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City of Columbus Shuts Down First Drug House of the New Year

West side property was the scene of nearly a dozen drug overdoses, including one fatality last month

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 property that was a target of investigation by both the Columbus Division of Police and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office for suspected drug trafficking, including illegal sales of black tar heroin, crack cocaine, and potentially lethal doses of fentanyl. It is the first drug-related nuisance property the City Attorney's office has shut down this year after obtaining court injunctions to board-up 18 in 2019, 10 of which were located on the city's west side.

Today's hearing also comes on the heels of a Franklin County Coroner's [report](#) showing overdose deaths were up 15 percent in the first nine months of 2019 compared to the same time period the previous year.

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 Investigative/Tactical Unit raided [628 South Oakley Avenue](#) and enforced the court's order to board up the premises. It's the fourth property on Oakley that the City Attorney has shut down since 2018.

“The Franklin County Coroner’s most recent report indicating overdose deaths were up 15 percent last year shows how critical our fight against addiction is,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. “Every facet of our community needs to be engaged in battling the drug epidemic, and we’ll continue to be aggressive in shutting down these dangerous drug operations while also emphasizing the critical need to address and treat the underlying causes of addiction.”

According to court documents, Columbus Police have responded to the premises over 30 times in the last two years, mostly for drug-related complaints, including six overdoses in 2018 and five in 2019. The Franklin County Sheriff's Office also conducted several covert purchases of black tar heroin, crack cocaine, and fentanyl from the premises, resulting in a search warrant that turned up cash and drugs.

On August 7, 2019, Columbus Police narcotics detectives sent a certified letter to the owner of the property to inform him of the illegal nuisance activities occurring at the premises and advised him of his legal responsibility to abate the conditions. The letter was signed as received.

On August 10, 2019 officers confiscated methamphetamine, drug paraphernalia, a scale, stolen

credit cards, live .38 caliber ammunition, and a GLB38 Cobra pistol from individuals associated with the premises.

On October 12, 2019 police and paramedics were called to the premises on report of an overdose. The victim was administered narcan and treated at the scene.

On October 13, 2019 police were dispatched to the premises on report of a domestic violence incident. Five days later, officers were dispatched again on report of another domestic dispute, this time involving an individual with active arrest warrants.

On November 18, 2019, narcotics detectives conducted a covert purchase of crack cocaine from the premises.

On December 18, 2019 police and paramedics responded to the premises on report of a drug overdose. The victim was found in very critical condition and transported to Doctors Hospital West before being pronounced deceased. Thirteen other individuals were found inside the premises, which is 800 square feet, at the time of the incident.

“If we wanted to identify one of the epicenters of the drug epidemic, we’d be hard-pressed to find a place more impacted than South Oakley Avenue,” said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin. “More than half the drug houses we shut down last year were located on the west side and this is the fourth house on this street alone that we’ve boarded up since 2018.”

A hearing for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief against the property owner is scheduled for Friday, January 17, 2020 at 12:00 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 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.