



Council on American-Islamic Relations Minnesota Chapter
2511 East Franklin Avenue, Suite 100 Minneapolis, MN 55406
Office 612.206.3360 Fax 612.206.3361
www.cairmn.com

Mayor Rob Rafferty,
Councilmember Tony Cavegn,
Councilmember Chris Lyden,
Councilmember Michael Ruhland,
Councilmember Dale Stoesz

Cc:
USAO Andy Lugar,
MN Attorney General Keith Ellison,
Commissioner Lucero, MN Department of Human Rights,
Governor Tim Walz

Dear Mayor Rafferty and Council Members,

I am writing to you on behalf of CAIR-Minnesota regarding the proposed Madinah Lakes project in Lino Lakes. This letter is also being sent to prominent state and federal officials to ensure comprehensive oversight and support for a fair and lawful consideration of this development.

The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) protects individuals, houses of worship, and other religious institutions from discrimination in zoning and landmarking laws. It is imperative to recall that any action that seems to disproportionately affect religious groups may lead to significant legal scrutiny under this act.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a concerning trend related to the Madinah Lakes project. Even before the submission of its formal application, there have been discussions within the city about imposing a moratorium specifically timed with this development's proposal. Moreover, recent public comments and testimonies have demonstrated a disturbing Islamophobic sentiment aimed at halting this Muslim-friendly development.

Our experience has shown that groups opposing mosques and similar developments often employ tactics that mask their true intentions behind purported concerns related to traffic, water, and other planning-related issues. These matters are typically addressed adequately in the planning process by trained staff who apply uniform codes and processes to ensure impartial treatment for all applicants. The fact that previous developers did not face this level of opposition, or the threat of a moratorium clearly highlights the discriminatory nature of the challenges facing the Madinah Lakes project.

Adding to this, the history of redlining in our nation reveals a longstanding pattern of opposing developments that bring diversity to communities. This practice not only violates the spirit of inclusivity but also perpetuates economic and social segregation. It is concerning that tactics resembling historical redlining might be at play, where the opposition appears driven by the desire to exclude Muslim residents from integrating into Lino Lakes. Importantly, the proposed Madinah Lakes welcomes anyone to be part of its development, emphasizing its commitment to inclusivity and community integration.

Our organization has successfully challenged similar discriminatory actions in other Minnesota cities, such as St. Anthony, Castle Rock Township, St. Cloud, and Chisago County. It is crucial to note that all legal

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efforts against such discriminatory practices have been victorious, emphasizing the unlawfulness of opposing developments based on religious affiliations.

The proposed moratorium and any discriminatory practices not only contravene RLUIPA but could potentially expose the city to unnecessary legal and financial consequences. We urge Lino Lakes to adhere strictly to federal and state laws, ensuring that the Madinah Lakes project is treated equitably and without prejudice.

Zoning has long been used as a tool to keep out people that look different, speak other languages, and follow different faiths: Irish Catholics, Jews, the Chinese, and of course, African Americans in the post-slavery era. That tradition is alive and well today.

We are committed to supporting a fair process and are closely monitoring this situation with the assistance of the U.S. Federal Attorney's Office in Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, and the Governor's office.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your support in upholding the law and ensuring that Lino Lakes remains a community that values diversity and inclusivity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jaylani Hussein", with a blue ink smudge or stamp below it.

Jaylani Hussein,
Executive Director
CAIR-Minnesota

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