Amin Center of Florida Facebook page](#)

**Location:** Fort Pierce, Fla.

**Proposed by:** Muslim Friends of Florida International

**Background:** A Muslim group proposed to build an 18,800-square-foot mosque on a 2.9-acre lot, part of which was zoned for religious use. Neighbors expressed concerns about the size of the facility and potential drainage problems. The Muslim group scaled back the design to 14,400-square-feet in an effort to assuage neighbors' concerns.

**Current status:** St. Lucie County Commissioners unanimously approved construction of the mosque in February 2009.

**Source:** TCPalm [Feb. 16](#) and [Feb. 18](#), 2009

**Location:** Alpharetta, Ga. (Rucker Road)

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of North Fulton

**Background:** A congregation applied to replace its 2,500-square-foot mosque with a two-story, 15,500-square-foot structure and to construct a temporary worship hall that later would be converted to a community center. Residents expressed concerns about increased traffic and overdevelopment, and Alpharetta's City Council denied the expansion in May 2010. The center sued the city in June 2010, alleging religious discrimination. Several civil rights groups, including the Anti-Defamation League, filed briefs supporting the congregation.

**Current status:** A federal judge ruled in January 2012 that the city did not violate religious land use laws. The decision is under appeal, and in June 2012 the U.S. Department of Justice filed a brief supporting the mosque.

**Source:** [Appen Newspapers](#), [The Associated Press](#), The Atlanta Journal-Constitution [May 2011](#) and [January 2012](#), WSBTV [June](#) and [August 2012](#)

**Location:** Alpharetta , Ga. (near Tidwell Road)

**Proposed by:** Hamzah Islamic Center

**Background:** Opponents of a proposed mosque and community center on a 12-acre lot objected to the size of the project and the traffic it would bring. The Forsyth County Commission unanimously approved the plan in fall 2009. Residents opposed to the project said they would appeal in court. After resolving the debate over the type of sewage system the new facility should have, construction began in February 2011.

**Current status:** As of September 2012, a section of the parking lot has been finished and the congregation has moved into a temporary building on the site. Funds are being raised for the construction of the permanent facility.

**Source:** [Forsyth County Department of Planning and Development](#) (PDF), Forsyth County News, Hamzah Islamic Center [Construction Tracker](#) and [About page](#)

**Location:** Lilburn, Ga.

**Proposed by:** Dar-E-Abbas congregation

**Background:** The congregation sought permission to expand two buildings into a 20,000-square-foot complex with a mosque, gym and cemetery. The Lilburn City Council rejected this proposal in November 2009 and a scaled-down proposal in December 2010. After the U.S. Department of Justice threatened to sue Lilburn, alleging religious discrimination, the city approved a modified proposal in August 2011.

**Current status:** The congregation is fundraising to pay off a loan used to buy the land it will build on. Construction is expected to take several years and will not begin until enough money is raised to pay off the loan.

**Source:** [The Wall Street Journal](#), [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), [DOJ website](#), [Gwinnett Daily Post](#)

**Location:** Aurora, Ill.

**Proposed by:** Salahuddin Razi, Ashfaq Maqsood and Khatija Maqsood

**Background:** In November 2011, three Muslims sought permission to turn a 1,500-square-foot house and a 2,000-square-foot barn into a mosque and Islamic studies center on their five-acre property. The property is in a residential area two miles outside the city. Aurora's mayor and city council filed objections with county zoning officials, citing concerns about flooding, septic waste and traffic. They also argued that the mosque was "not consistent with the city's adopted comprehensive plan." Neighbors said they had similar concerns. In February 2012, zoning officials approved the proposal in a 15-10 vote, noting that the mosque developers would have to address traffic and water concerns according to county law.

**Current status:** Further studies and permits are needed before construction can begin.

**Source:** [Chicago Tribune](#), [Chicago Sun-Times](#)

**Location:** Chicago, Ill.

**Proposed by:** Faizan e Madina Islamic Education Center

**Background:** A congregation sought to convert a vacant restaurant into a mosque. The local chamber of commerce opposed the center, saying it preferred for the site's new occupant to produce tax revenue, which a nonprofit religious group would not do. Residents' concerns ranged from the aesthetics of the facility, to traffic, to fears about the spread of mosques in the neighborhood. In 2010, the zoning board denied a special-use permit for the proposed mosque but did not inform the congregation of its denial within the required time frame. Due to this error, the congregation won its appeal of the decision and began remodeling the building's interior.

