
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

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City To Shut Down Gang-Controlled House

City Attorney, D.A., & Police Chief to Join Ald. Donovan at Thursday News Conference Detailing City Action, Work of Community Prosecution Unit

The City of Milwaukee has filed a civil lawsuit to take over a south side house that has been used by gang members as a hub for controlling and intimidating neighborhood residents, and where a drive-by shooting in December left two gang members wounded, according to Ald. Robert G. Donovan.

The action to take over the house will be discussed during **a news conference at 12:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday, January 17, 2008) at the 6th District police station, 3006 S. 27th St.** Ald. Donovan will be joined by **Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm, Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn, City Attorney Grant Langley, as well as members of the Community Prosecution Unit (CPU), other police and city officials, and citizens and members of local neighborhood groups. Media coverage is invited.**

The move to take over the house at 2076 S. 35th St., owned by Gabriel Fuentes and Alicia Villafuerte, was initiated following an investigation by Milwaukee police and the CPU's Grant Huebner, an assistant district attorney handling cases on the city's near south side. The investigation turned up illegal activities including evidence of narcotics distribution, illegal firearms and acts of violence, Ald. Donovan said.

"People living near this residence felt like prisoners in their own homes, afraid to venture outside for fear of running into these gang members," said the alderman, whose 8th District includes the block where the house is located.

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City To Shut Down Gang House/ADD ONE

“The Community Prosecution Unit went to work and quickly identified this house as a nuisance property that brought drugs, crime, violence and disorder to an otherwise peaceful neighborhood. It became clear the house had to be taken over to protect the good people of this neighborhood and to help drive out the gang presence there,” said Ald. Donovan.

City Attorney Grant Langley said the civil lawsuit declaring the house a public nuisance and ordering it immediately vacated was filed today in Milwaukee County Circuit Court. Langley said the action was necessary and others will be initiated when and where appropriate.

“These are our neighborhoods,” Langley said. “They are not the territory of the Mexican Posse, the Latin Kings, or any other criminal gang. We will not permit them to take our neighborhoods from us.”

District Attorney John Chisholm said the case illustrates one of the many benefits the CPU offers to Milwaukee neighborhoods “when the community is directly involved in restoring order and solving problems.”

“This case demonstrates the effectiveness of community based programs in identifying and solving problems for the people who live in neighborhoods that have some challenges,” Chisholm said.

Vince Bobot, the assistant city attorney who coordinates the city’s CPU efforts, said a drive-by shooting at the house on December 16 targeted Mexican Posse gang members living there. Minutes after that shooting, a related, retaliatory drive-by shooting occurred blocks away in the 1900 block of S. 28th St., he said.

“In a matter of minutes this neighborhood was transformed into something out of a movie about the ‘Wild West,’” Bobot said. “It’s a miracle no one was killed.”

The community prosecutor program, initiated in 2000 with one community prosecutor, has evolved into one of the city’s most effective tools for fighting gangs, drugs, prostitution, illegal firearms, loud noise, and other criminal and nuisance activities. There are now nine, six from the district attorney’s office and three assistant city attorneys, with eight stationed in satellite offices in six Milwaukee police district stations and community based organizations.

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City To Shut Down Gang House/ADD TWO

Ald. Donovan, chair of the Common Council's Public Safety Committee, said the program is being threatened by cuts at the federal and state levels, and he is urging public support to help continue the program and to expand it if possible. "The community prosecution program has made a huge difference in the lives of people in our neighborhoods, and I'm confident it will continue to have a major impact on the quality of life in this community," Ald. Donovan said.

What Is The Community Prosecution Unit?

The goal of the community prosecutors is to work with homeowners and landlords to resolve issues. The community prosecutors in the D.A.'s office can bring criminal prosecution charges against problem tenants and/or prosecute property owners. The City can also charge property owners for police services if officers are called to a property for certain crimes more than three times in a month. Complaints include nuisance properties, drug dealing, prostitution, trash, dangerous dogs and code violations.

Community prosecutors are also investigating complaints in the cities of West Allis and South Milwaukee because those communities participated in the original state grant which funds part of the community prosecution effort.

The agencies involved in the collaboration include the City Attorney's office, District Attorney's office, Milwaukee Police Department, Health Department, Department of Neighborhood Services, Department of Public Works, community based organizations, citizens and the religious community.

The majority of the prosecution team's effort deals with nuisance properties, homes and buildings that are the repeated sources of complaints and police calls. They also meet with owners and landlords to discuss solutions, including enrolling them in the city's Landlord Training Program. In addition, they can help neighbors get involved in block clubs, give crime prevention speeches in schools, discuss crime prevention techniques with residents and inform them how to effectively report criminal behavior to police. The community prosecutors are accessible to police, community groups and citizens in person or by cell phones.