



City of Plainfield Homeowner's Handbook

**CITY OF PLAINFIELD
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
DIVISION OF INSPECTIONS**

**CITY OF PLAINFIELD
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

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ONE PLAINFIELD ♦ ONE FUTURE



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

Heating Requirements

From October 1st to May 1st, 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 between 6:00 AM to 11:00 PM whenever the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees F. During the hours between 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM the minimum interior temperature shall be maintained at 65 degrees F. whenever the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees F.

Except as hereinafter stated, from May 1st to October 1st, , every dwelling unit, rooming unit, bathroom and water closet compartment shall be maintained at a temperature of 68 degrees F. during the daytime hours from 6:00 AM in the morning and 11:00 PM in the evening whenever the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees F.

In meeting the aforesaid standards the owner shall not be responsible for heat loss and the consequent drop in the interior temperature arising out of action by the occupant in 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 as required hereunder and in the absence of clear and convincing proof to the contrary this presumption shall control.

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							

Table of Contents

Welcome from the Mayor	1
Welcome from the Division of Inspections	2
City Administration/City Agencies	3
Codes and Ordinances To Know	4
Outdoor Storage/Litter/Snow & Ice Removal	5
Vehicle Guidelines	6
Height Restrictions Diagram	7
When Is A Permit Required?	8
Repairs In Historic Districts	9
Map of Historic Districts & Sites	10
Certificate of Compliance Requirements	11
Exterior Maintenance Check List	12-15
Exterior Maintenance Chart	16
Interior Maintenance	17-18
Interior Maintenance Check List	19

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

PLUMBING

Clean the built in screens in the faucet aerators once a year, sediment can build up. 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.

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. If you have a warm air system change the fiberglass filters yearly since they can become clogged and the dirt and dust will be re-circulated into your air. Vacuum all registers and grilles to keep them dust free. 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.

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. If your tank and hot water lines are not insulated you might want to consider doing so. It will keep the water hot longer and save money by not having to constantly reheat the water to maintain the temperature.

INTERIOR MAINTENANCE

Interior maintenance is important not only for appearance's sake but to also maintain the structural integrity and overall value of your home. Most interior repairs can be performed by the homeowner.

FRAMING

At least once a year check all exposed wood members 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 with an awl to check for soundness. Repair or replace any defective wood. Evidence of insect activity should be checked by a professional exterminator.

FIREPLACE

Check the joints between the fireplace bricks. If there is any loose mortar make the necessary 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. Clean out the ash pit. This may be done yearly or less depending on the frequency of use.

BATHROOM TILES

Check all tile joints on the tub wall. If there is any cracking or missing grout, replace it. 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 ongoing basis .

ELECTRICAL

The electrical system does not require an annual maintenance schedule, but you should check the following for reasons of 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. Trip ground fault interrupters at least once a month. If the same fuses or circuits blow continually have them checked out by an electrician. Limit your use of extension cords and plug in receptacle extenders, instead have additional outlets installed. Secure any loose outlets to the wall.

Dear Resident,

The Division of Inspections is part of the Department of Public Works and Urban Development. The Division is responsible for the enforcement of the Property Maintenance Code, the Uniform Construction Code and a host of other local and State codes.

The Property Maintenance Code is on the City's website for you to view.

WEBSITE: www.plainfieldnj.gov

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

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. Chip out any loose material, widen narrow cracks in order to fill them with mortar. Check sidewalk slabs for raised sections. Level any raised sections to prevent slip/fall accidents. 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 rot and insects. Replace damaged sections with pressure treated posts and railings which has a far greater resistance to decay than untreated wood.

ZONING RESTORATIONS

UCC over 6' Req or used as a (Needs) Permit Pool Barrier. 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. It gives your property attractive appeal and will also prevent insect and rodent infestation. 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.

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 removal 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, polices and procedures related to recycling at (908) 226—2518.

Lawn/Hedges/Bushes

Grass and shrubbery shall be cut/trimmed regularly and maintained. Brush schedule (Issued in May)—only 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.

Outdoor Storage and Display

Outdoor storage and display of any kind or nature, except storage of items customarily used in conjunction with a residential occupancy (Ex: lawn furniture, grill etc.) is prohibited. Firewood may be stored on the property providing it is raised at least 12” off the ground to prevent rodent harborage.

Litter

All premises are to be maintained litter free on a daily basis. The homeowner is responsible for maintaining 24” into the gutter/curb area free of grass clippings, litter, and debris.

Sidewalks

Homeowners are responsible for maintaining the public sidewalks immediately adjacent to their property, free of all defects and trip hazards.

Snow/Ice Removal

All snow and ice is to be removed from the sidewalks in front of your property within twelve hours of daylight after it has fallen or formed. If ice has formed, the ice shall be kept covered with ashes, sawdust, sand or other approved material until it can be removed.

DOORS

Flat level outside door sills will rot first. Be sure to paint sills yearly. Unpainted sills will buckle and warp and heat will seep through the open gaps. 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.

