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City of Columbus Secures Emergency Order to Board Up West Side Apartment Building

Nine-unit building the scene of housing code violations, rampant drug trafficking, gang activity, gun violence, burglary, homicide and drug overdoses

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus secured an emergency court order to vacate and shutter a notorious west side apartment building that has been under investigation by the Columbus Division of Police’s narcotics division and gang unit since 2017. Officers responded to the premises over 100 times in the last two years for incidents ranging from theft, burglary, menacing, domestic violence and assault to reports of shots fired, wanted fugitives onsite, gang activity, the sale, purchase and use of heavy narcotics, and drug overdoses.

City Attorney Klein filed a request for an *ex parte* temporary restraining order earlier today in the Franklin County Environmental Court to shut down [563 South Hague Avenue](#), which is located less than a half mile from the Hilltop Branch library and two schools. Due to the fact that not all of the tenants in the nine-unit building were engaged in criminal activity, the board-up will take place on Friday, August 10, and relocation specialists from the City and Maryhaven will be onsite to assist lawful residents in finding new accommodations.

“Shutting down an entire apartment building may seem like an extreme measure but there were extreme circumstances in this case,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. “This property was a danger to the lawful residents who lived there as well as to the surrounding community. It was the scene of a homicide, drug overdoses, trafficking in black tar heroin and crack cocaine, gang activity and repeated gun violence.”

According to court documents, Columbus Police began investigating the property last year on suspicion of illegal narcotics being sold from the premises. On April 27, 2017, officers responded to the premises after a victim who lived in one of the apartment units reported that individuals seeking narcotics chased him into his apartment and broke down his door.

On May 1, 2017, police responded to the premises and discovered the body of a homicide victim.

On August 18, 2017, Columbus Fire Medics responded to an overdose at the premises and had to administer three doses of Narcan to the overdose victim, who was subsequently transported to a nearby hospital.

On September 18, 2017, police responded to a domestic dispute involving a knife. The caller also reported that narcotics were involved. A month later, police were dispatched to the premises on

a report of shots fired.

On November 3, 2017, police responded to a report that a known drug dealer was at the premises waving around a firearm and “threatening to shoot up the building.”

On December 27, 2017, SWAT team members arrested a known gang associate who was wanted on federal warrants for weapons and narcotics violations, as well as an assault warrant out of Ross County.

On February 6 and again on February 16, 2018, police responded to reports of shots fired at the premises. Later that month, the gang unit and narcotics detectives executed a search warrant at one of the apartment units and seized 11 grams of suspected heroin, three grams of crack cocaine, two rifles, a .9mm handgun, 21 rounds of ammunition and two gun magazines.

After executing the search warrant, detectives sent warning notification letters via certified mail to the building owner, Jackson Jones LLC, and the property management company, Heart & Home Realty. Both letters were signed as received, and the property manager indicated to police officials that an eviction process would take place. However, police continued to be dispatched to the premises repeatedly.

On May 3, 2018, police responded to the premises after a 911 caller reported that there were individuals with a gun outside of her apartment “trying to kill her.” Later that month, officers responded to a report of an intoxicated individual with a brick was breaking into an apartment.

On June 29, 2018, officers responded to a caller stating that her “ex” had assaulted her. Upon arrival, officers observed the victim had visible injuries and appeared very distraught. After interviewing all parties, officers arrested the suspect for domestic violence and assault. While on scene for this incident, officers observed an individual known to have outstanding warrants for his arrest. An arrest and subsequent search of his person yielded four hypodermic syringes and two crack pipes.

Officers have continued to make arrests for drug-related offenses throughout the summer and last month arrested a known individual with four felony warrants and another individual with a felony warrant for safecracking who admitted to the arresting officers that he was at the apartment building to purchase drugs.

“This apartment building was a persistent hazard to the community as tenants seemed to come and go but the property remained an epicenter for serious criminal activity,” said Assistant City Attorney Zachary Gwin. “Our only option at this point was to go to court and shut it down.”

If the property is ultimately declared to be a statutorily defined public nuisance, state law grants the court authority to order the premises shut down for up to one year. The owner also would be permanently enjoined from “conducting, maintaining, using, occupying, or in any way permitting” a public nuisance anywhere else in Franklin County, Ohio.

In order to secure closure of the property, Gwin, who is the Zone Initiative Attorney assigned to the west side of Columbus, is seeking to prove that the owner and property manager are guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that they “knew of, participated in, or acquiesced to the activity which constituted the nuisance” as prescribed by [Chapter 3767](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.