**Current status:** The city ordered the remodeling to stop in May 2012 because the congregation did not have a building permit. The congregation is now waiting for a building permit.

**Source:** [The Wall Street Journal](#), [NBC Chicago](#), [Fox News](#), [Chicago Real Estate Daily](#)

**Location:** DeKalb, Ill.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Society of Northern Illinois University

**Background:** The Islamic Society of Northern Illinois University requested a zoning change that would allow the group to move down the street from its current location to build a larger mosque for 300 students and 60 families. Many supporters spoke on behalf of the proposal at a public hearing, emphasizing the importance of the mosque to nearby university students, faculty and other members of the community. Mosque opponents who spoke at the hearing noted that they were not against Islam but were concerned about maintaining the residential feel of the neighborhood.

**Current status:** In May 2012, DeKalb's planning committee and city council unanimously approved a zoning change and permit allowing the mosque to be built.

**Source:** [Northern Public Radio](#), [USA Today](#)

**Location:** Des Plaines, Ill.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Community Center of Des Plaines

**Background:** A Muslim congregation that has grown over 25 years from a few families to hundreds of worshippers applied to add 23 parking spaces on its property. Neighbors opposed the proposal, saying the additional parking would ruin the aesthetics of the neighborhood.

**Current status:** The City Council gave the mosque permission to add the parking spaces in July 2010.

**Source:** The Daily Herald [video clip](#)

**Location:** Naperville, Ill.

**Proposed by:** Irshad Learning Center

**Background:** A group of mostly Iranian-born Muslims proposed to build a school and mosque on a three-acre lot. The DuPage County Board and zoning officials denied the application in January 2010 after neighbors voiced concerns about parking and late-night worship services. There were also allegations that the Irshad Learning Center had received funds from an organization reportedly being investigated by the FBI for ties to an Iranian government-run bank. Supporters of the project filed a federal lawsuit in April 2010, alleging religious discrimination.

**Current status:** The lawsuit is ongoing.

**Source:** [Voice of America](#), [The New York Times](#), [Naperville Sun](#), [WBEZ](#)

**Location:** West Chicago, Ill.



**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Western Suburbs

**Background:** Since 2008, the center has sought permission to convert a vacant home into a prayer space. Worshippers have reportedly used the house as a mosque for at least two years, despite not having a permit for that use. Neighbors have voiced concerns about traffic, noise and lights. DuPage County denied the request in a 15-3 vote in May 2012, citing concerns about the septic system and whether the county would be able to regulate the number of daily worshippers. In August 2012, the center filed a lawsuit against the county, claiming that the county violated the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 by applying “different standards and procedures” in considering the center’s request for a conditional use permit.

**Current status:** The lawsuit is ongoing. A court hearing is scheduled for Sept. 26.

**Source:** Daily Herald [May](#) and [August](#) 2012, [Naperville Sun](#), [Courier News](#), [Chicago Tribune](#)

**Location:** Willowbrook, Ill.

**Proposed by:** Muslim Educational Cultural Center of America (MECCA)

**Background:** The center applied for permission to build a 57,000-square-foot facility including a mosque, gym and school. Some residents voiced concerns about matters ranging from water runoff to increased traffic. In March 2011, the DuPage County Zoning Board granted a conditional-use permit for a scaled-back proposal. But the board denied MECCA’s two separate requests to allow construction of a minaret and dome that would stand taller than 36 feet.

**Current status:** Construction began in June 2012. MECCA officials estimate it will take about two years to complete the project.

