

# Code Connection

## Message from our Assistant Director

**T**hank you for partnering with us in making our city, communities and homes safer.

This year begins with a new phase for the Building Standards Board (BSB). In April, 2015, District 1 Councilman Robert Treviño submitted a Council Consideration Request (CCR), to evaluate and modify the City's current demolition procedures. The intention was to find areas where the city's process in addressing "dangerous premises" could be improved. Our staff partnered with the Office of Historic Presentation (OHP) to amend how our department, Development Services (DSD), OHP, BSB and the Historic Design & Review Commission (HDRC) reassesses and determines the feasibility of repairing or demolishing a structure deemed dangerous. The results were several amendments to our Unified Development Code (UDC), detailed in this issue's article.

Achieving compliance with San Antonio's code ordinances and UDC is our charge. One of the challenges we often face are "absentee property owners," residing outside of Bexar County or have a P.O. Box as an address. This is fairly common in rental properties. To address this challenge, the Absentee Property Owner Registration ordinance was created and passed in 2013. Applicable to single-family homes and duplexes, any property that has more than two violations within a year are subject to be registered by the owners. There is an an-

nual fee and the requirement includes contact information be provided for a local property manager. In its third year, DSD will be evaluating the level of success of this initiative by assessing if the number of code violations has decreased overall for these types of properties.

2016 marks two years of *Code Connection* and to celebrate, we've created a new, fresh look. We look forward to continue our work for and with the community to make San Antonio safe and healthy. If you have any compliance issues, there are a few ways you can let us know:

- Call 311
- Download the free "311" app onto your smart phone
- Visit our website at [www.sanantonio.gov/ces](http://www.sanantonio.gov/ces) and click on the "Report a Violation" icon on right

Please continue to send your comments, ideas and suggestions to us at:

[CodeConnection@sanantonio.gov](mailto:CodeConnection@sanantonio.gov)

Best Regards,



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

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## 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.

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

**The New Phase of the Building Standards Board – Jenny Ramirez**

This past October, City Council passed an ordinance amending Sec. 6-159 of the City Code - “Standards for repair, vacation, or demolition; BSB review of demolition settlement.” With these modifications, the Director of the Development Services Department (DSD) can now allow additional time to develop a rehabilitation plan for occupied homesteads

Because properties designated historic are important to our community, some procedural changes (Sec. 6-155.1) were made. Cases for structures designated a historic landmark or located within a historic district that may constitute a hazard to public safety and have not received a recommendation for a demolition order from the HDRC will require a full board (both panels). These proce-

and Commissions” or by calling (210) 207-7253.

The BSB may issue civil penalties for failure to comply with the San Antonio Property Maintenance Code (SAPMC). The panels also rule on cases related to the repair or demolition of unsafe structures. Each panel holds a hearing twice per month unless otherwise indicated. Meeting dates are the first and third

PREVIOUS BOARD	NEW BOARD AS OF FEB. 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14-member citizen-based quasi-judicial board – two 7 member panels made up of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 appointed by Council Districts</li> <li>3 appointed at large / 1 appointed by Mayor (within the below categories)                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single family rental property manager</li> <li>Multi-family rental property manager</li> <li>Commercial rental property manager (or other design professional)</li> <li>Historic preservation professional</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14-member citizen-based quasi-judicial board* – two 7 member panels, each panel having:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>architect**</li> <li>engineer**</li> <li>general contractor**</li> <li>social worker</li> <li>health care professional</li> <li>retired person (over the age of 64)</li> <li>a veteran of the United States Military</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*10 still appointed by Council Districts, 1 appointed by Mayor and 3 members at large</p> <p>**1 of each architect, engineer and general contractor shall have demonstrated experience addressing adaptive reuse of existing and historic buildings.</p>

under special circumstances faced by the owner including, but not limited to, mental and or physical hardships, age, income, length of occupancy and veteran status. The homeowner may be given an additional 9 months without facing any fines or penalties during this time.

The ordinance also modified the make-up of the Building Standards Board (BSB) appointees to ensure architects, engineers, social workers, health care professionals, retiree and a veteran are represented. The table best illustrates the changes.

dures will also require that at least one of the designated historic professionals be present to hear and vote on such case.

Other amendments included adding language that will allow OHP staff to collect and use bids from third party contractors to verify economic hardship claims to the Historic Design & Review Commission (Sec. 35-614b).

