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City Shuts Down Multiple Drug Houses Owned by Former ‘Pill-Mill’ Doctor

The properties saw hundreds of police runs for narcotics trafficking, domestic violence, assaults, and two homicides, among other violent crimes

COLUMBUS—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus secured an emergency court order to board-up several troubled rental properties owned by Jose Villavicencio, the former German Village “pill-mill” doctor who was stripped of his medical license in 2012.

The properties were placed under receivership in 2019 as part of ongoing litigation in a wrongful death lawsuit filed against Villavicencio in 2013. The case is still pending in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. Yet, court records—including Villavicencio’s own testimony—indicate that Villavicencio and his associates continued to oversee properties by executing leases and collecting rent while the receivership has been in effect.

“Despite neither parties involved, Mr. Villavicencio nor the receiver, taking responsibility for neglecting these properties, our priority is to protect the health and safety of our neighborhoods,” Klein said. “Now that these locations are boarded up, we hope the court can sort out who is culpable, and we’ll do our part to make sure they’re held accountable.”

Villavicencio has a history of violations as a property owner. Including this latest case, the City of Columbus has filed nine civil and six criminal cases against Villavicencio and his companies. In 2016, the city obtained a permanent injunction prohibiting him from maintaining a nuisance anywhere in Franklin County, including the 21 properties owned in whole or in part by him at the time. In 2017, the City filed criminal charges against Villavicencio and he was ultimately sentenced to 178 days in jail. He also has been fined tens of thousands of dollars.

The following eight properties were ordered closed by Franklin County Environmental Court on Thursday and shuttered on Friday:

2-4 Reeb Avenue

According to court documents, Columbus police responded to this south side apartment building at least 19 times in the past year for a range of calls, including drug dealing complaints, domestic violence, robbery, burglary, and two recent homicides. Narcotics detectives also conducted four covert purchases of crack cocaine late last year after a suspected overdose victim informed police that drug dealers with “numerous firearms and surveillance cameras” were selling methamphetamine, fentanyl, and crack cocaine from the premises.

On December 19, 2020 police responded to a report of a homicide. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene. On February 5, 2021, police responded to another reported homicide and located three shooting victims. One victim was pronounced dead at the scene. The other was transported to a local hospital in critical condition. The third victim suffered an apparent gunshot wound to her face.

289-291 Brehl Avenue

Columbus police responded to this Franklinton duplex over 50 times in the last two years for calls that included drug trafficking, armed robbery, assault, multiple reports of shots fired, several domestic violence incidents, and a stabbing. A fatality late last year also was allegedly associated with the premises.

On December 16, 2020, police were dispatched after a lifeless body was found in a nearby alley. A source told investigators that a man had died in the basement of 289 Brehl Avenue and was found between a washer and dryer. The source allegedly had been asked by a drug dealer to help dispose of the body but refused to help—and later heard that the body had been “dumped in an alley.”

On January 7, 2021, officers executed a search warrant and found 10 individuals inside the residence along with 92 grams of fentanyl, two semi-automatic handguns, and an assault rifle. Seven more people tried to enter the premises after the officers had just completed the search warrant.

364-366 East Innis Avenue

On October 12, 2019, police were dispatched to this South Side duplex on report of a DOA. The victim was pronounced dead upon the officers’ arrival.

On August 7, 2020, patrol officers were flagged down by a victim who reported that she had been sexually assaulted at the premises.

On February 15, 2021, Columbus narcotics detectives conducted a covert purchase of crack cocaine.

629-631 South Wheatland Avenue

This West Side duplex first came to the attention of Columbus police in the summer of 2019 due to the high volume of drug activity and arrests in the area. Since September 2020, officers have responded to Shot Spotter alerts and other reports of shots fired six times. Narcotics detectives also conducted four undercover purchases of heroin and one purchase of crack cocaine from the premises this year.

On February 3, 2021, the Columbus police investigative/tactical (INTAC) unit executed a search warrant and found twelve individuals inside the premises. The officers also seized \$59,500 worth of cocaine, close to 23 grams of methamphetamine, more than \$5000 in cash, and two loaded handguns.

“This case was complicated by the receivership dispute but what was without question was the drug dealing, crime, and violence at these properties had to stop,” said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin, who is the Zone Initiative attorney for the city’s West Side. “We’re grateful the Judge acknowledged the damage these properties were causing on the west side and south side, and look forward to working towards a long-term solution to the myriad problems associated with the defendants and these properties.”

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***Editor’s note: [Signed order attached](#)**