**Source:** Chicago Tribune [August 2010](#) and [March 2011](#); Chicago Daily Herald [2011](#), [March](#) and [June](#) 2012; [Naperville Sun](#)

**Location:** Florence, Ky.

**Proposed by:** Mercy Foundation Inc.

**Background:** The Islamic Center of Northern Kentucky proposed to move from a rented storefront in a strip mall to a new, 8,000-square-foot mosque on 5.5 acres already zoned for religious use. According to media reports, opponents set up a “stop the mosque” website and circulated fliers urging neighbors to help “stop the takeover of our country” by Muslims.

**Current status:** The Boone County Planning Commission approved plans for the proposed mosque in June 2010, but it was never built. In October 2011, the Mercy Foundation sold the plot for a large profit to a property developer.

**Source:** [The Kentucky Enquirer](#), [WCPO 9 News](#), [The Christian Science Monitor](#), [Northern Kentucky News](#)

**Location:** Mayfield, Ky.

**Proposed by:** Somali immigrants

**Background:** A group of Somali-born Muslims applied to open a mosque in an existing building in Mayfield's downtown business district. Residents and business owners expressed concern that mosque attendees would exacerbate limited parking in the area. Mayfield's Board of Zoning Adjustment first approved, then denied, the permit in August 2010, citing a lack of parking spots. In September 2010, the Kentucky ACLU announced it would support the Somali group. The zoning board approved the permit in November 2010.

**Current status:** By February 2011, the congregation had stopped worshipping at the approved location, mistakenly believing the permit had been denied. They resumed worshipping at the location by fall 2011.

**Source:** [WKMS Radio](#), Courier-Journal [August 2010](#) and [September 2011](#), [WBKO Radio](#), [The Associated Press](#)

**Location:** Portland, Maine

**Proposed by:** Afghan refugees

**Background:** Worship at the Portland Masjid and Islamic Center, located in a former TV repair shop, was suspended for five months in 2009 because of a zoning conflict. In response, the Maine Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on behalf of the congregation. After asking the group to remove an illegally paved parking lot, the Portland Planning Board rezoned the area, allowing the mosque to operate.

**Current status:** The Planning Board granted a conditional use permit in July 2010, letting the group of about 15 families reopen the mosque.

**Source:** The Portland Press Herald [March](#) and [July](#) 2010

**Location:** Walkersville, Md.

**Proposed by:** Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

**Background:** The group contracted to buy a 224-acre farm and proposed to build a worship center for about 200 people, two gyms and space for tents to host as many as 10,000 people for an annual three-day convention. Facing opposition from residents who expressed fear of Islam,

the Ahmadiyya community took out newspaper ads, knocked on doors and offered residents use of the gyms in attempts to win community support. The zoning board rejected the proposal in August 2008, citing traffic and water supply concerns. Although the Muslim group did not challenge the decision, the landowner who wanted to sell the property filed a religious discrimination lawsuit.

**Current status:** The landowner's lawsuit was settled in August 2009 when the town agreed to buy the land for \$4.7 million.

**Source:** [The Washington Post](#), [Maryland Community News](#)

**Location:** Amherst, Mass.

**Proposed by:** Hampshire Mosque

**Background:** The Muslim community in Amherst, a college town, sought to convert a former Christian school and poultry farm into a prayer and educational space. Local officials were supportive, but some neighbors expressed concerns about possible disturbance from increased traffic, parking and lights on the rural site.

**Current status:** In June 2010, the Muslim group withdrew its application, citing difficulties securing the property from its current owners, negative comments from neighbors and possible restrictions on future expansion.

**Source:** Daily Hampshire Gazette

**Location:** Roxbury Crossing, Mass.

**Proposed by:** Muslim American Society, Boston chapter

**Background:** The city of Boston gave permission for a mosque and community center to be built in Roxbury Crossing in 1992. Before construction began in 2004, opponents alleged that some of the mosque leaders had ties to radical groups. Controversy continued throughout construction of the \$15 million, 68,000-square-foot Islamic center, which can hold about 3,000 people.

**Current status:** The Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center officially opened in June 2009, although it had been used for daily prayers since fall 2008.

