



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**JOINT PROBE LEADS TO ARREST OF PROPERTY OWNER ON BRIBERY AND RECKLESS ENDANGERMENT CHARGES  
ILLEGAL CONVERSIONS CREATED UNSAFE CONDITIONS IN QUEENS BUILDING; FIVE RELOCATED**

Mark G. Peters, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), and Rick D. Chandler, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings ("DOB"), jointly announced the arrest of a Woodside, Queens property owner on charges of offering \$200 in cash in exchange for overlooking a vacate order issued for the building, which contained illegal room conversions creating unsafe, hazardous conditions. DOB notified DOI of the bribe attempt and the two agencies jointly worked the investigation. The office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case.

SUSANA ESCOBAR CARDENA, 65, of Woodside, Queens, was arrested late Monday, December 12, 2016, and charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony, and Reckless Endangerment in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year's incarceration. CARDENA was arraigned on Tuesday, December 13, 2016, in Queens Criminal Court and released on her own recognizance. Her next court date is scheduled for February 9, 2017.

DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters said, "This arrest exemplifies how bribery and corruption gravely undercut New Yorkers' safety; in this case, creating seriously dangerous conditions, according to the complaint. Working with the City Department of Buildings, we successfully stopped the illegal conduct that could have had perilous results."

City Buildings Commissioner Rick D. Chandler said, "Our partnership with DOI on this case may have saved lives. Over the past week DOB has been canvassing the five boroughs, warning New Yorkers of the dangers that are often present in illegal conversions. I want to thank Commissioner Peters and Queens District Attorney Richard Brown for bringing charges against this criminally-negligent landlord."

According to the criminal complaint:

In March 2016, DOB issued a vacate order for the two-family residence at 62-17 39 Avenue in Queens due to illegal single room occupancies in the cellar and first and second floors of the building. As a result of those illegal rooms, the property was deemed unsafe and hazardous and no one was allowed to re-rent or reside at the location.

On December 10, 2016, a DOB investigator went to the building to re-inspect it, finding the defendant on the property and three occupied rooms: two rooms on the second floor with no emergency exits and one room in the cellar with no emergency exit. The defendant indicated that she had nowhere else to live and the

DOB investigator indicated he would notify the American Red Cross to help the defendant to find shelter. When the investigator asked for the defendant's identification, the defendant asked him to help her out, later placing \$200 in cash, in the investigator's hand. The investigator told the defendant that was not proper, placed the money on a table in a rear room, and notified his colleague who was outside. The DOB investigator and his colleague went back into the building and recorded the conversation with the defendant, who again handed over \$200 in cash in exchange for overlooking the vacate order due to dangerous conditions in the building.

According to the investigation, on Monday, December 12, 2016, DOI and DOB vacated the property and alerted the American Red Cross. Five residents who were inside the building were relocated. Since 2010, the address has three dozen City Environmental Control Board violations that are either pending or in default. The violations range from illegal conversions to illegal construction.

DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters thanked Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown and DOB Commissioner Rick D. Chandler and their staffs for their assistance and cooperation in this investigation.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

*DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.*

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