

# Putting teeth in preservation

**Man's new duty is enforcing city rules on historic structures.**

**By Brian Chasnoff**

In the historic Tobin Hill neighborhood sits a dilapidated, two-story home with a strange feature: a newly installed door hovering on the second floor of the house where a window once was.

The [Historic and Design Review Commission](#) has ruled the renovation violates city preservation laws. And while the process for restoring such structures has dragged in the past, city officials expect a new enforcement position in the [Office of Historic Preservation](#) to boost compliance.

Ron Meyers, a longtime city employee, started last week as the city's new historic building enforcement officer. One of his first orders of business likely will be a visit to the floating doorway in the 400 block of Kendall Street.

“It's kind of a messed up situation, but we're going to try and see if we can take care of it amicably first,” Meyers said.

The city long has sought to find and remedy violations to historic structures and local landmarks, but never before has an officer been devoted solely to the task, said [Shannon Peterson](#), the city's historic preservation officer.

“We didn't have full-time attention,” Peterson said, “and now this position will be focused exclusively on enforcement issues in historic districts, landmarks and river districts.”

Urgency in such matters is important, she added.

“You need to be able to respond immediately to those types of issues, because if it is original material that's being removed, you want to be able to save it onsite so it can be restored,” she said.

Meyers, who said his salary is about \$35,000, is responding to sites where work has started without the proper permits or approval, and he also will enforce code violations. His territory includes the city's 27 historic districts, about 1,300 local landmarks, such as the Milam and Tower Life buildings, and the River Improvement Overlay districts.

Another recent violation took place in the latter — someone built stairs leading from the San Antonio River to their home along the burgeoning [Museum Reach](#), Peterson said.

The city was notified of the violation on Kendall Street by another resident, who saw the new door and four new windows, Peterson said.

Notified of the violations, the homeowner applied for approval. But the commission denied the changes because the windows and door are not consistent with the style of the house.

The violator has time to restore the home, Meyers said. But the case could end up in Municipal Court, where fines are assessed every day the violations are not remedied.

“It can range anywhere from \$10 a day to \$2,000 a day,” he said.

**How to report violations:**

Residents who notice potential violations should call the Office of Historic Preservation at (210) 219-2093 or email [OHP@sanantonio.gov](mailto:OHP@sanantonio.gov).

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