**Source:** The Boston Globe [June 11](#) and [June 27](#), 2009, [Harvard University](#) (PDF)

**Location:** Farmington, Mich.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Cultural Association of Franklin (ICA)

**Background:** In January 2011, the ICA made an unsolicited offer to buy a closed elementary school in order to build an Islamic community center that would include a mosque and banquet hall. The Farmington Public School Board publicized the bid in May 2011 and heard from supporters and opponents of the sale at a public meeting in June 2011. One opponent alleged that the ICA had connections with anti-Semitic individuals, but most opponents were concerned that other potential buyers were not adequately considered. Despite community opposition, the sale was approved unanimously by the district in June. In July 2011, two residents sued the district for allegedly failing to follow school board policies and procedures in conducting the sale. Outside court, mosque opponents reportedly alleged that the ICA has ties to terrorism. Oakland County Circuit Court dismissed the suit in September 2011, and the sale of the school to the ICA was finalized in November 2011.

**Current status:** The residents are appealing the circuit court's September 2011 dismissal of the case. A decision is expected in October 2012. In June 2012, they asked Michigan's attorney general to investigate alleged corruption by district officials regarding the sale.

**Source:** Farmington Patch [June](#), [August](#), [September](#) and [November](#) 2011, [June 2012](#); [The Associated Press](#); [Bloomfield Patch](#)

**Location:** Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Proposed by:** Masjid Muhammad Islamic Center

**Background:** Organizers hoped to purchase a former child development center and turn it into a worship space for up to 50 people. Neighbors said they preferred to see the site developed for housing and expressed concerns about parking, noise and congestion. A Muslim leader attributed the opposition to "a whole lot of fear-mongering."

**Current status:** Although city administrators initially recommended the sale, the Planning Commission unanimously rejected the proposal in September 2010, citing insufficient parking.

**Source:** The Grand Rapids Press [July](#) and [September](#) 2008

**Location:** Northville, Mich.

**Proposed by:** Meadowbrook Islamic Center

**Background:** The Islamic center sought permission to build a parking lot on the front lawn of its building, a former single-family home in a residential area. Neighbors said they were concerned about property values, noise, traffic and overflow parking. Proponents said that there would be no amplified calls to prayer and that the congregation had no intention of enlarging the building.

**Current status:** The Northville Township Zoning Board of Appeals voted in January 2010 to deny the proposed changes to the property.

**Source:** [The Detroit Free Press](#)

**Location:** St. Anthony, Minn.

**Proposed by:** Abu-Huraira Islamic Center

**Background:** The center proposed converting the basement of a large building in a light industrial zone into a mosque for 200 worshippers. Center supporters said they had worked with city officials for months on the proposal and were unofficially told the plan was acceptable. After a three-month delay by the city, the St. Anthony Planning Commission approved the plan in June 2012. But a week later, the city council voted 4-1 against the project at a public hearing on the proposal. Residents who opposed the project cited concerns about traffic problems and the loss of tax revenue, as well as about Islam.

**Current status:** The Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations has asked the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate the denial.

**Source:** The Star Tribune [June](#) and [August](#) 2012

**Location:** Madison, Miss.

**Proposed by:** Mississippi Muslim Association

**Background:** The association requested to build a mosque for about 150 congregants on a five-acre site north of the city of Madison. Residents and city officials voiced concerns about how the proposed 11,000-square-foot facility would secure a sewage system. About 400 residents signed a petition opposing the mosque, and some were quoted in local media expressing fears about Islamic radicalism. The Madison County Board of Supervisors gave preliminary approval for the construction of the mosque in August 2009 and granted final approval in March 2010.

**Current status:** Construction of the mosque is underway.

**Source:** Jackson Free Press [July 2009](#) and [March 2010](#), [Mississippi Muslim Association website](#)

**Location:** Boonton, N.J.

**Proposed by:** Jam-e-Masjid Islamic Center

**Background:** A 4,000-square-foot addition to an existing mosque was approved by the city planning board in 2006, despite opposition from residents concerned about parking and the

proposed building's size and style. The town issued a stop-work order in August 2008 because construction of the mosque facade did not conform to the approved plan. An amended application was rejected in September 2008, causing the group to further revise the application.

