



CITY OF OAKLAND
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Decades of Drug Dealing Finally Stopped

Notorious School Street Drug House Shut Down; Relief Expressed by Weary Neighbors

(OAKLAND, CA)— After twenty years of being terrorized by drug-dealers who live on their street, the residents of the 3000 block of School Street in the Fruitvale will be able to breathe a sigh of relief. The owner of the drug house and matriarch of the convicted drug-dealing family, Ruby Harris, agreed to sell her home in a settlement filed by the Neighborhood Laws Corps in Superior Court today. The settlement also requires the Harris clan to move out by December 20th, 2005.

“This case is a perfect example of what is possible when we get dedicated lawyers on the streets to fight on behalf of our residents”, said Neighborhood Law Corps creator and Oakland City Attorney John Russo. The Neighborhood Law Corps are a team of full-time lawyers who take direction from the community in tackling slum housing, drug nuisance and toxic pollution. President of the Council, Ignacio De La Fuente was relieved to finally have resolved the problem, “I’m glad for the residents who’ve had to live in such fear that they would only meet with my staff in secret, miles from their home. This is a great day for School Street.”

In what is becoming a highly successful partnership in fighting criminal activity, City Attorney John Russo and Council President Ignacio De La Fuente have joined forces to correct another recalcitrant problem in Oakland. In this case, the Neighborhood Laws Corps in the City Attorney’s Office charged that Ruby Harris “allowed her home to be a drug nuisance, permitting the unlawful use, sale, storage and manufacturing of controlled substances since at least 1987” (Superior Court Case # RG04186981.)

For years, city officials tried through signed settlements to get Ms. Harris to control the drug-dealing by her children and grandchildren. Time and time again Ms. Harris’ family members violated those agreements. Now, in order to stave off hundreds of thousands of dollars in public nuisance fines from the City, the Harris family will move out and sell the property, allowing the neighbors to take back their street.

“For years the drug dealers have owned the street and harassed my tenants,” said Paul Watts, a property owner on the street. “All day and night they have stood on the sidewalks, selling drugs, blocking pedestrians, and terrorizing the neighborhood. I’m relieved that the Harris Family is moving out. We’ll all be able to live in peace.”

In addition to closing down the drug house, Russo’s Neighborhood Law Corps, which recently won the grand prize from the League of California Cities in the category of Community Services and Economic Development, partnered with the office of De La Fuente to revitalize the block. These efforts have included: providing a store owner with a grant to improve his façade, sending abatement notices to other negligent property owners and organizing a neighborhood watch group. These collective efforts will be celebrated in January in a block party hosted by De La Fuente and Russo and partially funded by relieved property owner, Mr. Watts, who wanted to contribute to the event.

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