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City of Columbus Shuts Down Second Drug House in Two Weeks (and Fifth in Two Years) on Same West Side Street

Property on South Oakley Avenue was linked to the supply and distribution of crack cocaine in both Franklin and Delaware Counties

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus secured an emergency court order to board-up a west side residence that was under surveillance by both the Columbus Division of Police and the Delaware County Sheriff's Office for suspected drug trafficking. Law enforcement authorities conducted several undercover purchases of crack cocaine from the premises and were granted four search warrants related to their months-long investigation. At one point, so much illegal narcotics were being sold from the premises that officers were informed by a disappointed customer that the dealer had run out crack cocaine.

Immediately after the Franklin County Environmental Court granted City Attorney Klein's motion for an *ex parte* temporary restraining order this afternoon, officers from the Drug Enforcement Bureau's Investigative Tactical (INTAC) Unit raided [543 South Oakley Avenue](#) and enforced the court's order to board up the premises. It's the fifth property on Oakley that the City Attorney has shut down since 2018, including [one](#) less than a block away just two weeks ago.

“Sadly, South Oakley Avenue has become a microcosm of the drug epidemic our community is fighting every day,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. “More than half the drug houses we shut down last year were located on the west side and this is the fifth house on this street alone that we’ve boarded up since 2018. This case also shows the tentacles that these drug operations have, extending from a west side neighborhood up into Delaware County.”

According to court documents, Columbus Police observed several narcotics users and prostitutes entering and exiting the premises last spring. On June 24, 2019 narcotics detectives from the Drug Enforcement Bureau INTACT Unit conducted a covert purchase of crack cocaine. The following day, detectives requested, and were granted, a court-ordered search warrant for the premises.

On July 29, 2019 narcotics detectives conducted a covert purchase of crack cocaine from the premises. The following day, detectives received another search warrant.

On July 31 and, again, on August 19, 2019 detectives conducted two more covert purchases of

crack cocaine from the premises.

On August 20, 2019 detectives were granted a third search warrant.

On September 10, 2019 officers encountered a female suspect leaving the premises and determined she had outstanding warrants for her arrest.

On September 30, 2019 INTAC detectives sent the property owner a certified letter notifying him of the criminal nuisance activity occurring at the premises and explaining his legal obligation to abate the conditions. The letter was signed as received.

On December 23, 2019 detectives from the Delaware County Sheriff's Office Drug Task Force began surveillance of the premises in connection to information they received about drug trafficking in Delaware County. The detectives noted "substantial traffic in and out" of the property.

Persistent activity connected with drug trafficking continued. On January 9, 2020 Columbus Police narcotics detectives executed a search warrant, seizing crack cocaine.

"Our legal cases are built by working closely with law enforcement and the community, and I can attest that we are all well attuned to the plight of South Oakley Avenue," said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin. "We especially want to thank the Drug Enforcement Bureau's INTAC Unit for their efforts and hope this latest court ruling will provide some relief to the neighborhood."

A hearing for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief against the property owner is scheduled for Monday, February 3, 2020 at 1:30 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 Police Zone Three on 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 [order](#) is available online.