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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Columbus, Ohio Official Traces Absentee Landlords to Tacoma

City Attorney hopes local media will help put Tacoma company on alert

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. is taking his battle against blighted properties in Columbus more than 2400 miles away, to Tacoma. Start Linden LLC, a limited liability company named after an inner-city Columbus neighborhood particularly hard hit by the housing crisis, has a listed billing address of 2620 N. Junett Street in Tacoma. The incorporating members are listed as Christine S. Rowan and Karen L. Cochrane.

Pfeiffer hopes to alert the Tacoma community that eight out of the 10 properties Start Linden LLC acquired in Columbus have been issued code violation orders and all 10 have outstanding property taxes due. According to records from the county auditor's office, Start Linden LLC has not attempted to pay taxes on any of the properties since originally taking possession of them in 2009.

Start Linden sold one of the delinquent properties, 2342 Linden Avenue, to an individual investor allegedly located in Kailua Kona, Hawaii on November 21, 2011. Start Linden reportedly transferred the property via quit claim deed for \$30,000 after originally purchasing it from Delaware County Bank & Trust for \$8700. \$2,803.74 in back taxes are still owed on the property. Of the nine properties still in the possession of Start Linden, a total of \$24,823.22 in taxes is owed.

“While various factors led to the housing crisis, part of the aftermath we are left to deal with is out-of-state speculators who are neglecting properties they are presumably waiting to flip,” said City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. **“I doubt Tacoma residents would appreciate a Columbus company flouting Tacoma laws and exploiting Tacoma neighborhoods with little regard for how its business model impacts a community 2400 miles away.”**

Pfeiffer became aware of Start Linden while doing research for a documentary he produced on neighborhood blight in the Linden area. Start Linden originally registered with the Ohio Secretary of State on December 11, 2008 and lists a Columbus-area man, Luke Lumsden, as the statutory agent.

After interaction with the statutory agent did not produce a satisfactory resolution to the delinquent taxes, Pfeiffer felt compelled to turn to the Tacoma media to help get his message across to the principals of Start Linden.

“I believe in free enterprise and the right to make an honest profit, but I have a duty to the residents of Columbus to make sure out-of-state companies such as Start Linden start playing by the rules and are held accountable for abating their nuisance properties in Ohio.”

Various code violations for Start Linden's properties include high grass, unsecured buildings, and general disrepair. Also, according to §4703.01(F)(2) of the Columbus City Codes, a public nuisance can be declared on "[a]ny building, premises or real estate, including vacant land, or any appurtenance thereto upon which its real property taxes have remained unpaid in excess of one (1) year from [the] date of assessment."

If a property owner ignores original orders to abate a nuisance, the City Attorney can file a complaint for injunctive relief in the Franklin County Municipal Court Environmental Division. If the owner does not answer in court, the City can file for a default judgment and an injunction. If the owner still does not comply, the City can motion for contempt and petition the Court to order daily fines up to \$250 per day. If the owner continues to ignore court orders, the fines can be reduced to a judgment and foreclosure proceedings can be initiated.

However, City Attorney Pfeiffer's first preference is to work with property owners to abate the nuisance. He's hoping the Tacoma community will speak up and help compel the principals of Start Linden LLC to work with him and take responsibility for their properties in Columbus before court action is initiated.

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