

Habitat Halton still trying to find site for home

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

The Champion

Attempts to find a piece of local land on which to build a Habitat for Humanity home haven't yet succeeded, despite the efforts of volunteers who have been scouring Milton for the past several months.

"We're still looking for property. It's not going as well as we'd hoped," said Susan Goetz, Habitat for Humanity Halton's board vice-chair. "Land is scarce up there (in Milton)."

Earlier this year, Habitat for Humanity Halton and the Milton Affordable Housing Coalition decided to team up to build the house. Since then, attempts to find the land have failed, Ms Goetz said.

But, she said, she's not discouraged.

"It just takes time and effort to raise awareness of the need. There's a lot of criteria to meet to find the right location."

Ms Goetz said Habitat Halton is currently working with the Town to see if there's a property the Town owns that it may be disposing of.

But so far, nothing has come to fruition, she said.

A meeting for families interested in applying for a Habitat house was held Thursday night, but nobody showed up.

Ms Goetz said she thinks that's because it was the first meeting of the sort that has been held locally, and it takes a while to get information out. She said the next meeting will be held in a downtown Milton location rather than at the Milton Community Resource Centre, where the first one was held. That should draw people out, she said.

This hasn't affected her firm belief that there are many needy families in Milton, she said, nor has it caused her to doubt the feasibility of building a house by next year.

"I'm positive we'll be able to do it next year," she said.

Ms Goetz said the Milton community has rallied around the cause, and offered to volunteer — but land has to be found first.

"We need people to come forward who own land and are willing to donate it or (sell it to us) at a good price," Ms Goetz said. "As soon as we find a piece of land, we can really start fundraising."

Ms Goetz said Habitat Halton still needs some volunteers to serve on committees.

Habitat For Humanity is an international non-profit organization that gathers volunteers and partners them with families-in-need to build homes. Their goal is to build them simple, affordable housing.

Families chosen to benefit from Habitat for Humanity work alongside volunteers to build their home. In fact, they must contribute 500 hours of volunteer time toward its construction.

And the homes aren't free. The families purchase them at a lower-than-market-value cost, and pay a no-interest, no-profit mortgage.

Habitat for Humanity is able to offer the houses at a low price because the building materials are donated and there's no charge for the labour.

Wendy Schau, chair of Milton Affordable Housing Coalition, said she's still hopeful the house will be built, mentioning a piece of land that's currently being looked into as a possible site for the house.

The location of the site is very important, she said, because the family chosen to live in the home has to be close to amenities.

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House at Martin and Steeles soon to move to Peru

By **JASON MISNER**

The Champion

Ruth Vella simply calls it 'The Mess'.

Referring next door to the .6-acre property at the southwest corner of Martin Street and Steeles Avenue, she said she's had to watch over the last three years an abandoned house on the site become the target of vandals and a late-night hangout for kids.

The windows have been smashed and litter strewn around the grassy site, she said.

"I've called the police quite a few times," Ms Vella said from her home. "I've called the Town and said I wanted the windows boarded up."

But word has come — finally — that the house is being moved to a new site on Peru Road.

Ms Vella is thrilled by that, although issues still linger, namely what will become of the soon-to-be-vacant property and who will clean it up once the house has been moved.

"I'm concerned about the mess being left behind," she said, noting there's a crumbled foundation on the site.

Troy Drummond, Milton's coordinator, building administration and zoning, said all of the proper permits have been issued for the house to be hauled away.

There was a longer-than-expected delay in getting the proper permits to move it to a site on Peru Road because the area is in a flood plain near Sixteen Mile Creek. Conservation Halton had to be consulted to ensure a new foundation could be properly built.

Once technical requirements were met, a permit was issued September 18 to move the house. Mr. Drummond said on October 22, the Town was informed the house would be moved.

But it wasn't, and the movers, from what he understands, are waiting for the best day to do that.

"I know the owner wanted it moved a while ago," Mr. Drummond said.

The site is zoned highway commercial, which means a restaurant or gas station is allowed.

At one point, the site was close to being home to a Kentucky Fried Chicken, but concerns about how many buildings could fit on the site scuttled the deal, said Ward 2 Councillor Art Melanson.

He said he's glad to see the house is on the brink of being moved and hopes the corner lot is used wisely.

He said it's a high-profile site, not far from the downtown.

"I think it will move very quickly," he said, noting he'd like to see a restaurant open on site.

Richard Hierman, an agent with Re/Max who's attempting to sell the property, said interest has been expressed from fast-food outlets, among others.

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