



City of Plainfield Homeowner's Handbook

**CITY OF PLAINFIELD
DIVISION OF INSPECTIONS
515 WATCHUNG AVE
DIVISION OF BUILDING AND
CONSTRUCTION
508 WATCHUNG AVE**

CITY OF PLAINFIELD DIVISION OF INSPECTIONS

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Revised 5/2021

ONE PLAINFIELD ♦ ONE FUTURE



**MAYOR ADRIAN O. MAPP
ONE PLAINFIELD ♦ ONE FUTURE**

VIOLATION: PENALTY– SECOND OFFENSE

Violations of Sections 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.13 and 2.14 as listed above shall be punishable by fines of not less than \$250.00 and not more than \$750.00 for the second offense and/or not more than three (3) days imprisonment and/or the equivalent in community service.

VIOLATION: PENALTY–THIRD AND SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES

Violations of Sections 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.13 and 2.14 as listed above shall be punishable by fines not less than \$500.00 and not more than \$1,000.00 for a third offense and all offenses thereafter with a term of imprisonment and/or the equivalent in community service of not less than five (5) but not more than ten (10) days.

PENALTIES

Fines—A violation of any section or subsection of this code shall be punishable by a fine not to exceed One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00) for each violation committed hereunder. Each violation of a section or subsection of this code shall constitute a separate and distinct violation independent of any other section or subsection. Each day's failure to comply with any such section or subsection shall constitute a separate violation.

Penalties in Addition—Where an owner, operator, or occupant has been convicted of a violation of this code, and within twelve (12) months thereafter has been found by the Magistrate of the Municipal Court to be guilty of a second violation of this, the offender in addition to or in lieu of the fine set forth in the above paragraph to imprisonment in the County jail for a period of time not to exceed ninety (90) days.

Liability of Officers and Agents—Where the defendant is other than a natural person or persons, the above two (2) paragraphs shall also apply to any agent, or superintendent, officer, member or partner who shall alone or with others have charge, care, or control of the premises.

VIOLATION: PENALTY—FIRST OFFENSE

Violation of Sections 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.13 and 2.14 as listed below shall be punishable by fines of not less than the amounts listed below and not more than \$500.00 for the first offense as follows:

2.01 Failure to remove trash and debris	\$150.00
2.02 Failure to cut and maintain lawn	\$150.00
2.03 Failure to remove abandoned/disable vehicle	\$200.00
2.13 Improper garbage storage	\$150.00
2.14 Failure to provide garbage removal services no less than twice weekly	\$150.00

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Greetings Residents and Property Owners,

On behalf of the staff of the City of Plainfield I bring you good will and greetings.

As Mayor of Plainfield, I vowed to provide the City with the best possible services and resources, and to this end, this handbook is designed to help guide homeowners with preventive maintenance ideas.

Our City has valuable housing stock of both old and new homes that require periodic maintenance. Keeping properties well maintained help to ensure compliance with our Property Maintenance Codes—which are designed to rid our beautiful city of unsightliness and blight. With a little maintenance we hope to ensure our community is safe and pleasant for all to live, enjoy and take pride in.

Please familiarize yourself with the information in this handbook and feel free to call our staff at the Division of Inspections with any questions or concerns.

By working together, we can build
One Plainfield - One Future.



Mayor Adrian O. Mapp

City of Plainfield

Heating Requirements

From October 1st to May 1st, when the temperature falls below 55 degrees F, the interior of every dwelling unit or rooming unit, bathroom, and water closet compartment shall be maintained at a minimum of 68 degrees F during the hours of 6:00 AM to 11:00 PM. In that same timeframe, when the weather falls below 40 degrees F, the minimum interior temperature shall be maintained at 65 degrees F between 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM.

From May 1st to October 1st, , every dwelling unit, rooming unit, bathroom and water closet compartment shall be maintained at a temperature of a minimum of 68 degrees F between 6am-11pm and overnight when the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees F.

The owner shall not be responsible for heat loss and the consequent drop in the interior temperature arising out of action by the occupant leaving windows or doors open to the exterior of the building. The presence of heating outlets, radiators, risers, or returns in any hall or dwelling unit or rooming unit shall constitute a presumption that the owner is to supply heat in compliance with the above mentioned guidelines.