**Current status:** Construction has been completed and the expanded center is now open.

**Source:** The Daily Record February 2006, March 8 and March 10, 2006, and September 2008; [Jam-e-Masjid Islamic Center website](#)

**Location:** Bridgewater, N.J.

**Proposed by:** Al Falah Center

**Background:** The Al Falah Center is suing Bridgewater, claiming that the town changed zoning laws to block its proposal to turn a former banquet hall into a mosque and community center. The plan was set to be reviewed at a Planning Board meeting in January 2011, but hundreds of residents protested, and the meeting was postponed. Al Falah says the town then hurriedly passed an ordinance restricting where houses of worship could be built, banning religious buildings on the proposed site for the mosque. Bridgewater officials say they changed the law due to traffic concerns and moved to have the case dismissed.

**Current status:** In July 2012, a federal judge denied Bridgewater's motion to dismiss the lawsuit. Litigation is underway, and the trial may start by the end of 2012.

**Source:** [AALDEF press release](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), [The Messenger-Gazette](#), [Bridgewater Patch](#)

**Location:** Piscataway, N.J.

**Proposed by:** Muslim Center of Middlesex County

**Background:** A proposed expansion would add a 45-foot minaret to an existing mosque, increase the facility's size by about 38,000 square feet and quadruple its parking spaces to nearly 300. Area residents expressed concerns about noise, lights, parking and declining property values.

**Current status:** The Piscataway Zoning Board of Adjustment held hearings on the project in late 2009 but has not yet rendered a decision. According to a YouTube video posted on March 18, 2012, in which members of the center appeal to the community for donations to fund the expansion, the center has raised about \$100,000 for the project but needs to raise \$400,000 more before construction can begin.

**Source:** The Star-Ledger [August](#) and [October](#) 2009, [Religion News Service](#), [YouTube](#)

**Location:** Rockaway Borough, N.J.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of New Jersey

**Background:** Organizers proposed to convert an office building into a 14,800-square-foot mosque. Residents raised concerns at zoning board meetings about increased traffic and noise, questioning whether the site was large enough for the number of people expected to attend services.

**Current status:** The Rockaway Borough zoning board approved the proposal in January 2008. Residents filed a lawsuit to halt construction. A Morris County judge upheld the zoning board's approval of the project.

**Source:** [New Jersey Real-Time News](#), The Daily Record October 2007 and October 2008, The Star-Ledger

**Location:** Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Proposed by:** Muslim American Society

**Background:** A Muslim group proposed to build a mosque in a residential area of Sheepshead Bay. Neighborhood opponents created a website and held protests, citing concerns about noise and traffic, as well as alleging the Muslim American Society has ties to terrorism. One protester was quoted as threatening to bomb the mosque if it was built. But some city officials condemned the anti-mosque sentiment and expressed support for the project. Opponents applied for a court injunction to halt construction on the mosque, which was denied in May 2011. In November 2011, an appeal against the approved building design was also denied.

**Current status:** Construction began in early 2012. In July 2012, a state senator representing Brighton Beach wrote a letter to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg saying the mosque "may pose a danger to public safety." In August 2012, a state assembly candidate also publicly accused the mosque's organizers of having ties to terrorism.

**Source:** [New York Daily News](#), The Brooklyn Paper [June](#) and [September](#) 2010, [New York Community Media Alliance](#), [The New York Post](#), [BBC News](#), Sheepshead Bites [November 2011](#) and [February 2012](#), [Salon](#), [Brooklyn Daily](#), [The New York Times](#)

**Location:** New York, N.Y.

**Proposed by:** Sharif El-Gamal

**Background:** Plans to erect an Islamic community center two blocks from the site of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan sparked intense national debate over the past several years. President Barack Obama said in 2010 that Muslims have a right to build in that location, but he stopped short of endorsing the project. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has been an

ardent supporter of the center. The city's Landmarks Preservation Commission approved the project in August 2010. Due to lack of funds, a new building has not yet been constructed. Part of an existing building on the site opened as a temporary community center and prayer space on Sept. 21, 2011. In November 2011, a state judge prevented Con Edison, the company that owns the building, from evicting developer El-Gamal for unpaid rent but allowed the company to increase the rent. El-Gamal countersued, claiming the rent increase and eviction attempt were politically motivated.

