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# San Diego City Attorney Jan I. Goldsmith

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **HOWARD JOHNSON HOTEL LOCATED IN THE HIGH TOURIST AREA OF MISSION VALLEY IS ORDERED TO ADDRESS PREVALENT PROSTITUTION ACTIVITY**

*City Attorney's Office Settles with Hotel Owner who must Immediately Abate Criminal Activity*

**San Diego, CA:** The owner of the Howard Johnson Hotel located at 1631 Hotel Circle South in the busy area of Mission Valley, must now increase security, change hotel registration policies, and make significant changes to its manner of doing business as part of a civil Red Light Abatement action filed by the City Attorney's Code Enforcement Unit. The owner must also pay \$21,000 in investigative costs to the City of San Diego.

Chhatrala Hospitality Group, LLC, owned by Hemant Chhatrala, owns and runs the franchise hotel and holds a long term lease on the property. In less than one year, the VICE unit of the San Diego Police Department made approximately 18 prostitution related arrests, including one case involving the human trafficking of a minor. There previously has been no security at the hotel combined with inadequate lighting, limited video surveillance, and minimal guest registration policies. The hotel was also allowing guests to rent a room by paying cash without requiring an additional cash deposit, facilitating the quick rental of rooms for illegal activity.

The case was referred to the Code Enforcement Unit of the City Attorney's Office by VICE officers of the San Diego Police Department. Deputy City Attorney Nicole Pedone worked closely with VICE to ensure that the criminal activity was immediately abated. The resulting injunction requires the owner to hire a 24 hour security guard; install additional security cameras; and post signs to deter criminal activity. The owner must also require a cash deposit for all rooms rented with cash; photocopy all guest and visitor identification cards; register all guest and visitor vehicles; install additional lighting around the hotel; and continue to maintain a "Do not Rent" list of known problematic individuals. Additionally, the owner must educate and train his employees regarding hotel rules and regulations pertaining to all guests and visitors.

As part of the settlement the property owner has agreed to pay \$21,688.42 to reimburse the City for investigative costs incurred in responding to the crime on the premises. In addition, \$10,000 in civil penalties is stayed pending full compliance with the terms of the settlement. The case was brought pursuant to California Penal Code sections 11225 and 11227, known as the Red Light Abatement Act.

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The defendants are now permanently enjoined from maintaining, allowing, permitting directly or indirectly, the occurrence, continuance, or reoccurrence of acts of lewdness or prostitution, solicitation, or human trafficking upon the premises of the property; maintaining any violations of the San Diego Municipal Code section related to hotels, motels, Inns, etc.; and maintaining any violations of the Red Light Abatement Act at any other property or premises in the City of San Diego. The owner will work closely with the San Diego Police Department and City Attorney's Office in implementing the new procedures at the hotel, monitoring the activity at the hotel and will provide the City Attorney's Office with copies of weekly security logs and incident reports pertaining to the hotel for the next 6 months.

According to City Attorney Jan Goldsmith, "Our office will continue to use the Red Light Abatement Act to help clean up neighborhoods impacted by owners who allow their properties to be used to facilitate criminal conduct."

[The City Attorney's Code Enforcement Unit](#) addresses nuisance properties and code violations throughout San Diego. The Unit works in partnership with the City's Code Enforcement Services Unit, the San Diego Police Department, and the community to identify and aggressively address code violations and nuisance properties. Community members can report property violations to Code Enforcement Services at 619-236-5500.

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