



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 19, 2022

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Owner of Dilapidated San Ysidro Property Fined *City Attorney obtains injunction against L.A.-based slumlord*

City Attorney Mara W. Elliott today announced the successful resolution of a case her Office brought against the owner of an unsafe, run-down property on San Ysidro Boulevard that housed both tenants and businesses.

The former owner, Jung Fang Chen of Los Angeles, will pay civil penalties of \$166,837.50 and faces additional penalties if he maintains any property in the City of San Diego in a substandard, hazardous, or unhealthy condition. The property at 319-323 San Ysidro Blvd. has been sold to a new owner who has pledged to work with the City to rehabilitate the structures.

All tenants living on the property have been relocated to better housing with the help of a City Attorney's Victim Services Coordinator. Chen has already paid \$31,360 in relocation benefits and has reimbursed the City for the cost of its investigation.

“This is a positive outcome in a case where families with small children were exposed to toxic mold, vermin, and other safety hazards,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“Our Nuisance Abatement Unit works hard every day to ensure landlords comply with the law by providing a safe and habitable place for families to live.”**

The property initially contained only a two-story house constructed in 1947. In the 1960s, a two-story commercial building was added, then a 14-unit motel called El Palacio. Over the years, motel rooms were illegally converted to a business use without the required permits, inspections, or approvals. Later, it was discovered that offices and motel rooms on the property were being rented as apartments, and there was no heating in any of the dwelling units.

Tenants reported infestations of roaches and rats, mold in the walls, unsafe stairwells with nails protruding from the handrail, and electrical wires hanging from the walls. Those who complained to the property manager were reportedly told to move out.

The City Attorney's Office brought a civil enforcement action against Chen and her company, T.J.J. Investments, LLC, on August 13, 2021, after extensive efforts failed to get the owner to take responsibility for bringing the property into compliance and making it safe for habitation.

Prior to going to trial, the City Attorney's Office reached a stipulated agreement with Chen that a Superior Court judge approved this week. Chen agreed to a penalty of \$500,000, of which \$333,162.50 is stayed pending Chen's compliance with the terms of the settlement. If Chen fails to comply, she must pay the balance of the penalty and may be subject to a contempt action.

This case was handled for the People of the State of California and the City of San Diego by Deputy City Attorney David Miller of the City Attorney's Nuisance Abatement Unit, under the supervision of Chief Deputy City Attorney Gabriela Brannan. 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.

Community members may report code, health and safety, and environmental violations to the City's Code Enforcement Division at 619-236-5500 or the City Attorney's Nuisance Abatement Unit at 619-533-5655 or CityAttorney@saniego.gov.