



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

The owner of two lots located just north of the public library/leisure complex near downtown Stouffville can't put homes on them because they don't have road access, the town says.

Town studying traffic, park plan in library neighbourhood

Owner can't build homes on land-locked lots

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Mario Greco has been paying taxes on two lots he can't do anything with and he wants the town to stop dragging its heels and open the road that's right in front of his land.

Mr. Greco, owner of the former Da Classic Scoop on Main Street and Hwy. 48, purchased two adjoining 50-by-100-foot residentially-zoned lots fronting onto Franklin Street about 25 years ago with the intention of building a pair of homes on them for himself and his brother.

DA CLASSIC SCOOP

When Mr. Greco purchased the properties, he knew they were land-locked as Franklin Street was not a public roadway.

About 15 years ago, Mr. Greco said he asked the town to unlock them, but was told it was premature because there was no road.

Ten years ago, when the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library and Lebovic Leisure Centre were constructed, he said he asked the town, once again, to open the road, which now ran parallel to the facility's driveway. Mr. Greco said the town was unresponsive to the request.

He asked again in 2008.

Various discussions have taken place between the two parties over the past three

years, but the situation remains unchanged — the two lots are locked.

"If I pay for residential lots ... I should have some sort of entrance to my lots," Mr. Greco told *The Sun-Tribune*. "In the meantime, there's two little lots, we're paying \$1,900 and change in tax a year and we've got nothing on it. I don't know what's fair."

Mr. Greco and his real estate broker, Tony Galletta, made another appeal to council to unlock the properties last month.

"Our objective this evening is to emphasize our willingness to work hand-in-hand with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and do what is necessary to assist with the process required to grant the opportunity for development," Mr. Galletta told councillors.

However, there are three things, which have nothing to do with Mr. Greco, that need to take place before council can decide if it wants to open Franklin Street or leave it closed.

The first is conducting a traffic study in the area, now that Park Drive between Burkholder Street and Hoover Park Drive is open.

Approved in the 2011 budget, it's expected to be complete this spring or summer.

Another piece of the puzzle is the Memorial Park master plan. The status of Burkholder Street between Park Drive and the access road to 30 Burkholder St., which is the library

and leisure centre, has to be determined.

"A decision needs to be made as to whether this portion of Burkholder Street should be closed and incorporated into the park," according to Andrew McNeely, director of planning and building services for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, who noted the traffic study will help make this decision.

The clear-cutting angered some of his neighbours, in particular Raimée Stevens, who purchased his Russel Avenue home four years ago because of the treed lots, which backed onto his property.

Public consultations on the park's master plan are also expected to take place this year.

It is then up to council to decide if the road will be opened or remain closed, according to Mr. McNeely.

"The years are going by. We don't get any younger. How much longer are we going to wait?" Mr. Greco said.

Until this past September, the lots remained in their natural state — tree and brush covered. That is, until Mr. Greco decid-

ed to clear-cut them in anticipation of building the homes.

"The owner has consistently been advised that the properties in question do not front onto a public road and as such, they are currently not eligible for building permits," Mr. McNeely said.

The clear-cutting angered some of his neighbours, in particular Raimée Stevens, who purchased his Russel Avenue home four years ago because of the treed lots, which backed onto his property.

"As well as just being nice to look at and watch all of the birds, rabbits, squirrels etc., it was also a natural barrier to the traffic and noise on the other side," he said. "(Now) I'm wide open to everything, especially the wind."

Mr. Greco did nothing illegal and admitted to the councillors last month he did not consult his neighbours because he did not think it would matter to them.

"It was just a shame," Councillor Rob Hargrave told *The Sun-Tribune*.

Although a decision could be made by council sometime this year regarding the opening of the road, Mr. Greco does not know what his next step is.

"I hope they do consider giving us the right-of-way sooner, rather than later. It's been a real drag," Mr. Greco said.



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