City forces change on troubled Aurora Avenue motels

SEATTLE – The city of Seattle has taken action against the operators of five Aurora Avenue motels that have been the scene of drug-use, prostitution and other illegal behavior. Last week, the City Attorney’s Office filed 152 criminal charges for various tax violations. In addition, the motels are behind in utility payments.

Outreach workers were dispatched today to offer motel vouchers and relocation assistance to eligible guests at the motels.

The properties are: Seattle Motor Inn, 12245 Aurora Ave North; Wallingford Inn, 4453 Winslow Place North; Italia Motel, 4129 Aurora Ave North; Fremont Inn, 4251 Aurora Ave North; and Isabella Motel, 4117 Aurora Ave North.

Dean and Jill Inman are the corporate officers and directors of the Seattle Motor Inn Inc., Isabella and Italia, Inc., Fremont Inn, Inc. and Wallingford Inn, Inc. The Inman’s oversee direct operations of their 5 motels.

The motels are frequent crime scenes. In 2008, there were more than 460 calls for police service for the five motels:
- Wallingford Inn: 82
- Fremont Inn: 110
- Isabella Motel: 31
- Italia Motel: 80
- Seattle Motor Inn: 160

Officers routinely confiscate drugs and drug paraphernalia in the motel rooms and former motel employees have reported widespread drug use. In April 2008, officers made 32 arrests at the Inman motels. Officers seized 11.7 grams of marijuana, traces of heroin, 42 grams of cocaine, some liquid cocaine, 4 drug scales, and numerous items of drug paraphernalia – in just a 16 day period. Robberies and assaults have also occurred.

Since 2005, Seattle Police and City Attorneys have met with the owners to discuss criminal activities in and around their motels. After promising to take action, they continued to ignore the problems. In fact, in 2008, a sign was posted in the office window of the Isabella Motel warning residents to not cooperate with the police or City
Attorney’s Office. This behavior stands in stark contrast to the positive relationship developed between other area motel operators and city officials.

Besides public safety concerns, the corporations controlled by the owners have fallen in arrears in utility payments and city taxes. The City Attorney's office has filed 152 criminal charges for various tax violations such as failure to file and failure to pay the business tax and employee hours tax. The City Attorney’s Office also filed a criminal charge against the manager of the Seattle Motor Inn for failing to comply with laws requiring motels to copy the identification of guests paying with cash.

The total amount of tax owed has not yet been determined. Those charges are pending.

In addition, the city is initiating action to revoke the business licenses of the motels based upon failure to comply with the tax requirements.

Earlier this week, the city sent notices that electricity service to the motels will be stopped unless payment is received.

The actions taken against these five Aurora motels represent the first steps in an effort to force positive change on these properties and improve the neighborhood.

Community contacts:
Rob Pierides, local restaurant owner, 425-280-1138
Spencer Anderson, 930-9850

Get the Nickels Newsletter and the mayor’s inside view on transportation, public safety, economic opportunity and healthy communities. Sign up at mayor.seattle.gov

###