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City Attorney Secures Emergency Order to Board Up West Side Drug ‘Fortress’

Heavily fortified property was target of an ongoing police investigation into alleged heroin, fentanyl trafficking

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 had been under covert police investigation since 2017. The property reportedly was heavily fortified with steel reinforced security doors, plexiglass windows equipped with chicken wire and security bars, a “large, vicious dog,” and several handguns and rifles. It is the 14th drug house the city has shut down this year, half 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 [478 South Harris Avenue](#), which is located within a half-mile radius of the Hilltop Branch Library, Burroughs Elementary School and St. Mary Magdalene School. It also is two blocks away from the [crime-plagued apartment building](#) the city shut down in August and just down the street from another [drug house](#) that was boarded up in March.

“The fact that crack cocaine and heroin was being dealt from three different locations—all within a couple of blocks of each other—just reinforces how dire the drug epidemic is in our community,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“We especially need to commend the Columbus Division of Police for conducting all of these dangerous, overlapping investigations, while also acknowledging society’s need to diminish the drug supply by addressing the demand.”**

According to court documents, Columbus Police began investigating the property early last year on suspicion of illegal narcotics being sold from the premises. Detectives conducted several covert purchases of heroin from a 40-year-old white male occupant of the premises, initially identified only as “Dale.” On at least one occasion, this individual alleged that the heroin he was selling “had been mixed with fentanyl.”

Police subsequently raided the premises, seizing heroin, crack cocaine, mushrooms, suboxone, and over \$2500 in cash. After the second raid, police officials notified the owner at the time, Karen C. Adams, via certified letter of the illegal nuisance drug activity occurring at her property. According to court records, Adams executed a quit claim deed three days after receiving the letter, transferring ownership of the property to her tenant, Dale Pine, Jr.

The illegal drug activity continued as detectives obtained several more covert purchases of heroin from Pine at the premises, including last month.

“If the guy allegedly dealing drugs from the premises was concerned enough to heavily fortify the property, one can only imagine how much of a threat it must have been to the surrounding area,” said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin. “We’re pleased the judge granted our board-up request and hope that shutting this place down will provide some relief to all the law-abiding residents who live nearby.”

A hearing for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief is scheduled for Thursday, October 11, 2018 at 9:00 a.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, in addition to dealing drugs, is guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that he “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.