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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City Shuts Down West Side Drug House

Property called a 'stark danger' to the community and police officers

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus secured an emergency court order to vacate and shutter a west side property that has served as a hub for crack-cocaine and heroin trafficking just blocks from a public high school. It is the first in what is anticipated to be several drug houses the city will be seeking to shut down this year.

City Attorney Klein's office filed a request for an *ex parte* temporary restraining order in the Franklin County Environmental Court to board up [333 South Hague Avenue](#), which is located roughly three blocks from West High School. The owner of record is Christopher F. Smith of Columbus.

“We are committed to a holistic approach in addressing the drug epidemic that is plaguing not only our city but communities across the country,” said City Attorney Zach Klein. “This case is a good example where community input, critical police responsiveness, and the legal system all come together to address an imminent danger.”

Columbus Police began investigating the property due to community complaints of illegal activity several months ago. Narcotics detectives made three covert purchases of crack-cocaine at the premises in October and November 2017.

A search warrant was executed on November 9, 2017. Police officials formally notified the owner, Mr. Smith, via certified mail about the drug violations occurring at the property on November 15, 2017. The letter also informed him of his duty to evict and abate the nuisance.

According to court documents, Mr. Smith had filed an eviction action regarding the property on February 27, 2017 but allowed the writ to expire in May without following through on it. No other eviction action has been filed by him since.

Narcotics detectives made four more covert purchases of crack-cocaine at the premises earlier this month.

They then executed another search warrant on January 16, 2018 and found:

- A Glock 23 semi-automatic weapon, a pistol, a gun magazine and live 40 caliber rounds
- 16.06 grams of heroin
- 21.03 grams of crack-cocaine
- Nine people inside, three of whom were arrested for felonious possession of drugs

“We commend the court for weighing the evidence presented today and agreeing with our assessment that the circumstances of this case warranted an emergency board up order,” said Assistant City Attorney Kristen Dickerson.

In filing a civil motion for injunctive relief along with the TRO request, Dickerson, who is the Zone Initiative Attorney assigned to the west side of Columbus, is seeking to prove that Mr. Smith is guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that he, as owner of the premises, “knew of, participated in, or acquiesced to the activity which constituted the nuisance” as prescribed by [Chapter 3767](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

The hearing for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. on February 5, 2018.

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 following the permanent injunction hearing.

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