**Current status:** In July 2012, a state court approved the rent increase and ruled that El-Gamal owed Con Edison \$1.7 million in back rent. El-Gamal plans to appeal.

**Source:** [NPR](#); New York Times [2010](#) and [2011](#); [Washington Post](#); [Christian Science Monitor](#); NY Daily News [November 2011](#) and [July 2012](#)

**Location:** Staten Island, N.Y.

**Proposed by:** Muslim American Society

**Background:** The society planned to buy a former convent from a Roman Catholic parish and convert it into a mosque and community center. Many parishioners and neighbors opposed the sale of the convent, and some demonstrated against it at rallies. Opponents expressed fears ranging from increased traffic to perceived connections to Islamic terrorism. The church's priest withdrew his initial support for the sale and the parish board of trustees rejected the plan in July 2010.

**Current status:** In June 2011, the Muslim American Society purchased a former Hindu temple in Staten Island's Dongan Hills. The space has been renovated and is now a functioning mosque.

**Source:** Staten Island Advance [June](#), [July](#) and [August](#) 2010; [July 25](#) and [July 30](#), 2011

**Location:** Westbury, N.Y.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Long Island

**Background:** The center sought permission for a three-story, 19,000-square-foot addition to its existing mosque, along with more on-site parking, for about 350 congregants. Some residents supported the proposal, saying the mosque had been a good neighbor for many years. But opponents cited concern about impacts on the residential neighborhood and property values. Organizers eventually agreed to scale back the proposal to a two-story building and divide Friday prayer services into two sessions to ease traffic. The new plan was approved by the municipal government in March 2011.

**Current status:** Construction of the expanded mosque is underway.



**Source:** Westbury Times [November 2009](#) and [June 2010](#), [Long Island Press](#)

**Location:** Sugarcreek Township, Ohio

**Proposed by:** Islamic Society of Greater Dayton

**Background:** In early 2008 the Sugarcreek Township Board of Zoning Appeals rejected an initial rezoning application for a new mosque, citing traffic and sewage concerns. Opposition to the plan was led by the pastor and members of a Baptist church. In response, the Islamic society scaled back the proposed building to 19,000-square-foot and a capacity of 500 people, about half the size of the original plan. In September 2008, the Board of Zoning Appeals approved a conditional use application to construct the mosque.

**Current status:** Construction began in fall 2011.

**Source:** Dayton Daily News January and September 2008, [October 2011](#)

**Location:** Edmond, Okla.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Society of Edmond

**Background:** In July 2012, the group requested city permission to expand its mosque to five times its current size. After notifying the community of the expansion plans, the Edmond Planning Commission received letters from residents concerned about terrorism. One called the mosque “a headquarters for terrorist affiliate organizations.” Another letter referred to the controversy surrounding a planned mosque in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and expressed concerns about “what our grandchildren are going to face.” A planning commission official stated that only nonreligious concerns, such as building codes and regulations, will be considered.

**Current status:** The planning commission has postponed its review of the proposal until mosque leaders finalize their construction plans.

**Source:** [KOCO News](#), [News OK](#)

**Location:** Kane County, Okla.

**Proposed by:** The American Muslim Community Organization (AMCO)

**Background:** In June 2012, AMCO received approval from Kane County’s Zoning Board and Development Committee to expand and convert a single-family home into a mosque for up to 80 worshippers. Citing concerns about traffic and septic waste, the owner of a farm bordering three sides of the proposed site filed a formal legal complaint, triggering the need for a three-quarters majority vote from the county board for the project’s approval.

**Current Status:** In August 2012, the Kane County Public Health Department reviewed and cleared the septic system, and all 23 of the 26 board members present voted to approve the proposed mosque.

**Source:** The Daily Herald [June](#), [Aug. 8](#) and [Aug. 14](#), 2012

**Location:** Lebanon, Pa.

**Proposed by:** Lebanon Valley Mosque

**Background:** The Lebanon Valley Mosque sought to move from its current location to a one-story building in a residential low-density zone. Because the zoning code allows places of worship to operate, the city did not hold a hearing on the matter. Some nearby residents opposed the move, citing noise, traffic and safety concerns for small children. Residents brought their concerns to an open Lebanon City Council meeting in September 2011. Some city officials worried that the complaints were rooted in Islamophobia, which several residents strongly denied at the meeting.