INTERIOR MAINTENANCE FOR MONTHLY 3 & 6 MONTH MAINTENANCE CHORES

CHORE	DATES						NOTES
	3—6 MONTHS						
CIRCUIT BREAKERS							
FURNACE FILTERS							
HOT WATER TANK VALVE							
HOT WATER TANK DRAIN							
BATHROOM TILES							
FIREPLACE—CLEAN							
	MONTHLY						
STOVE PILOT LIGHTS							
GROUND FAULT INTER							
STREAM RELIEF VALVE							
OUTLETS/RECEPT.							
PIPES/FAUCETS							

Dear Resident,

The Division of Inspections, which falls under the Department of Public Works, is responsible for the enforcement of the Property Maintenance Code . The Division of Building and Construction , which falls under the Department of Economic Development, is responsible for the enforcement of the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) as well as a host of other local and State codes.

This pamphlet can be found online at plainfieldnj.gov.

We look forward to bringing you quality service. With your help, we can have a safe and beautiful city.

Adrian O. Mapp

Mayor

Business Administrator

Abby Levenson

Communications and IT Director

Jazz Clayton– Hunt

Corporation Counsel

David Minchello

City Clerk

Abubakar Jalloh

Economic Development Director

Valerie Jackson

Health and Social Services Director

Shep Brown

Finance Director

Ron West

Fire Director

Kenneth Childress

Acting Police Director

Captain David Guarino

Public Works Director

Oren K. Dabney Sr.

Frequently Called

CITY AGENCIES

Police & Fire Emergencies **911**

Mayor	753-3310
City Administrator	226-2570
City Clerk	753-3222
City Yard	753-3427
Code Enforcement/Inspections	753-3386
Construction Office	226-2665
Economic Development	226-2513
Community Development	753-3610
Engineering	226-2514
Fire Prevention Bureau	753-3430
Health	753-3092
Municipal Court	753-3062
Parking Bureau	753-3200
Personnel	753-3219
Plainfield Action Services	753-3519
Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority (PMUA)	226-2518
Planning	753-3391
Public Works Department	753-3375
Recreation	753-3097
Senior Citizen's Center	753-3506
Tax Assessor	753-3203
Tax Collector	753-3215
Vital Statistics	753-3373

PLUMBING

Run your faucets regularly to ensure water is flowing. Check pipe joints for leaks and repair immediately. Check the sump pump float to see if it will rise and fall freely. Once a year check all shutoff valves to make sure they are functional. For all other matters consult with a licensed plumber.

HEATING

Oil burners should be cleaned, serviced and tuned up every year by your oil company. Gas burners should be serviced every third year by the local utility company. On hot water systems, bleed all radiator valves before heating season to rid the pipes of accumulated air. The system should be blown out no less than once a month during heating season. Make sure that all air valves on the radiators are clear and in working order. For other matters, consult a licensed plumber.

HOT WATER TANK

A properly maintained hot water tank will last longer than the average 5–10 years. Sediment should be drained every six (6) months. This is done by opening the drain valve located at the base of the tank, drain at least a bucket of water from the tank. If there is a high mineral content in the water it should be drained every three (3) months. Once a year the pressure relief valve should be tripped. If the valve is working properly it will emit a spurt of water when it is tripped. If it does not, it needs to be replaced.

INTERIOR MAINTENANCE

Interior maintenance is important for maintaining the structural integrity and overall value of your home.

FRAMING

At least once a year check all exposed wood for signs of decay or termite activity. The basement, crawl space, and attic of a house will be the major areas to check. Probe exposed wood to check for soundness and repair or replace any defective wood. Evidence of insect activity should be checked by a professional exterminator.

FIREPLACE

This maintenance may be done yearly or less depending on the frequency of use. Check the joints between the fireplace bricks for loose mortar that may need repairs. Have the fireplace flue cleaned by a professional chimney sweep to remove the buildup of soot and creosol. Clean the rim around the damper to maintain a tight seal when the damper is closed and clean out the ash pit.

BATHROOM TILES

Check all tile joints on the tub wall for cracks or missing grout that needs to be replaced. Water will seep behind the missing tiles and cause damage to the walls and floor. Check the caulking around the tub and the base of the tub where it meets the floor. A good seal will prevent water from seeping under the tub and rotting out the floor. After grouting all areas, seal with silicone water proofing sealer. This should be done on an as needed basis.

ELECTRICAL

The electrical system does not require an annual maintenance schedule, but you should check the following to ensure safety. Trip circuit breakers every six (6) months to make sure they are functional. If you find one that does not shut off, contact a licensed electrician. Limit your use of extension cords and plug in receptacle extenders, instead have additional outlets installed and secure any loose outlets to the wall. Contact a licensed electrician for all electrical maintenance.

