

Code Enforcement Section, Development Services Department

Message from our Assistant Director

In this issue of Code Connection, we wanted to talk about “dangerous premises” and the role the Building Standards Board (BSB) plays in code enforcement.

Our Officers are charged with the responsibility of maintaining the health, safety and quality of life for all San Antonians. Part of that is identifying buildings that aren’t safe, secure and pose a danger to neighbors and the community as a whole. Dangerous buildings fall mainly into three categories: unoccupied and unsecured, distressed, or those that are an imminent threat.

The effectiveness of the BSB is that it’s a “peer-to-peer” board. Its commissioners are not city employees, but active members of our community. True, they do have backgrounds in the professional management of single- and multi-family rental properties, engineering, architecture, archaeology or planning, but that only makes them more equipped to hear and make decisions on the cases brought before them. Our (and BSB’s) ultimate goal is compliance, and decisions declar-

ing properties dangerous or ordering demolished are not made lightly. We want to partner with the homeowners and help them acquire the needed permits to gain compliance so that the structure, ultimately, is safe for them and all in the neighborhood.

For any compliance issues, call the City’s 311 Call Center or download the free “311” app onto your iPhone or Android. You can also send your comments, ideas and suggestions to our new email at:

CodeConnection@sanantonio.gov

Best regards,

Mike



Michael Shannon, PE, CBO
Assistant Director-Field Services
Code Enforcement & Building
Inspections

Clarifying the Code

Neighborhood, Homeowners or Property Owners Associations can display their signs for their events on city right-of-way if they’re: placed only a week ahead of the event; removed within 48-hours following the event; are weatherproof, bear the official color, name or logo; not bigger than six (6) square feet in area and three (3)

feet high; not obstructing State, County or City signage; and aren’t creating a public safety hazard. As long you follow these guidelines, you won’t need a permit. Make sure to contact our Sign Inspections Section and provide them with a list (or map) identifying where the temporary signs will be. (City Code, Ch. 28, Sec. 28-117).

Contact Us

Cliff Morton Development & Business Services Center
1901 S. Alamo
San Antonio, Texas 78204

Hours: Monday – Friday
7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

To report Code Compliance issues call 311 or download City’s “311” Phone App

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Code Connection

“Partnering with our Community to build and maintain a safer San Antonio”



Not All Vacant Buildings are “Dangerous” — by Danny Liguez



Ever reported a dangerous building in your neighborhood and wonder what happens next? Dangerous buildings exist throughout vari-

ous city communities and it’s why we strive to improve policies and procedures on how they’re addressed. The City Code defines a dangerous building as one that is a “hazard to the public health, safety, and welfare,” and “poses a threat or potential threat to life, health, property, or human safety” (City Code, Ch. 6, Sec. 6-156).

So you may be wondering, what does that mean? How does a building become dangerous? Dangerous buildings fall mainly into three categories:

Unoccupied and Unsecured Buildings – This is the most common. Not all unoccupied structures are considered dangerous, just as not all occupied structures are considered safe. It’s possible that an occupied structure is a dangerous building. In situations like this, the Dangerous Premise (DP) Officer has the authority to issue an order to vacate, along with a notice to repair and secure.

Property owners are given a 10-day notice and, if not corrected within the allotted time frame, the City can clean and secure all accessible openings. Keep in mind that without prior notice, the City has the authority to abate unoccupied and unsecured structures within 1,000 feet of a public or private elementary school, middle school, high school or a state recognized day care center; or at the discretion of the Code Official, if the building poses such a danger to public, health, safety, and welfare (City Code, Ch. 6, Sec. 6-172). Another point to consider: failure to comply with the notice of violation can result in a fine up to \$2,000.

Distressed Property – is a building that falls into a state of disrepair and poses/is a potential threat. The second most common concern in neighborhoods, it’s caused when owners fail to maintain

their property over the years. For these structures, Officers evaluate if it can be feasibly repaired, if it poses imminent danger to its occupants and needs an order to vacate, or if the building is deteriorated to a point where repairs are not practical.

Notices give owners 30 days to repair the structure. If they fail to complete them, the officer will prepare a case to be considered by the Building Standards Board (BSB). In instances where repairs are made but are substandard and the building still poses a danger, homeowners may be prosecuted for a criminal misdemeanor offense.

Imminent Threat – is when a building is at risk of collapse and where “there is clear and imminent danger to the life, safety or property of any person unless the building is immediately demolished” (City Code, Ch. 6, Sec. 6-175). Despite being the least common category of dangerous buildings, it’s the most crucial, challenging and time-sensitive of all categories because of the high level of threat it poses.

There are 84 Officers, including 13 Dangerous Premise (DP) Officers that are strategically deployed throughout the City. Remember, if in doubt, please give us a call. If you consider a building in your neighborhood dangerous, report it by calling the City’s “311” call center. We’re always available to inspect and make an assessment — you may be saving someone from injury.

Danny Liguez is a Supervisor for the Central Field Unit and our team’s Subject Matter Expert (SME) on Dangerous Buildings. He has been with the City since 2000, the last 11 years with Code Enforcement.

