

Contact: Kristen Dickerson
Email: kmdickerson@columbus.gov

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City Boarding Up Seventh West Side Drug House This Year

Property presented ‘imminent risk of danger’ according to court documents

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. announced today that the City of Columbus is seeking to vacate and shutter a west side property known for drug trafficking, prostitution and drug overdoses. It is the seventh drug house the city has shut down on the west side this year.

The City Attorney’s office filed a complaint for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief in the Franklin County Environmental Court to board up the property located at 441 South Terrace Avenue, which is less than half a mile from Burroughs Elementary School and St. Mary Magdalene School. The owner of record is Robert W. Johnson of Pickerington. Johnson also is listed as the rental contact for the property.

The court granted the city’s request for preliminary injunctive relief to shut down the property, which is being boarded up this afternoon, pending a permanent injunction hearing to be held at 1:30 p.m. on August 9, 2017. 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 following the permanent injunction hearing.

“By filing these nuisance cases, our attorneys are doing what they can to help the neighborhoods that are on the front lines of the drug epidemic plaguing our society,” said City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. “From civil litigation and criminal prosecution to treatment and addiction services, all facets of our community must be engaged in this fight.”

Columbus police narcotics detectives began investigating the property this year and made covert purchases of heroin on January 9 and crack-cocaine on February 1 and April 17 at the premises. Police officials subsequently sent a certified letter to the owner notifying him of the nuisance criminal activity occurring at his property.

The certified mail receipt was signed by Johnson on May 19, 2017 but the illegal activities continued. According to court documents, police and the surrounding community “report daily issues with drug trafficking and prostitution at the property.”

The city’s complaint also indicates that the premises have been found “littered with syringe needles and trash” and “people have overdosed at the property.”

City code enforcement officers have cited the property for a multitude of code violations as well, including a “habitable space” violation pertaining to individuals living in a tent in the backyard.

“Since this is the seventh drug house we have shut down on the west side this year, we hope that more property owners begin to take notice,” said Assistant City Attorney Kristen Dickerson. “They can heed our warnings and take responsibility for cleaning up and cleaning out the criminal elements from their properties or they can face us in court.”

In filing a civil motion for injunctive relief, Dickerson, who is the Zone Initiative Attorney assigned to the west side of Columbus, is seeking to prove that Johnson 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.

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