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City Attorney Klein Joins Columbus Leaders to Share Vision for How City Addresses Dangerous, Vacant and Nuisance Properties

Announces expanded resources and rebranded team leading city's legal response to properties plagued by drugs, violence or unsafe conditions

COLUMBUS, OH— Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein joined city officials today to announce the rebrand and expansion of the Zone Initiative, a specialized team within the City Attorney's Office that works closely with the Division of Police, various city departments and community members to address dozens of nuisance properties like drug houses, violent bars, and unsafe hotels and apartment complexes each year. As part of the announcement, City Attorney Klein unveiled a new name for the division, now known as the [Property Action Team](#).

“As City Attorney, I've made it a priority to be aggressive about going after drug houses, violent bars, and other problem properties that threaten public safety, and we've been historically successful at getting these properties shut down or back on the right track,” said **Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein**. “As Columbus grows, it's important that we have a clear vision for the future that continues the strong relationship we have with the Division of Police, Code Enforcement all of our city and community partners who are instrumental in the work to make our neighborhoods safer.”

City Attorney Klein also announced several other key changes already underway, including:

- The hiring of an additional Property Action Team attorney assigned to the city's newly created police zone;
- Additional social workers to better assess the needs of communities impacted by blight and nuisance properties;
- Plans to release a report tracking the city's progress in identifying and addressing problem properties over the next year;
- Expanded educational materials, including contact sheets placed in every police substation, webpage enhancements, a social media PSA campaign and informational video to raise awareness of PAT and to encourage Columbus residents to report problem properties to the city.

Since 2018, the Property Action Team has filed nearly 250 cases in Environmental Court for criminal activity at properties across the city, including against 136 drug houses, 30 bars and illegal after hours clubs, 18 area hotels and more than 50 other businesses. In addition, the city has filed more than 3,500 cases for code violations, secured millions of dollars in fines against problem landlords and property owners, and objected to 69 liquor permit renewals.

The team has also worked with strategic partners to fight crime and blight by reducing the number of vacant and abandoned building in the city, with an 85 percent decline in the number of vacant buildings rated in poor condition in recent years. The team has also worked to keep elderly residents in their homes with funding to complete needed repairs to fix code violations.

“Whenever we go in and take action against a property, we see results—decreases across the board in violent crime, police calls for service and overdoses. It’s a winning formula that’s a proven deterrent to crime,” said **Steve Dunbar, the lead attorney on the Property Action Team.** “Expanding resources will only broaden our reach and improve public safety in neighborhoods across Columbus.”

Here is what other Columbus leaders are saying about the city’s efforts to take on problem properties:

“Our neighbors deserve nothing less than a safe place to raise their families and earn an honest living – a strong social fabric that both reflects and lifts up their values. We’re banding together across multiple departments to take on nuisance properties – and we’ve already seen some impressive results,” said **Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther.**

“When the City goes in and shuts down a drug house or takes problem landlords or owners of dangerous businesses to court, we get results. Disrupting the flow of drugs into our streets, shutting down or revoking liquor licenses of violent establishments and drawing a line in the sand on deplorable living conditions have a real, positive effect on the quality of life in our neighborhoods,” said **Councilmember Shayla Favor.**