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Kushner family business submitted false paperwork with city

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Kushner Cos. said it didn't have any regulated units in several Astoria properties when the company actually did. (BEBETO MATTHEWS/AP)

Jared Kushner's real estate company faces a City Council probe for filing bogus paperwork declaring it had zero rent-regulated tenants in dozens of buildings across the city — when in reality it had hundreds.

The shady record-keeping is laid bare in paperwork filed in connection with three buildings in Astoria, Queens. Kushner Cos. checked a box on construction permit applications in 2015 that the buildings had zero rent-regulated tenants.

But tax records filed a few months later showed the company inherited as many as 94 rent-regulated units from the previous owner.

"It's bare-faced greed," said Aaron Carr, founder of Housing Rights Initiative, a tenants' rights watchdog that compiled the documents and shared them with The Associated Press, which first reported the findings.

"The fact that the company was falsifying all these applications with the government shows a sordid attempt to avert accountability and get a rapid return on its investment."

Kushner Cos. sold the buildings in 2017 for \$60 million — nearly 50% more than it paid only two years prior.

Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law, stepped down as CEO of the company last year and sold off part of his real estate holdings before taking on his advisory role at the White House.



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Kushner's signature wasn't on any of the documents, but he led the company at the time of the filings. (JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP)

A review by Housing Rights Initiative found Kushner Cos. filed at least 80 false applications for construction permits in 34 buildings across New York City from 2013 to 2016. All indicated there were no rent-regulated tenants. But tax documents show there were more than 300 rent-regulated units.

The advocacy group filed a lawsuit in August alleging a similar scheme at a 48-unit property in Brooklyn Heights.

Had Kushner Cos. filed accurate paperwork, it could have triggered stricter city oversight.

City Councilman Ritchie Torres (D-Bronx) said he would launch an investigation into the permit applications.

"The Kushners appear to be engaging in what I call the weaponization of construction," said Torres, who will hold a press conference Monday outside Kushner Cos. headquarters on Fifth Ave. and 52nd St.

Tenants of the Astoria buildings endured extensive renovations they believed were part of a coordinated harassment campaign to clear the way for higher rents.



Mary Ann Siwek sits in her apartment in the East Village. (MARY ALTAFFER/AP)

"It was noisy, there were complaints, I got mice," said mailman Rudolph Romano, adding that the Kushner Cos. tried to increase his rent by 60%. "They cleaned the place out. I watched the whole building leave."

A similar ordeal occurred at a six-story walkup in the East Village owned by Kushner Cos. The company filed papers in 2013 listing no rent-regulated tenants. Tax papers showed seven such tenants.

"All of a sudden, there was drilling, drilling ... You heard the drilling in the middle of night," said one of the rent-regulated tenants, Mary Ann Siwek, 67.

"The hallways were always filled with lumber and sawdust and plaster."

Kushner Cos. said a third party prepared the inaccurate paperwork, which was reviewed by independent counsel.

"If mistakes or violations are identified, corrective action is taken immediately," the company said. "Kushner would never deny any tenant their due-process rights."

Housing Rights Initiative found the Kushner Cos. filed dozens of amended forms for its buildings, most of them a year to two later.

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