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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## City of Columbus Shuts Down Troubled Linden Carryout

*'A to Z Market' was an alphabet soup of criminal activity, including felony drug trafficking, underage alcohol sales, assaults, armed robbery, menacing, code violations and prostitution*

**COLUMBUS, OH**—A notorious carryout that has plagued Columbus' Linden neighborhood for years has been shut down this afternoon after City Attorney Zach Klein secured an *ex parte* temporary restraining order against a business deemed to be a threat to the “health, safety, and welfare” of the Columbus community in the Franklin County Environmental Court earlier today.

Longstanding problems at *A to Z Market* ([1015 East Hudson Street](#)), including crimes both perpetrated by and against employees and the owner/operator of the business, prompted the Columbus Police Division to begin investigating through the VICE Unit.

Repeated sales of a “highly potent” illegal narcotic known as K2 (or synthetic marijuana) from a store clerk inside the premises became highly alarming as city officials documented several emergency calls to the property over the past two years for people suffering over-intoxication, “seizure-like symptoms” and at least one near-fatal drug overdose.

**“The amount of illegal activity occurring at this establishment was alarming,” said City Attorney Zach Klein. “We hope the surrounding community experiences some measure of relief after this property is boarded up.”**

According to court documents, in April 2016 an individual reported that the owner/operator of *A to Z Market*, Mohamed Al Damen, pointed to his holstered gun and said “I will kill you” after getting into an argument with him. Also that month, Columbus EMS responded to an individual suffering seizure-like symptoms at the property.

In August 2016, police arrested a man outside the premises for threatening people with a knife.

In September 2016, EMS responded on two separate occasions to unconscious individuals suffering from “over-intoxication or other alcohol-related illness.”

In November 2016, police officers recovered a loaded gun, marijuana and oxycodone after stopping a vehicle at the premises that was being driven by a known gang member.

In January 2017, EMS responded to a person who had “difficulty breathing” from over-intoxication or other alcohol-related illness.

In February 2017, EMS responded to a drug overdose/cardiac arrest. The person nearly died from overdosing in the parking lot. Also that month, a female victim reported that a suspect stole her prescription pills in the parking lot of the property.

In April 2017, an individual reported being a victim of felonious assault at the property. EMS also responded to another person suffering from seizure-like symptoms.

The following month, a woman reported that a man pulled out a gun on her and her son in the parking lot of the property.

In June 2017, a store clerk reported that a “local dope dealer” robbed him at gunpoint. The suspect threatened the clerk that he would “shoot him and the police.”

A month later, a person reported being punched in the face at the property. The individual was treated by a medic at the scene.

In August 2017, police arrested and charged two female suspects with soliciting at the property.

In September 2017, police responded to the property on a report of a fight in the parking lot. Also that month, police arrested and charged a female suspect with soliciting. During the arrest, this individual provided 2755 Pontiac Street as her home address—a property known to serve as both a drug trafficking hub and a “safe haven for fugitives” that the City of Columbus recently boarded up.

Vice Squad detectives also obtained direct evidence of several illegal underage purchases of alcohol, including a minor purchasing alcohol from the owner, Mr. Al Damen, as well as multiple sales of drug paraphernalia and the synthetic marijuana known as K2 inside the premises.

Columbus police formally charged Mr. Al Damen yesterday with felony drug trafficking.

*A to Z Market* also has a litany of code violations including potholes and buckling in the parking lot, trash and debris throughout the property, and ‘bare and rotted wood” on the exterior of the building.

**“We had an overwhelming amount of evidence supporting the immediate board-up of this establishment,” said Assistant City Attorney Katarina Karac. “The amount of illegal activity occurring at the premises clearly made it a danger to patrons, employees, nearby residents, and the police officers who regularly responded to calls at the store.”**

A follow-up hearing for a preliminary and permanent injunction against the owner of *A to Z Market* is scheduled for 11:00 a.m. on March 9, 2018.

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 business, Karac, who is the Zone Initiative Attorney assigned to the Linden area of Columbus, is seeking to prove that the owner is guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that he, as owner of the premises, “knew of, participated in, or acquiesced to the activity which constituted the nuisance” as prescribed by [Chapter 3767](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

Copies of the city’s [complaint](#) and the [court’s order](#) are available online.