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Columbus Surpasses Last Year's Drug-Related Nuisance Abatement Filings

Franklinton property that operated at times like a 'drug drive-thru' becomes City Attorney's 26th case of 2020

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that his office has exceeded the number of drug-related nuisance cases filed in 2019 after taking legal action against a Franklinton property—bringing the total to 26 this year. The City Attorney's office filed 23 such cases in 2019.

Klein filed a complaint for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief in the Franklin County Environmental Court against [148 South Dakota Avenue](#), a residence where the owner was accused of drug dealing, illegally discharging a weapon, beating a female victim, and engaging in an armed stand-off with the Columbus Division of Police. Cars allegedly lined up as many as eight at a time outside the home to purchase illegal narcotics. The house was boarded up by city crews earlier today.

Over 60 percent of this year's cases have been located on the city's west side (16 out of 26), which also is an increase from last year when approximately half the cases filed were against west side properties.

“With nearly three months left to go this year, our office has already exceeded the number of drug-related cases we filed in 2019—even with the court limiting its operations due to the coronavirus pandemic,” said Klein. “Another alarming trend we’re seeing this year is the increased concentration of illegal narcotics activity taking place in residential neighborhoods on the west side, with more than 60 percent of our complaints filed against properties there.”

According to court documents, on July 24, 2019, officers responded to 148 South Dakota Avenue after receiving a report that the owner had fired a gun inside the premises during an argument. Upon arrival, officers observed him with a firearm and attempted for an hour to get him to surrender peacefully. He refused and officers made a tactical entry into the premises to place him under arrest.

On Jan. 19, 2020, police received a complaint that eight cars were lined up at the premises to buy drugs.

On April 4, 2020, police received a complaint that someone who appeared to be under the influence of narcotics exited the premises to urinate on a neighboring house and then returned inside.

On April 9, 2020, officers responded to a report of gunshots being fired and removed several individuals from the premises.

On April 21, 2020, officers responded to a narcotics complaint and were informed by witnesses that the property owner and another man, known as “Huey,” were selling drugs from the premises. Officers conducted surveillance and observed heavy foot traffic consistent with narcotics trafficking.

On April 25, 2020, officers responded to a report of a person with a gun.

On May 31, 2020, officers responded to a report that the property owner was beating a woman.

On June 24, 2020, narcotics detectives made a covert purchase of crack cocaine at premises.

On June 24 and again on Aug. 25, 2020, police officials sent the owner a certified letter detailing the illegal activity occurring at his property.

On Aug. 26, 2020, the city’s 311 call center received complaints that multiple daily exchanges, likely to be illegal drug sales, were occurring at the premises.

“The City Attorney’s *Zone Initiative* is a dedicated unit that uses legal remedies to eliminate public nuisances blighting our neighborhoods, such as this property,” said Zone Initiative Section Chief Stephen C. Dunbar. “We don’t do it alone—our cases are built by working closely with an array of partners, including law enforcement, code officers, fire and public health officials, neighborhood associations and the public. Community input was extremely important in this case, helping inform the Division of Police that cars lined up outside the premises to purchase illegal narcotics like it was a drug drive-thru.”

After a property is 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 is permanently enjoined from “conducting, maintaining, using, occupying or in any way permitting” a public nuisance anywhere in Franklin County.

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