

Permitted Front Yard Porches

Front yard porches in Plainfield have great significance as representations of our town. They are often the first thing passersby notice about our homes and as more of our adjacent communities have allowed these porches to be enclosed, the more desirable and valuable Plainfield's "front yard wraparound porches" become. Realtors and community planners consistently tell us that the existence of these porches immediately increase the value of our homes. In order to protect the value of these porches, the Plainfield Land Use Ordinance contains regulations which require residents to adhere to when performing any repairs or changes to a front porch, particularly in our historic homes. Included in this notice are the regulations and procedures all



property owners are encouraged to review in order to understand the process of repairing or constructing a front yard porch.



It is important to note that while many homeowners may see the enclosure of a front porch as a cost effective way to obtain additional interior living space the city views the continued existence and protection of open front yard porches as a vital way to maintain Plainfield's unique character and property values.

The definition of a front yard porch refers to any structure attached to the entrance of a building that has a roof and that may or may not have walls. Alterations to porches do require property owners to submit zoning and building permit applications to the city inspections and building divisions for zoning and building plan review.

According to **Section 17:9-44**: *"Porches shall be permitted on all residential lots as accessory structures. Adequate surveys, plans and details are to be submitted to the Zoning Officer in accordance with Article 1, in order for determination to be made as the proposed porch zoning conformance"*.

Please read the following regulations when considering front porch alterations.

- ❖ For all residential structures, porches cannot be located in the required side yard setback area but may be located in the required front or rear yard setback, provided they do not extend more than eight (8) feet into the front yard setback area. Porches cannot be closer than seventeen (17) feet to the front property line and twenty-two (22) feet to the rear property line. Porches are considered a

permanent encroachment into the front or rear yard setback of the principal building. The required setbacks shall continue to be measured from the foundation of the principal use. (This regulation allows/encourages homeowners to install a front porch into required front yards).

- ❖ Enclosed porches shall not be heated or air conditioned and at least fifty (50) percent of the exterior wall area shall be open and non-glazed. (This does not mean that a property owner can enclose fifty (50) percent of the property porch; it means that fifty (50) percent of the total wall area around a porch must be open and non-glazed).
- ❖ For townhouses, apartments and nonresidential uses, porches may not extend into any required yard setback area.
- ❖ Upper story structures are not permitted over porches if those porches encroach into required yards.
- ❖ No use is permitted above a porch
- ❖ Porch flooring shall be tongue and groove material and not made of structural lumber/pressure treated decking. (By definition porches have roofs and floors; wood flooring-spruce, fir, mahogany, etc.-is to be utilized for all wood flooring. Decks do not have roofs; therefore, have no weather protection and pressure treated wood is appropriate. But not for porch floors.)
- ❖ Steps for porches and decks shall not be located closer than six (6) feet from the property line.

Regulations for Historic Preservation Commissions

There are eight residential historic districts in Plainfield and it is in these districts where the protection and preservation of front yard porches is most important. If a property owner proposes to maintain an existing porch or utilize the same type of wood, then a zoning approval and building permit is all that is required. It is only if a property owner chooses to change the type of wood that a separate application must be made to the Historic Preservation Commission for a **Certification of Appropriateness. (Section 17:10-4.A.4)**

In order to begin the process of reconstructing, repairing or constructing new front yard porches, property owners must submit the following:

- 1) A completed Development Permit Application
- 2) Proof of payment of the application fee
- 3) A copy of a property survey of the subject site

Homeowners can obtain applications in Room 202(Planning Division) in City Hall or on the city's website (www.plainfieldnj.gov) by clicking "All Downloads" link on the left of the page.