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City Files Lawsuit to Help Improve Dangerous, Unsanitary Living Conditions for Hundreds of Residents at Southpark Apartments

City Attorney Klein says filing is a step in the right direction for complex that has been plagued by criminal activity and deplorable conditions for residents

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today announced his office has filed a lawsuit to declare Southpark Apartments a public nuisance, and to require the owners to improve the quality of life for residents at the 356 unit apartment complex located in south Franklinton. The Southpark Apartment complex is among the largest affordable housing developments in Columbus and has been plagued by criminal activity and unsafe and unsanitary living conditions, with over 800 calls for police service and some 200 documented code violations in recent years.

“Everyone deserves a safe, clean place to live, but the fact is that hundreds of Columbus residents are denied those basic rights through no fault of their own due to ongoing crime and deplorable living conditions at Southpark,” said City Attorney Zach Klein. **“The City will continue to work with Southpark management to ensure a better, safer quality of life for tenants, and securing this court order would be a major win for residents and a step in the right direction.”**

According to court documents, CPD received more than 800 calls for service to the Southpark Apartments between Aug. 1, 2021 and July 21, 2022, including 179 disturbances, 49 stolen vehicles, 51 domestic violence incidents, 24 shots fired, 9 stabbings, 7 overdoses and other criminal activity.

CPD has raised concerns over the quality and operability of the complex’s security camera system, noting a number of deficiencies and requesting remote access to better monitor the premises for criminal activity.

In addition to the significant volume of calls for service, many tenants at Southpark are subjected to substandard, unsafe and unsanitary living conditions. A Nov. 2021 property inspection by the City’s Code Enforcement team identified approximately 200 code violations at the premises, including roach and rodent infestations, missing smoke detectors, inoperable fixtures and appliances, damaged ceilings, floors and walls, among other interior violations. Extensive exterior violations identified at Southpark include rotting balcony decking, broken windows, exposed wiring, mortar voids and units not secured to meet code standards.

For each violation, Southpark management was given a deadline for repair, however all initial deadlines have passed with minimal progress in addressing the issues, according to routine re-inspections by Code officials.

On April 7, 2022, the Columbus Department of Build and Zoning Services found a common stairwell at the property had deteriorated to the point that it was deemed dangerous to human life, resulting in four units being vacated. Owners have yet to address the issue and the units remain unoccupied.

As of April 20, 2022, Code has re-inspected 87 units on site, and more than 160 violations remain outstanding from the initial inspections in Nov. 2021, including roach and rodent infestation, damaged units, water leaks, unsanitary conditions, solid waste, inoperable appliances, water damage and other serious issues affecting the safety and quality of life for residents.

Additionally, on Apr. 26, 2022, Code Enforcement officers spoke to one tenant who said she had been instructed by property maintenance not to answer the door if Code Enforcement came to inspect the unit.

And as of June 1, 2022, of the units re-inspected, only 13 were deemed complaint while 80 still had active code violations.

“The health and safety of residents is our number one priority and the conditions at Southpark Apartments represent a significant hazard to the community. From the revolving door of criminal activity to units that are so unsafe and unsanitary they’re near uninhabitable,” said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin, who is the Zone Initiative attorney for the city’s west side. **“It’s important that the city steps in to ensure conditions improve.”**

The City Attorney’s Office has asked the court to order Southpark Apartment management to present a plan to bring the property into compliance with City Code and take steps to mitigate criminal activity.

Court documents on the Southpark Apartments are attached.

[Southpark Complaint Filed](#)

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