



PATRICIA R. LYKOS
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

Nov. 10, 2010
Public Information Office
Donna Hawkins
George Flynn
(713) 755-3320

District Attorney Seeks First Anti-Gang Injunction in Harris County

(Houston, Tx) – District Attorney Patricia Lykos on Wednesday announced the filing of the first-ever civil injunction action against gang activity in Harris County, as part of a coordinated new offensive to restore public safety in a gang-infested northeast county community.

The public nuisance lawsuit seeks court orders to equip law enforcement officers with special authority to prevent crimes and disrupt organized criminal operations in a 57-acre “safety zone” around the 700-unit Haverstock Hills apartment complex. Defendants are 33 known members of the Crips and Blood gangs.

“The Haverstock Hills neighborhood is a low-income community that has been terrorized by gang members, dope dealers and pimps,” Lykos said. “We are sending a message to all criminal gangs to get out of Harris County – we are after you.”

Legal action is sought to bar gang members from entering or staying in the designated zone. They would also be banned from associating among themselves or with other gang members. Defendants would not be allowed to display gang “colors” or flash hand signs, or have graffiti-marking items or weapons of any type. They would be prohibited from disrupting traffic or building access, harassing residents, or carrying cell phones or similar devices. The full list of banned items or actions spans nearly three pages of the lawsuit.

Lykos began coordinating a project in January to provide sweeping changes, upgraded services and security for the 2,400 residents there. Haverstock Hills is an attractive and well maintained complex and its management has been active in cooperative crime reduction efforts.

“This has been an amazing collaboration of law enforcement, community leaders, churches, schools and apartment management to tackle a problem in an innovative, creative way,” said Kim Ogg, a lawyer who is heading the project for the District Attorney’s Office. “Through this process, we are shining a light on the Bloods and the Crips and exposing their actual impact on this community for what it is. They commit more crimes with greater impunity than ordinary criminals. Our lawsuit seeks to protect the law-abiding residents who have been held hostage by criminal gangs for far too long.”

Appellate courts have consistently upheld the special sanctions against known criminal gangs targeted by nuisance actions. The lawsuits rely on evidentiary hearings for temporary injunctions until there can be full trials to decide if injunctions should be permanent. Defendants found to be in violation can be punished by up to one year in jail and fine of up to \$4,000.

The requested safety zone covers the complex and 11 listed businesses. That area is east of the Eastex Freeway, in the area of Aldine Bender at Lee Road. About 700 children live in the complex, and some of them attend the nearby Aldine ISD elementary school.

Lykos said this lawsuit is just one of the tactics that will be utilized in the strategy to disrupt and dismantle organized crime in the Harris County region.

Announcement of the civil action came at a news conference that included representatives of the Harris County Sheriff's Office, Police Department of Aldine ISD, Office of Congressman Gene Green, and several community organizations and schools.

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