



NEWS RELEASE
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Oakland Files Lawsuit for Caltrans to Clean Blighted Properties

Chronic Blight Creates Unsightly, Dangerous Conditions

(Oakland, CA) – Oakland City Attorney John Russo announced this morning that the City of Oakland has filed a public nuisance action against Caltrans. The lawsuit, filed in Alameda Superior Court, addresses the chronic problem of accumulated litter, debris, graffiti and weeds on Caltrans property throughout Oakland.

"Oakland will no longer tolerate absentee landlords who create blight in Oakland—even when the absentee landlord is the State of California," said City Attorney John Russo. "These unkempt properties diminish our quality of life, reduce property values and create dangerous conditions. Our Fire Department has designated over a dozen Caltrans lots around Highways 24 and 13 as fire hazards with overgrown vegetation threatening homes in the hills."

Caltrans properties, which consist of vacant lots, yards, highway ramps and overpasses, have for years been allowed to accumulate refuse, debris and weeds to become blighted. Photos of the blighted areas in Oakland were posted at the press conference providing evidence for the action. In addition, local residents gave testimony about the blight in their neighborhoods and their efforts to work with Caltrans to clean the properties.

Formal declarations by Oakland residents about the blighted areas in their neighborhoods were included with the lawsuit. "Overgrowth of vegetation constricts sections of the sidewalk so that there is only room for one pedestrian to pass by at a time," stated Oakland resident who walks blighted Caltrans property on the Lake Park Ave overpass weekly. "I fear for my own safety when I am forced to walk into the street."

Caltrans has thus far refused to negotiate a legally-binding agreement. "Oakland doesn't like having to file this suit, but we can't shrink from our responsibilities to our people. We hope to resolve this issue with Caltrans quickly. It's in our collective interest to work together for the public good," concluded Russo.