“Failure to comply with the notice of violation shall be punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 dollars.”

What is the Building Standards Board? — by Amanda Esparza

The Building Standards Board (BSB), a quasi-judicial citizen-based board, became effective on January 1, 2012. The board includes 14 members of which 10 are appointed by City Council, one by the Mayor and three at-large.

The purpose of the BSB is to hear and rule on issues related to the San Antonio Property Maintenance Code (SAPMC), dangerous and dilapidated structures, appeals related to summary abatements (when the City abates a property without providing the owner prior notice, as allowed by state law and City Code), and appeals of SAPMC notices of violation.

Creating the BSB has allowed for quicker compliance by reducing the amount of time it takes for a case to be heard from an average of 88 days to 30. It has also improved transparency and the dynamic of the code enforcement process (citizen judges and a decriminalized process).

Cases are scheduled for the BSB when property owners don't comply with the SAPMC and City

Code, within the allotted time, after notices of violation are issued. BSB's ultimate goal is compliance and ordering the demolition of a property is the option of last resort, and issued only when all other avenues have been exhausted and repairing the property is no longer feasible.

We currently have a vacancy — *Multi-Family Rental Property Manager*. If you're interested, applications are available at: <https://webapps2.sanantonio.gov/boardcomm/vacancies.aspx> or through the City Clerk's website, under the news release section. For assistance, contact their office at (210) 207-7253.

For more information on the Board, please feel free to contact me at (210) 207-5422 or via e-mail at Amanda.esparza@sanantonio.gov

Amanda Esparza is the BSB Liaison, responsible for coordinating the administrative operations for the Board. She's been with the City for 14 years and believes in providing quality customer service to our citizens on behalf of the City of San Antonio.

Performance Measures — May/June 2014

We want you to know what we are doing! Our main goals are to be more proactive and to gain quicker compliance. These performance measures track our level and effectiveness of our service for Tier I and II issues. *Tier I* includes key health and safety issues, such as high weeds, trash, unsecure structures, visual obstructions. *Tier II* encompasses building maintenance and zoning.

	MAY/JUN.	FY 2014 TO DATE <i>(FY=Oct. 2013 to Sept. 2014)</i>
Inspections initiated by Code Officers (Proactive)	9,498	31,016
Inspections initiated through complaints/calls (Reactive)	3,198	8,322
Pro-activity Rate (Goal of 50%)	75%	81%
Response Time—Tier I (Goal of 2 business days)	1.2	1.4
Response Time—Tier II (Goal of 6 business days)	1.4	1.7
Compliance Rate (Goal of 90%)	96%	94%
Graffiti locations abated	3,870	10,748
Square footage of Graffiti Abated (Goal of 4 million)	649,489	2,029,778

"Partnering with our Community to build and maintain a safer San Antonio"

Did You Know...

It's against City Code to have a collection of standing or flowing water in which mosquitoes can breed, unless you follow the methods of treatment for preventing breeding described in the Code (Ch. 15, Sec. 15-155), some of which are: (1) treating water with an approved larvicide, (2) screening area with a wire netting of at least 16 meshes per inch, or (3) keeping it clean and sufficiently free of vegetation, stock with mosquito-destroying fish and with no evidence of half grown larvae. To see the City's Property Maintenance Code, log on to:

sanantonio.gov/dsd/codes.asp

For all of San Antonio's Codes, go to: www.municode.com/library/TX/San Antonio

Top 5 Violations — May/June 2014

VIOLATIONS RESOLVED	TOTAL
Trash, debris, overgrown grass	6,326
Graffiti	3,870
Bandit Signs	2,913
Vacant Lots (trash, debris, overgrown grass)	1,550
Cleaning and Securing Dangerous Premises	1,269

Before and After



BSB orders repair for this Dangerous Premises Case

Graffiti Corner



Is there a dumpster in your neighborhood that seems to attract more graffiti than trash? We've got the tools you need to make that eyesore shine!

The Adopt-A-Dumpster Program is in partnership with Waste Management and provides free green paint (blue and brown are also available) to volunteers interested in abating graffiti on their dumpsters. If you'd like to volunteer to keep our city beautiful, go online to: www.sanantonio.gov/commpa/Volunteer.aspx

You can call us to report graffiti through the City's 311 Call Center. There's also a new "311" app that is free to download onto your iPhone or Android.

San Antonio is our home, help keep it clean!

Cliff Morton Development & Business Services Center
1901 S. Alamo
San Antonio, Texas 78204
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311 or download City's "311" Phone App

We're on the web!
www.sanantonio.gov/ces

What You're Saying

"I am very satisfied with the response and professionalism with the Development Services Department. THANKS SO MUCH." - Mr. Guzman

"We volunteered with graffiti clean up under the direction of Daniel Chapa. We were very impressed with Mr. Chapa. He was extremely friendly and helpful and made our experience really enjoyable. He made time to thank us for volunteering and to speak to our daughter about the importance of her service." - Volunteer

"Had a question pertaining to city ordinances. Officer Roebuck promptly responded; timely, professional and helpful. His assistance and support is greatly appreciated." - Citizen