**Current status:** The mosque began operating at its new location on Nov. 1, 2011. Shortly after the opening, the mosque participated in a multifaith community Thanksgiving service with a nearby church and synagogue.

**Source:** The Lebanon Daily News Sept. 15, Sept. 25, Sept. 26 and Nov.18, 2011, wtf News, [Lebanon Valley Mosque's Facebook "about" page](#)

**Location:** Antioch, Tenn.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Tennessee

**Background:** In August 2010, the center purchased a former movie theater and proposed to convert it into a mosque and community center. Many residents had wanted the building to be used for a community college instead, and they circulated a petition against the mosque. Some opponents were quoted in local media saying they would not object to having a mosque elsewhere in the community. One resident was quoted saying he feared the mosque would become a training ground for terrorists.

**Current status:** The mosque is now open, and the center plans to further renovate the complex to accommodate future expansion of the facility.

**Source:** [WKRN News 2](#), [Nashville Business Journal](#), [WPLN Radio](#), [WBIR TV](#), [Islamic Center of Tennessee website](#)

**Location:** Brentwood, Tenn.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Williamson County

**Background:** The center applied to rezone 14 acres for a prayer space and fellowship hall with dining facilities for about 325 people; they emphasized that it would have few outside lights and no loudspeakers to broadcast calls to prayer. Opponents said they worried that the mosque's leaders might have ties to terrorists. They also expressed concerns about increased traffic.

**Current status:** The Islamic center withdrew its application in May 2010, citing community opposition and the \$450,000 cost of adding a turning lane to control traffic.

**Source:** [The Tennessean](#)

**Location:** Murfreesboro, Tenn.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Murfreesboro

**Background:** In May 2010, Rutherford County officials unanimously approved plans to build a mosque and community center. Some residents held protests and eventually filed two lawsuits against the county, in September 2010 and in September 2011, seeking to halt construction of the mosque. They alleged in part that Islam is not a religion and that Muslims posed a threat to the neighborhood. A state judge dismissed most of the opponents' claims but in May 2012 ruled that the county did not provide adequate notice of the approval meeting for the mosque and thus prevented the mosque from opening. In June 2012 the mosque filed suit against the county in federal court alleging religious discrimination, and the U.S. Department of Justice filed a brief in support, questioning the state court ruling. A federal judge granted the mosque temporary permission to open until the case is decided. The mosque opened on Aug. 10, 2012. The site was subject to vandalism, arson and a bomb threat between 2010 and 2012.

**Current status:** Both state and federal litigation continue. On Aug. 30, a federal judge ruled that residents opposed to the mosque could intervene in the federal discrimination lawsuit. In state court, the county plans to appeal the local court's public notice ruling.

**Source:** The Tennessean [June](#) and [September](#) 2010; [WKRN](#); [WGNS](#); [News Channel 5](#); The Associated Press [April](#), [May](#) and [August](#) 2012; [The New York Times](#)

**Location:** Longview, Texas

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Longview

**Background:** In January 2012, the center began preparations to construct a 2,500-square-foot mosque and community center on a residential street. The congregation previously met in an apartment, which could no longer accommodate the 40 to 50 worshippers. Neighbors voiced opposition, citing concerns about increased traffic. Some neighbors posted signs with the word "Jesus" in their yards in protest. Others worried that the mosque would draw anti-Islam

demonstrations. But members of a nearby Presbyterian church reached out to the Muslim community in support, holding educational sessions about Islam and inviting mosque leaders to speak at the church.

**Current status:** The new building opened in July 2012.

**Source:** [CBS 19](#), Longview News-Journal [June](#) and [July](#) 2012

**Location:** Henrico, Va. (Hungary Road)

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Richmond

**Background:** The center sought and received permission from Henrico County to expand its current facility into a two-story, roughly 30,000-square-foot structure to house a mosque, a day care center and a school. Shortly after construction began in May 2012, a resident who lives near the center filed an appeal of the county's decision to approve the expansion, citing traffic and parking concerns. At a public hearing in June 2012, residents voiced concerns about traffic, safety and lighting. County officials stated that the plans met all county requirements and that they would continue to monitor the project's compliance with county regulations.