Codes and Ordinances Every Homeowner Should Know

Garbage

Removal—Citywide municipal pickup is performed twice a week by Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority on either Mondays & Thursdays or Tuesdays & Fridays. If you are unsure of your pickup day, call the PMUA (908) 226-2518. Be aware if you do not put your receptacle back at the rear of your property, PMUA will do so and a \$10.00 charge will appear on your bill.

Storage - All garbage, until removed from the premises, is to be stored at the rear. Garbage containers are provided by the PMUA.

Recycling

Recycling is handled thru Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority (PMUA). Please contact PMUA for all information, schedules, policies and procedures related to recycling at (908) 226—2518.

Lawn/Hedges/Bushes (Yard Waste)

Grass and shrubbery shall be cut/trimmed regularly and maintained. Brush schedule (which is issued in April) can only be put out (1) day prior to pick up.

Leaf Removal

Leaf removal is done twice a year in the Spring and Fall by the Division of Public Works. Prior to pickup a flyer is mailed to each property with curbside pickup information and a schedule.

DRIVEWAYS

Cracks in asphalt driveways allow water to seep in, freeze and expand in winter, causing further damage. Annual maintenance consists of patching cracks with a cold mix asphalt compound and sealing the surface with an asphalt liquid coating. If you have a catch basin at the base of your driveway be sure to clean out the leaves in the spring and fall.

WALKS AND PATIOS

After winter, check masonry walks and patios for cracks and deterioration and check sidewalk slabs for raised sections. If you find any raised sections, level them off to prevent any tripping hazards. If a City tree (located between the sidewalk and curb) is causing the sidewalk to be raised, contact the Division of Public Works to have the tree roots cut. However, sidewalk repair/replacement is the homeowners responsibility once City tree issue is abated.

FENCING

Wood fences will rot if not properly maintained. Look over the wood posts for rotting and insects regularly. Replace damaged sections with pressure treated posts and railings which have greater resistance to decay than untreated wood.

⇒ Zoning Requirements For Fences:

- Pool Barrier Fences must be six feet.
- Chain link fences are prohibited.
- Only 4' open fences are permitted in front yards and up to 6' in side or rear yard.

SHRUBBERY & LAWN

Keep all grass and shrubbery cut and maintained. Shrubs should be cut away from foundation and structure to prevent moisture retention which can cause mildew and rot. Dead shrubbery and trees should be removed to eliminate possible nesting sites for insects. Tree limbs should be cut away from the roof to prevent damage to the roof shingles. Wood for fireplaces must be stored at least 12" off the ground to eliminate the possibility of rodents nesting.

Vehicles

Outdoor Storage - Commercial -

Outdoor storage, except for that which is customarily used in conjunction with and accessory to residential occupancy, is prohibited in all residential zones. Outdoor storage is not permitted in required front yard setbacks. Storage for commercial uses is not permitted in residential zones.

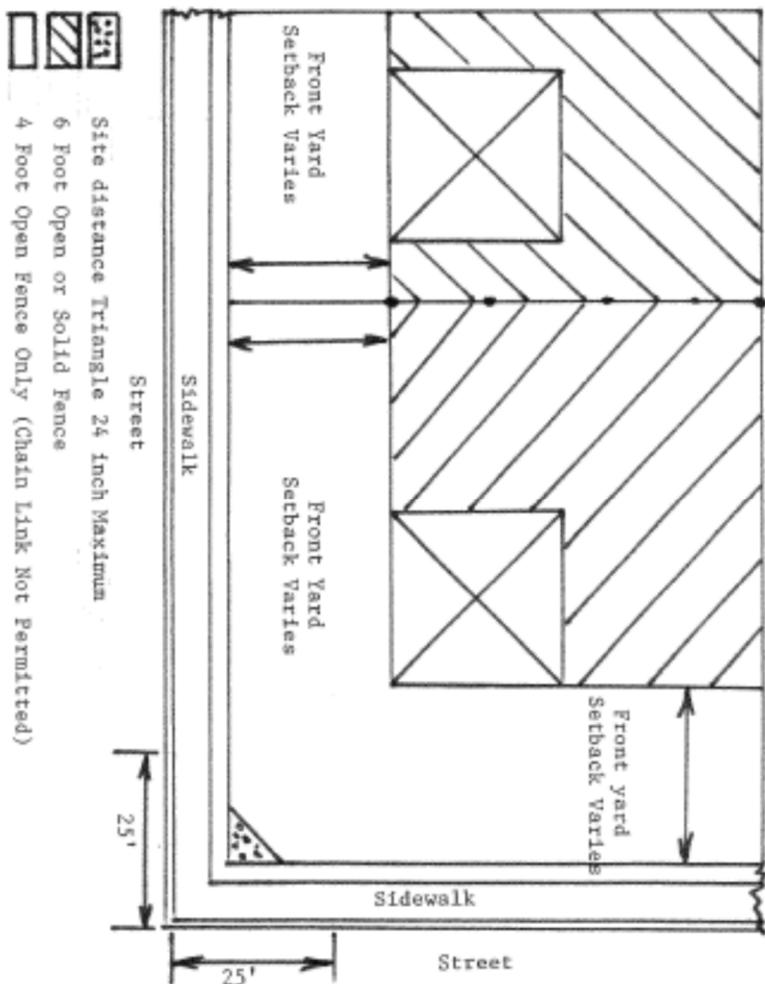
Passenger—No currently unlicensed, unregistered, or uninsured vehicle may be parked on the property, and no vehicle shall parked on the property may be in a state of major disassembly, disrepair, or in the process or being stripped or dismantled. One (1) unregistered motor vehicle or non-operable vehicle may be located on a residential property in a garage.

