



ZACH KLEIN

COLUMBUS CITY ATTORNEY

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Contact: Faith Oltman, 614.965.0159

Email: fboltman@columbus.gov

Columbus Shuts Down West Side Apartment Unit

Property was scene of dozens of police runs, including a homicide, narcotics trafficking, domestic violence, and prostitution

COLUMBUS — Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus secured an emergency court order to board-up an apartment unit that was operating a drug and prostitution ring out of a four-unit building on the city's West Side.

Both the Columbus Division of Police and the Franklin County Sheriff's office targeted the unit in separate undercover narcotics investigations due to the amount of drugs being trafficked from the premises. The case is the City Attorney's third this year after obtaining court injunctions against 30 drug-related nuisance properties in 2020, 20 of which were on the city's West Side.

After the Franklin County Environmental Court granted Klein's motion for injunctive relief this morning, Columbus police evacuated [641 Racine Avenue](#) and enforced the court's order to board up the premises.

"This complaint illustrates the extensive investigative effort that goes into each of our nuisance cases," said Klein. "In this instance, we were laser focused and targeted the single unit involved in criminal conduct. Shutting down the entire building could have resulted in the displacement of innocent people. It's important that we focus on neighborhood safety for all residents."

According to court documents, the property originally came to the attention of Columbus narcotics detectives in August 2019 after patrol officers responded to a drug overdose. Officers were dispatched to the premises several other times throughout the rest of 2019 for disturbances that included domestic violence, assault and burglary.

On January 23, 2020, police received a complaint that there was drug dealing "day and night" out 641 Racine Avenue.

On March 27, 2020 police documented four incidents at the premises, including a complaint regarding a suspicious person who "was asking for a car for a body" and a domestic violence complaint involving a suspect allegedly "making threats that if he is going to jail, he is going to make it worth it."

On May 1, 2020, police received a Shotspotter alert from the premises. A subsequent investigation determined that a suspect made menacing threats before firing four shots from his vehicle and driving off. Officers collected 9mm shell casings from the scene and turned them in to the property room.

On December 1, 2020, officers responding to a Shotspotter alert were informed that a shooting victim had been taken to a nearby hospital. Witnesses stated that the victim was shot in the stomach with a 9mm pistol following an earlier altercation with the suspect. The victim died fifteen days later.

On December 21, 2020, police received a complaint that 641 Racine Avenue was “still a drug house” with needles and guns “left out everywhere.” Officers also were told that “a two year old had eaten a Xanax and was unconscious for sixteen hours.”

“It’s important for us to distinguish between the individuals suffering from addiction and the drug dealers who prey upon them,” said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin, who is the Zone Initiative attorney for the city’s West Side. “In the constant balance between supply and demand, we will continue to go after those who are providing these dangerous narcotics, but we also have to do everything we can to help people with substance abuse issues get the treatment they need.”

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***Editor’s note: [A copy of the signed order is attached](#)**