We are currently looking for applicants to serve on the BSB. You can find additional information at <http://www.sanantonio.gov/dsd>, under “Board

Thursdays for Panel A, and the second and fourth Thursdays for Panel B, and generally run from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Location and times of meetings are subject to change on occasion.

If you are interested in being part of the BSB, or know of someone who may be, applications are available at <https://webapps2.sanantonio.gov/BoardComm/Vacancies.aspx>.

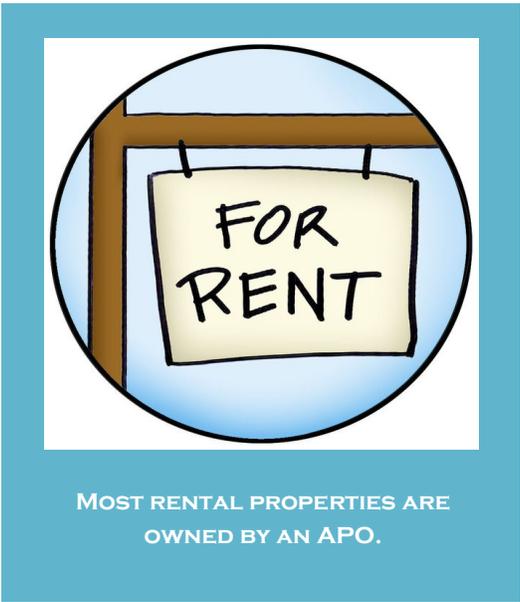
**Jenny Ramirez** has worked with Code Enforcement for 18 years. She was recently promoted to Code Enforcement Manager with the Development Services Department in October 2015.

## Any Absentee Owners in Your Area? - Alma Martinez-Jimenez

On Sept. 19, 2013, City Council passed the Absentee Property Owner (APO) Registration ordinance. Someone who owns a one- or two-family (a duplex) dwelling and resides outside of Bexar County, or has a P.O. Box on file with the Bexar County Appraisal District (BCAD), is considered to be an APO. To be identified for registration, the Development Services Department (DSD) uses a rolling one-year window to find properties having two or more code violations within the past 12 months. Once identified, these properties must register for a minimum of two years and pay a \$50 annual registration fee. In addition, contact information for a local property manager – who can act as an agent on behalf of the property owner – must be provided by the APO so future violations are addressed faster and more efficiently. If properties continue to have violations, then annual registration continues to apply. Before this ordinance was approved, APOs were found to be 30% more likely to have a code violation and 70% more likely to have a lien placed on the property due to non-compliance and non-payment of abatement costs covered by the City.

Since implementation of this registration program, more than 1,000 properties have been identified. Close to 10% of these properties have a P.O. Box on file with the BCAD. Some APOs have shown that they live in San Antonio and have generally indicated that they use a P.O. Box to (a) collect rental payments from their tenants at a central location if multiple proper-

ties are involved or (b) desire to maintain their home address as “private” from tenants or other parties. Today, about 300 properties have been registered by APOs along with their first-year fee. Almost a third of these properties have already paid for their second year of registration.



Failure to register is a Class C misdemeanor, prosecuted in Municipal Court that can result in a criminal conviction or a warrant if the property owner doesn't appear. To date, we have filed on nearly 20 cases for failure to register and more than a third have been found guilty. Before a case is filed in Municipal Court, an APO's date of birth must be verified and submitted by the Code Enforcement Officer. However, this has posed a challenge since personal information for APOs living outside of Bexar County is difficult to locate and verify. Additional cases are being prepared to be filed in court.

Our next step will be to evaluate whether this registration program is making a difference in our community. Has there been a decrease in the number of code violations for properties identified as having APOs? Initial results show a decrease in code violations. For about 100 properties registered in 2014, there was a notable reduction six months after registration from 2.3 to 0.7 code violations. We'll look at these properties again, this time over a one-year timeframe, to determine if the decrease is maintained. DSD will also reach out to various stakeholders to obtain input as to whether communities across San Antonio have noticed a difference. This information, along with any recommended changes to the ordinance, will be presented to the City Council on September 15, 2016.

