

# Changing history

## Belton historic grant funds used to update facade of historic building

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**BELTON** — Downtown Belton suffered a blow to its history when the City Council in February decided to help pay for a refacing of one of the city's oldest buildings, according to the city's preservation consultant.

Belton officials also failed to follow guidelines of its Facade Improvement Grant program, when \$10,000 was dedicated to fund the new brick veneer at 102 S. East St., rather than stay faithful to the weather-aged limestone facade that had lined the street since the 1870s.

Monteith Abstract & Title, which owned the property, received the \$10,000 facade grant in February upon a recommendation by City Manager Sam Listi. In a public hearing, the City Council approved the grant as a consent agenda item — meaning as a “routine” item without discussion.

Listi said he recommended approval of the grant because the brick veneer matched the building next door, also owned by Monteith Abstract

& Title, thus fitting the style of the neighborhood.

But the grant is also designed to rehabilitate historic buildings, not eliminate their unique features, said Michael Kelsey, who served as chair of the Belton Heritage Preservation Board, which reviewed building requests in the city's historic districts until recently.

It did the opposite in this case, he said.

“What happened was heresy to any preservationist. You just don't do that,” he said. “This is exactly why the City Council should have nothing to do with preservation.”

Steph McDougal, the certified historic preservation professional commissioned by the city to help revise its preservation ordinance this summer, had a similar assessment of the refacing.

“If asked, I would have said it was inappropriate,” McDougal said.

Despite the redesign, none of the original limestone was cut or altered, said Thomas Ogilvie of Ogilvie Construction, the firm hired to follow

Please see **FACADE**, 6A

## Historic building before and after



Courtesy photos

Limestone can be seen on the front of a historic building, left photo, at 102 S. East St. in Belton. The same building, right, now has a brick veneer facade.

## Facade

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the designs of Temple architect Larry Neal.

“One hundred years from now, 20 years from now, if they want to change it they can,” Ogilvie said. “The existing structure and the existing stone are still there. Nothing's been changed.”

The city's building department confirmed the building is

structurally sound, other than some minor rotted wood.

The grant in February was the second time in recent months that the city failed to follow policies or recommendations of its existing historic preservation ordinance. Also in February, the city approved a permit for the demolition of a historic home that should have been required an extra layer of review.

Listi stopped short of calling

the 102 S. East St. grant a mistake — the City Council has final say whether to approve a facade despite any recommendations, according to the program — but acknowledged the city hired an outside consultant in the hopes of refining its preservation efforts.

“There's just a great opportunity to do a better job in the future.”

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