



## San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 16, 2018**  
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# Court Orders Clean Up of Pacific Beach Hoarder House

*City Attorney's Office brings relief to neighborhood*

The City Attorney's Office on Tuesday obtained a court order to begin the clean-up and rehabilitation of a residence in the Pacific Beach/Mount Soledad area that has plagued neighbors with foul odors, trash, and rodents.

After Shirley T. Sanders died in 2012, one of her sons and various acquaintances moved into her four-bedroom home on Crownhill Road near Kate Sessions Park. Problems with the property multiplied since then, as an accumulation of junk and debris overflowed from the house and into the driveway and yards.

As the situation worsened, piles of furniture and trash inside the house created safety hazards for the occupants and emergency responders. The bathroom sinks drained into buckets, and water leaks created mold throughout the structure. County vector control agents cited the property, and a neighbor reported trapping 14 rats in his garage and finding three drowned rats in his swimming pool. Concerned parties notified County Child Protective Services on several occasions that infants or young children were living in unsafe conditions.

On March 13, 2018, the City Attorney's Office obtained an injunction prohibiting property owner Lauren E. Sanders of Lubbock, Texas, who is trustee of the Shirley T. Sanders Trust, from continuing to maintain a public nuisance. San Diego Superior Court Judge Randa Trapp appointed a receiver to bring the property into compliance with health and safety laws. The occupants were ordered to vacate the property within 72 hours or face arrest for trespassing. (Copies of the complaint and court order are attached.)

The Code Enforcement Division of the City Development Services Department had initially sought voluntary compliance from the property owner. However, the unlawful conditions continued despite more than a dozen warnings letters from the City, as well as notices of health and safety code violations from City building inspectors, County vector control officers, and San Diego Gas & Electric.

**“This kind of conduct threatens the health and safety of our communities and destroys our quality of life,”** City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“By intervening, we bring relief and peace of mind to affected neighbors, and help for hoarders who often have underlying issues that need to be addressed.”**

The case was prosecuted by Deputy City Attorney Marsha Kerr.

The City will recover the costs of rehabilitation, cleanup, attorney fees, and receiver fees from the property owner.

The City Attorney's Code Enforcement Unit was established in 1984 to address nuisance properties and blight throughout San Diego. This unit works in partnership with the Code Enforcement Division of the City Development Services Department, the San Diego Police Department, other local agencies, and the community to identify and aggressively address problem properties.

Since 2015, the Code Enforcement Unit has filed eight other health and safety receiverships with the Court. These cases also involved substandard housing violations, public nuisance and extreme hoarding conditions. In the past, the City would pay to abate the violations, costing taxpayers thousands of dollars, and then seek a lien against the property. With receivership actions, the City does not spend any money abating the nuisance. Instead, the property is rehabilitated using funds borrowed from the equity in the property. The City may also collect all costs of prosecution, including attorney's fees and investigative costs.

Community members can report property violations to the City Attorney's Code Enforcement Unit at 619-533-5655.

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The attached photos taken between July 2017 and January 2018 are courtesy of the  
City of San Diego Code Enforcement Division.