

THE REAL DEAL

Judge Dismisses Ex-Firefighter's Case Against Ground Zero-Area Mosque

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By Candace Taylor



Sharif El-Gamal and Park51 rendering (building source: SOMA Architects)

In what appears to be the last legal challenge to the project, a Manhattan judge has dismissed a lawsuit by former New York City firefighter Timothy Brown who is trying to halt the construction of the Park51 Islamic community center near Ground Zero by overturning a decision by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to deny landmark status to a 150-year-old building on the Park Place site.

According to the New York Times, the building, damaged in the attacks of Sept. 11, was once home to a Burlington Coat Factory store.

Justice Paul Feinman termed Brown "an individual with a strong interest in preservation of the building," but failed to see that he had any special legal standing in the case.

Sharif El-Gamal, the center's developer, admitted that despite the legal victory, the center faces other issues. Gamal has not yet raised a the \$100 million necessary for construction.

Adam Leitman Bailey, who represented Gamal in the case, called the decision "a victory for America." He said: "Despite the tempest of religious hatred, the judge flexed our Constitution's muscles enforcing the very bedrock of our democracy." [NYT]