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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, October 17, 2018  
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# West Side Story: City Attorney Shuts Down Another Drug House

*Hilltop property was the scene of cocaine, heroin trafficking, machete and glock-wielding drug dealers*

**COLUMBUS, OH**—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus secured an emergency court order to immediately vacate and shutter a west side property that was used as a drug dealing hub since at least mid-2017, prompting 35 police runs for incidents including narcotics complaints, burglary, weapons violations, grand theft auto and domestic violence. It is the 16<sup>th</sup> drug house the city has shut down this year, nine of which have been on the west side.

City Attorney Klein filed a request for an *ex parte* temporary restraining order earlier today in the Franklin County Environmental Court to shut down [271 South Oakley Avenue](#), which is located in a residential neighborhood that includes Highland Elementary School. The owner of record is listed as the Gahanna-based company MEK Investments, which also is subject to an open code violation case.

**“While the west side continues to be hit hard by the drug epidemic, it takes a true community-wide commitment to fight the long, difficult battle against such an intractable societal problem,”** said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“From recently securing close to three million dollars in new federal funding for local opioid intervention programs to continuing to file these public nuisance lawsuits, the City Attorney’s office is always ready and willing to help do our part.”**

According to court documents, Columbus Police began investigating the property earlier this year on suspicion of illegal narcotics being sold from the premises. Detectives conducted covert purchases of crack cocaine and heroin, leading to the Investigative Tactical Unit raiding the premises in mid-May. Along with seizing drugs and cash, officers arrested three individuals, two for parole violations and illegally carrying concealed weapons, and one for felony possession of crack cocaine.

Police officials subsequently notified the owner via certified letter of the illegal nuisance drug activity occurring at the property.

One week later, officers responded to a robbery at the premises and encountered two female victims who stated that their drug dealer pulled a machete on them and robbed them in retaliation after they had stolen \$50 worth of drugs from him earlier. Two days after that incident, police responded to a call of a suspect trying to break into the premises and arrested a man who had gained entry through a window.

In mid-August, an attorney representing MEK Investments informed detectives that the tenant of the property “was successfully evicted from the [p]remises.” However, police conducted two more covert purchases of crack cocaine from the house last week, leading to another raid. Officers seized three glock handguns, ammunition, and over \$6000 in cash, heroin, cocaine and pills.

**“With drug dealers wielding machetes and fully-loaded glocks while selling potentially lethal narcotics, this property posed a serious danger to the surrounding area,” said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin. “We’re grateful the judge granted our board-up request and want to thank the community and the Columbus Police Division for helping build this case given the inherent dangers involved in the drug trafficking trade.”**

A hearing for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief is scheduled for Monday, October 29, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.

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 is 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.

A copy of the [court’s order](#) is available online.