Campers/Trailers/Recreation - No motor home, camping trailer, boat or recreational vehicle shall be stored in residential zones unless it is stored in a side or rear yard or in a garage. One (1) unregistered motor vehicle or non-operable vehicle may be located on a residential property in a garage.

Parking—The parking of vehicles of any type in the front yard area, except driveways, is prohibited.

Repair—A vehicle of any type shall not undergo major overhaul, including body work, in a residential district.

Zoning Ordinance guidelines for fences, structures, planting, and shrubbery in residential districts.



FOUNDATIONS

Patch and repair all openings in the foundation walls. Seal around openings for dryer vents and utility connections with a quality silicone sealer and replace any broken cellar windows. Rodents cannot enter a house if there are no holes or openings for entry.

ENTRANCES

Make necessary repairs to stairs and platforms as needed. If railings are wood, remove any rotted sections and replace with new wood, sand, prime and paint them to keep them in good repair. Keep all exposed areas protected with a good coat of stain or paint. Secure all loose or weakened railings and handrails. The safety of your family depends on secure railing in case of a slip on the stairs.

DECKS & PORCHES

Rain, snow and ice can cause serious damage to exposed wood decks and porches. Be sure to apply a wood preservative every year. Replace any rotted sections and if possible use pressure treated wood which will resist rot and decay.

GARAGES

All steps of maintenance performed on your house should also be done on your garage. A garage in good repair adds to the value of your home and if you own a one family dwelling, a garage is required under the Zoning Ordinance.

GUTTERS & DOWNSPOUTS

Check gutters and downspouts in the spring and fall (more often if you have trees close to the house) as this the most important system on the house to prevents water damage. Defective gutters and misaligned downspouts can cause serious water damage to the inside and outside of your home. Remove all debris from the gutters, and run water from a garden hose into the downspout to ensure that it is debris free. Clogged gutters prevent water from properly draining into the downspouts and spill over onto the siding, which in time will cause decay of wood, or other damage. Many basements are flooded because of defective gutters and downspouts. Constant water draining onto the siding and foundation walls can cause serious and expensive damage to your home.

SIDING

A good paint job will protect your siding from water damage and wood rot. Scrape down all peeling surfaces to the bare wood and prime with a good quality primer followed by 2 coats of paint. Check masonry walls for cracks or open mortar joints. Scrape away all loose mortar or stucco and apply fresh mortar. Cut shrubs and ivy away from the house to prevent mildew.

VENTILATION

Check window screens at the end of winter for damage and make any needed repairs.

WINDOWS

Check the condition of all storm windows. Check the main window caulking and replace any broken or cracked areas. Caulking in good repair acts as a weather barrier and prevents wind from entering the interior of your home. Repair any rotted wood and apply a coat of paint to the sills. Make sure window locks are secure, and replace any broken sash cords.

DOORS

Prior to winter, check the weather-stripping around the door to make sure it's not damaged. Good weather-stripping will cut down on heating costs considerably.

WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?

The Uniform Construction Code (UCC) provides that ordinary maintenance can be made to a building without an application for a construction permit being filed with the Building Department.

Listed below are some *examples* of repairs or work that ***require a permit***. If you are unsure if a permit is needed for work you are planning to do, call the Building Department at 908-226-2665 and make an inquiry. A homeowner or contractor that does not obtain the necessary permits can be subjected to fines and penalties under the Uniform Construction Code State of New Jersey.