**Alma Martinez-Jimenez** joined the City in 2008 and came to Code Enforcement in May 2014 as a Senior Special Projects Manager. She's responsible for the oversight of special units including Graffiti, Neighborhood Enhancement Team (NET), Boarding Homes, Building Standards Board support, and Zoning and Permitting section.



### Be the voice of your neighborhood to make things happen!

- We're looking for more volunteers to work with us in developing effective solutions and strategies to those issues that matter the most in your neighborhood.
- The Neighborhood Code Enforcement Task Force (NCETF) was created 2 yrs. ago and is comprised of multiple representatives from each Council District.
- Call your City Council Office to become a member!



**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT**

Cliff Morton Development & Business  
Services Center  
1901 S. Alamo

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311 or download City's "311" Phone App

**We're on the web!**  
[www.sanantonio.gov/ces](http://www.sanantonio.gov/ces)

## Did You Know...

As temperatures begin to drop, the San Antonio Fire and Development Services Departments want you to keep the following safety tips in mind: (1) have your central heating system inspected and serviced by a licensed professional before you use it; (2) have your chimney and fireplace inspected for cracks, blockages and leaks by a professional chimney sweep; (3) burn only seasoned hardwood in your fireplace; (4) be sure the vent is open before you light up your fireplace; (5) don't use your stove or oven to heat up your home; (6) place space heaters at least 3 ft. away from anything flammable, including furniture or curtains; (7) supervise children and pets at all times when space or fireplaces are in use; (8) change the batteries in your smoke detectors! They are your early warning device.

To see San Antonio's Property Maintenance Code, visit [sanantonio.gov/dsd/codes.asp](http://sanantonio.gov/dsd/codes.asp).

For all of San Antonio's Codes, go to: [www.municode.com/library/TX/San\\_Antonio](http://www.municode.com/library/TX/San_Antonio)

## Performance Measures - Nov./Dec. 2015

	NOV.	DEC.	TOTAL	FY 2016 (FY = Oct. 2015 - Sept. 2016)
Cases initiated by Code Officers (Proactive)	4,989	5,317	10,306	16,042
Cases initiated through complaints/calls (Reactive)	1,011	853	1,864	3,135
Pro-activity Rate (Goal of 50%)	81%	83%	82%	81%
Response Time—Tier I (Goal of 2 business days)	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
Response Time—Tier II (Goal of 6 business days)	2.0	1.5	1.8	1.7
Compliance Rate (Goal of 90%)	95%	95%	95%	95%
Graffiti locations abated	3,852	3,902	7,754	12,927
Square footage of Graffiti Abated (Goal of 3.6 million)	271,366	271,141	542,507	1,015,496

### What You're Saying

"My comments are with respect to my attendance at TAG Meetings at the Police Department (Safety Building). Lisa McKenzie (Graffiti sets up informative meetings, gets emails to us at least one day in advance. She is courteous and positive at the meetings. The exact date doesn't apply to my response because I've attended several meetings on several different dates." - Resident

"Code Enforcement Officer Brittany Kjos showed a concern and interest in helping fix multiple sites where we had code compliance problems." - G. Schotts

"I would like to thank Lisa McKenzie and Frank Perez for providing superb service for removing gang graffiti from my mother's neighborhood. It was a concern for me after our next door neighbor's house was shot at. This was a serious matter and they took care of it very professionally and efficiently. And, for that, I would like to commend them for their service and helping make my mother's street just a little bit more safer. The City of San Antonio should be proud to have them and to be serving our city. So, thank you Lisa and Frank." - City of Austin Resident

## Graffiti Corner

Michael Shannon joins the Graffiti Abatement Team gathers to say goodbye to Estevan Parras, who retired after 20 years of service.

If you would like to attend one of our Graffiti Volunteer Classes, please contact Lisa McKenzie at 207-5430 or [Lisa.McKenzie@sanantonio.gov](mailto:Lisa.McKenzie@sanantonio.gov)

To report graffiti, call 311 or by using the City's free "311" app.



**Bottom Row (L-R):** Lori Campos, Veronica Rivas, Estevan Parras, William Gonzales

**Second Row (L-R):** Lisa McKenzie, Roland Martinez, Edward Arguello, Nancy Velazquez, Manuel Torres, Christopher Mercado, Daniel Chapa

**Third Row (L-R):** Frank Perez, Michael Shannon, Steven Medrano, Robert Garcia, Jose Garza, Rupert Tovar, Jason Riley