

St. Petersburg Resident Is Sued for \$75,000 for Building Playground

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A resident from St. Petersburg is being sued for millions to stop the construction of a store in a local park, where she instead campaigned to build a children's playground.

A retail company is suing an activist from St. Petersburg who led a neighborhood campaign to stop the construction of a store in a local park and helped build a children's playground there instead, a news report said.

Retail company Yelisei na Nauki is seeking more than 3 million rubles (\$75,000) in damages from local resident Oksana Korolyova, the city's Delovoi Peterburg business newspaper reported Friday.

The sum is more than the average Russian would earn in about 10 years, according to data from Russia's State Statistics Service.

The dispute began last year when Yelisei na Nauki announced plans to build a store in the

courtyard of an apartment block on Prospekt Nauki to provide "doorstep access" to its products, after winning the lease to the plot under a city tender four years earlier.

But local residents argued they were already being served by a dozen or so similar stores dotting their neighborhood, and said they should have a voice in determining the use of public land outside the building.

Things heated up when residents built a children's playground on the land, which was later torn down by Yelisei and replaced with a concrete wall blocking access to the site, the report said.

Marat Oganessian, deputy governor of St. Petersburg in charge of construction, visited the disputed plot to assure residents that no stores would be built there, and shortly afterward the city revoked the retail company's building permit, Delovoi Peterburg reported.

If the retail company wins its lawsuit, this would mark the first case of a business successfully suing community activists for campaigning to protect their neighborhood, the report said.

Yelisei na Nauki is registered as a separate company, along with a range of other Yelisei stores named after the streets on which they are located, the report said. But in a murky ownership structure, owners of individual Yelisei stores also hold shares in other stores within the chain, Delovoi Peterburg reported.

This story has been corrected. An earlier version said that the sum of the lawsuit was more than the average Russian would earn in about 100 years.

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