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A plan to build a mosque and Muslim community center blocks away from Ground Zero in New York City moves forward, sparks a national debate over religious freedom, tolerance, and memories of 9/11.

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**APA**


**CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**


**Transcript**

Mosque Near Ground Zero -- Too Close to Sacred Ground?

LESTER HOLT, anchor:

In this country there is news tonight about what has become a national battle over a plan here in New York City to build a Muslim center and mosque a few blocks away from ground zero. NBC's Ron Allen has the latest on an emotional debate over religious freedom, tolerance and the memories of 9/11.

Honorable R. TIERNEY: All in favor.

Group of People: (In unison) Aye.

RON ALLEN, reporting:

With that unanimous vote, New York City took another step paving the way for a contentious project near ground zero.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #1: Thank you all very much.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Shame on you!

ALLEN: The city refused to designate this 19th century former textile warehouse a historic site, clearing perhaps the last hurdle to demolition. A debate over the proposed Islamic center is so heated, there's even debate over what to call it. Some see a community center with an auditorium, restaurants, a swimming pool and a prayer space for 2,000.

DALIA MAHMOUD (Muslim Public Affairs Council): I think the idea that this is insensitive is actually just ignorance.

ALLEN: But opponents see an iconic mosque and rallying symbol for extremists just two and a half blocks from ground zero.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #2: It looks to me like a victory mosque, like a, you know, finger in our eyes.

ALLEN: We're at the corner of West Broadway and Park Place. It's a distance of about 75 yards from the entrance to the building to here. If you look down there, you can see a gray structure that says P-A-T and some cranes behind it. That's the edge of ground zero.
Total distance, about 250 yards. Lately, the argument has echoed nationally. On Twitter, Sarah Palin said, "It stabs hearts." Newt Gingrich on New York One cable.

NEWT GINGRICH: This is a political act designed to establish a 13-story building, two blocks the World Trade Center for the purpose of saying worldwide, `We're winning, the Americans are losing.'

ALLEN: Even the Anti-Defamation League, know for rejecting bigotry, says the center will cause "more pain unnecessarily." However, a local community board approved the project by a vote of 29-to-1. And many leaders like New York's mayor are steadfast supporters.

Mayor MICHAEL BLOOMBERG (New York City): Should government attempt to deny private citizens the right to build a house of worship on private property? That may happen in other countries, but we should never allow it to happen here.

ALLEN: The developers now say the will add an interfaith prayer area and a memorial to those who died on September 11th. But all of that probably will not sway those who insist all of this is just too close to sacred ground. Ron Allen, NBC News, New York.