1. Any type of new addition—if you build a deck, room, etc.
2. Installation of new electrical outlets, fixture or wiring.
3. Installation of new bathroom fixtures, toilet, tub, with rearrangement to piping.
4. Rearrangements to any plumbing pipes.
5. Installing central air conditioning.
6. Converting your heating system to a different type.
7. Repair of existing roofing material over 25% of the total roof.
8. Repair of existing siding over 25% of total building exterior.
9. Altering the dimensions or framing of a door or window.
10. Installing a hot water heater.
11. Removing a bearing wall & installing a new beam, columns, & footings.
12. Alterations to the interior layout.
13. Finishing an attic or basement.

REPAIRS IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

There are ten (10) historic districts in Plainfield, which are; Cedar Brook Park District, Crescent Area District, Hillside Avenue District, Netherwood Heights District, VanWyck Brooks District, North Avenue District, Putnam-Watchung District, Broadway District, Civic District and Green Brook Park District. The owner of any property in the Historic Districts or property designated as a Local Historic Landmark must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission prior to making any additions, alterations, maintenance or repair that results in changes to the exterior of the improved property, including demolition or relocation of any structure. Contact the Planning Division at 908-753-3664 for more information. A detailed booklet, "Design Guidelines for Historic Districts and Sites" is available at City Hall in the Planning Division.

If you intend to do any of the following to your property, approval must be obtained from the Commission:

1. Demolish a building, place, or structure.
2. Relocate a building or structure.
3. Change the exterior appearance of a building or structure by additions, reconstruction, alteration, maintenance or repair, if the change can be seen from a public street. Changes to the exterior appearance include but are not limited to the removal, repair or replacement of windows, doors shutters, balustrades, railings, columns, cornices, moldings, trim, stairs, steps porches, walkways, siding, gutters, signs and solar panels.
4. Create an addition by constructing a principal or accessory building or structure which could be seen from a public street.
5. Change existing walls or fences, or create new walls or fences which could be seen from a public street.

Note: If in doubt, contact the Planning Division at 908-753-3391, or visit the Planning Office at City Hall.

HOMEOWNER'S MAINTENANCE CHECK LIST

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE

Exterior maintenance begins at the top and works its way down. Listed below are the important areas of a house that require yearly maintenance. Regular maintenance will extend the life of your home and protect your investment.

ROOF

In spring, when all the winter battering is over, check the condition of the roof shingles. Look for broken or missing shingles and deterioration caused by wind, snow, and ice. Damaged shingles should be replaced to prevent water from getting into the attic.

CHIMNEY

When you see loose or crumbling mortar between the joints of bricks, it's time for repairs. Scrape out the loose debris, wet down the joints and apply fresh mortar. If the chimney is high you might want to hire a mason to do the repairs. If you have a wood burning stove, check the flue connection to the chimney. Make sure the connection is tight to prevent dangerous fumes from seeping into your home. Have the flue cleaned annually to prevent danger of fire or carbon monoxide leaks.

FLASHING

The flashing around chimneys, vent pipes, skylights, and roof edges will loosen over a period of time. Water will find its way into the smallest of openings, therefore check all flashings annually. A good coating of roof cement under and over the flashing will suffice.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

A Certificate of Compliance is required before any person, firm, corporation or other entity shall purchase, sell, transfer, lease, occupy, rent , etc., any building, structure or premise. This requirement applies whether the sale, transfer, conveyance, or change in ownership, occupancy, rental, or lease is temporary, seasonal, or permanent. Applications may be obtained from Division of Inspections in City Hall.

APPLICATION FEES

A. The following fee schedule applies:

- (1) Fifty Dollars (\$50) for the first dwelling unit, and Twenty-five (\$25) per additional dwelling unit.
- (2) Three Hundred Dollars (\$300) for each commercial building, structure or premise.
- (3) Seventy-five Dollars (\$75) per lot, plot or parcel for premises consisting of vacant land.
- (4) Three Hundred Dollars (\$300) for mixed use buildings, structures and premises.
- (5) In the event that the Division of Inspections cannot enter the premise on the date of a scheduled inspection, there will be an additional fee of Fifty Dollars (\$50) to be paid for the rescheduling of the inspection.

B. An application for an exemption from obtaining a Certificate of Compliance with respect to any building, structure, or premise shall be filed, together with a fee of Seventy Five Dollars (\$75).

LOCATION MAP: Plainfield Historic District and Sites

Map available on City’s website and posted in the Planning office

