

Syosset mobile home residents say they've been offered 'pittance' to move

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Theresa Walch, 52, seen here with her son, Wolfgang Kovac, 20, on Friday, August 28, 2015, has been a resident of a Syosset mobile home park for 20 years. The property has been coveted by developers for almost a decade and many residents have been evicted and had their homes destroyed in the process. (Credit: Danielle Finkelstein)

After nearly eight years fighting eviction, the remaining residents of the Syosset Mobile Home Park may have run out of time and

options to stay in their homes.

A judge recently authorized eviction warrants, and the residents' Mineola attorney, John McGrath, said his clients likely have exhausted their appeals.

Resident Robert Carman fears that with his only income being \$1,300 monthly federal disability, he'll end up homeless.

"I'd literally be living on Jericho Turnpike in a tent," Carman, 54, said as he sat in his living room next to the oxygen machine he needs for severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The park's owner, Uniondale-based STP Associates LLC, started eviction proceedings in 2007 to make way for a development that a company spokeswoman at the time said was to include condominiums, rental apartments and a commercial area.

Larry Rush, one of the principals of STP, declined to comment on the evictions or on the company's plans for the 5-acre site. The other principal for STP, Jerome Genova, father of Oyster Bay Town attorney Leonard Genova, a past co-owner of the park, could not be reached for comment. advertisement | [advertise on newsday](#)

Jeffrey Miller, an attorney for STP, declined to comment at length, but said, "It's been years and years of litigation, and we've won at each step."

Residents say that for the first time, STP has offered them money to leave. But they say the offer -- \$5,000 if they agree to leave by Sept. 19, nothing if they do not vacate by mid-October -- is a pittance compared to the cost of housing almost anywhere on Long Island and doesn't reimburse them for their homes. Residents rent the land but most own their homes, many of which lack wheels or are too old and unstable to move, residents say.

"Five thousand dollars would barely cover moving expenses and move to where?" said Debbie St. Clair, 62, who is disabled because of spinal and other injuries, the result of an auto accident. "How can I accept an offer if I have no place to go?"

Theresa Walch, 52, who lives there with her two children, said she paid \$75,000 for her home in 1999 and since then has spent \$50,000 on additions, a carport and a new roof.

"Treat me like a human being," she said. "Give me fair market value and find places for the disabled people. They're making millions off the backs of the poor."

The mobile homes are an island of affordability in Syosset, where, according to Census Bureau estimates, the median home value is more than \$600,000.

Syosset is the last mobile home park in Nassau County, according to state data, and the number of parks is decreasing Islandwide. A developer last year began evicting residents of a North Amityville mobile home park to build housing and retail space. Walch said there were about 200 residents at the Syosset park before the eviction attempts began. Now about 20 remain, she said. The tree-shaded park, set back behind a parking lot off Jericho Turnpike, is dotted with plots of grass and weeds where residents say homes were demolished once occupants moved. Despite her dwindling chances of legal victory, Walch said she will continue to fight.

Others, like Andy Fromia, 61, are resigned to leaving.

Fromia, who has Stage Four lymphoma and prostate cancer, said: "It gets tiresome living with a cloud over your future. I don't know how many years I have left. I want to put this behind me."

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