**Current status:** The Henrico County Planning Commission approved the plans and construction is underway.

**Source:** [WTVR](#), [NBC 12](#), [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#)

**Location:** Henrico, Va. (Impala Drive)

**Proposed by:** Islamic Center of Henrico

**Background:** In 2008, the center submitted a proposal to rezone a 5.2-acre lot in order to build a 10,000-square-foot mosque and community center. The property was zoned for commercial use and had been unused for more than 20 years. Mosque opponents raised concerns about increased noise and traffic. After Henrico County denied the application, the center sued the county, alleging religious discrimination. In March 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice joined the center's case, noting that the county had never denied a zoning application submitted by a Christian church. The lawsuit was settled out of court in August 2011 and required the county to treat all religious groups, including the Muslims seeking to build the mosque, equally. The county was also required to publicize its nondiscrimination policies and provide training to county officials on the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000.

**Current status:** Shortly after the settlement, the Henrico Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to approve the center's rezoning application. A groundbreaking ceremony took place in May 2012.

Source: [Islamic Center of Henrico website](#), [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), NBC 12 [August 2011](#) and [May 2012](#), [Religion News Service](#), [U.S. Department of Justice website](#)

**Location:** Short Pump, Va.

**Proposed by:** West End Islamic Center

**Background:** The center proposed to knock down its single-story temporary mosque and replace it with a 35,000-square-foot facility that would include a mosque, classrooms, a day care, a kitchen, offices and a conference room. Some residents opposed the plans at a Henrico County Planning Commission meeting, voicing concerns such as increased traffic, insufficient parking and maintaining the historic look of the neighborhood.

**Current status:** The planning commission unanimously approved the mosque proposal in July 2012. Mosque planners estimate they will need to raise \$3.5 million for the project and that it will be at least three years before construction begins.

**Source:** [NBC 12](#), [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), [Downtown Short Pump Newsmagazine](#)

**Location:** Brookfield, Wis.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Society of Milwaukee

**Background:** The group faced vocal opposition from some residents when it sought permission to build a 13,000-square-foot mosque in an industrial zone. Multiple public meetings were held to address citizen concerns about radicalism and sharia law, as well as traffic and zoning issues. A rally against “The Growing Threat of Islam” was held in nearby Waukesha, drawing more than 200 people. Brookfield’s mayor and aldermen stated that they would consider only nonreligious concerns.

**Current status:** In May 2012, the Brookfield Planning Commission unanimously approved plans to build the mosque and issued a conditional use permit. The group expects to begin construction in September 2012 and hopes to open the mosque by mid-2013.

**Source:** Brookfield Patch [March 13](#), [April 12](#), [April 15](#) and [Aug. 27](#), 2012; Journal Sentinel [May 7](#) and [May 15](#), 2012

**Location:** Green Bay, Wis.

**Proposed by:** Islamic Society of Wisconsin

**Background:** The Islamic Society of Wisconsin sought to rezone a former bait-and-tackle store and convert it into a mosque. In August 2010, the Green Bay City Council held a hearing on the

project. Most of the handful of people who spoke supported the mosque, though one Green Bay alderman suggested that Islam was at odds with “the American way of life.”

**Current status:** The City Council voted 9-3 to approve the rezoning.

**Source:** [Fox 11 \(WLUK-TV\)](#), [The Green Bay Press Gazette](#)

**Location:** Wilson, Wis.

**Proposed by:** Mansoor Mirza, Islamic Society of Sheboygan

**Background:** Mirza, a physician, sought a permit to rezone and renovate a former health-food store into a mosque. Many of the residents who attended a town planning commission meeting in February 2010 spoke out against the mosque and Islam in general. The pastor of a nearby church also opposed the mosque, but about 30 other local religious leaders signed a petition supporting Mirza’s proposal.

**Current status:** Renovations were approved and completed; the first service was held in May 2010.

**Source:** [Time](#)