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. 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

Repair or replace all missing or broken siding, clean and repair gutters and downspouts, basically every step 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). It is the most important system on the house that 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 insure 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. If the ends of the downspouts discharge into the foundation, add an elbow and place a splash block on the ground to divert the runoff at least 3' from the foundation. 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. Moisture can be retained in the foliage and cause damage.

VENTILATION

Check screens at the end of winter for damage. Make any needed repairs. Screening in good repair keeps insects from entering your home.

WINDOWS

Check the condition of all storm windows. If there are no weep holes between the window frame and sill, be sure to drill one in each end. Water will become trapped inside the frame and cause damage to the sill and trim. Remove any loose or cracked caulking from the joints between the frame and siding. Replace with quality flexible caulking compound. Also check for loose screws holding the window frame to the house. 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.

Vehicles

Outdoor Storage - Commercial - Outdoor storage of any kind or nature except 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.

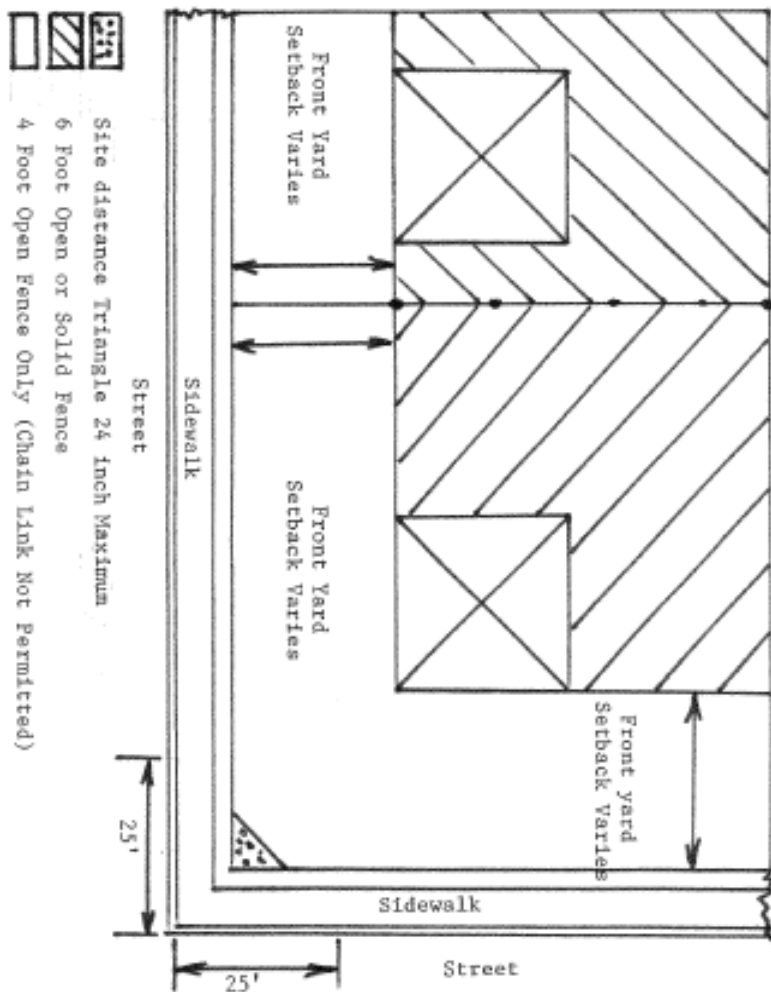
Passenger—not more than one currently unlicensed, unregistered, or uninsured vehicle may be parked on the property, and the vehicle shall not be in a state of major disassembly, disrepair, or in the process of being stripped or dismantled.

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) such unregistered motor vehicle or inoperable vehicle may be located on a residential property in a garage.

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

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

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



**HOMEOWNERS
MAINTENANCE CHECK LIST**

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE

The most important 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, its 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 to prevent danger of fire.

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 or otherwise convey, lease, occupy, rent or let or otherwise deliver up for occupancy (whether commercial or residential) any building, structure or premise, including, without limitation, a dwelling unit or rooming unit. 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, 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) One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150) for each commercial building, structure or premise.
- (3) Seventy-five Dollars (\$75) per lot, plot or parcel for premises consisting of vacant land.
- (4) One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150) for mixed use buildings, structures and premises; Fifty Dollars (\$50) for first through 20th dwelling unit, inclusive, and Twenty-Five Dollars (\$25) per additional dwelling unit.
- (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).

WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?

The Uniform Construction Code 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 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.

REPAIRS IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

There are ten (10) historic districts in Plainfield, Cedar Brook Park District, Crescent Area District, Hillside Avenue District, Netherwood Heights District, VanWyck Brooks District, North Avenue, Putnam, Watchung, Broadway, Civic and Green Brook Park. The owner of any property in the Historic Districts or 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 and on the Historic Preservation Commission's website: www.plainfieldnjhistoricpreservation.com

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.

LOCATION MAP: Plainfield Historic District and Sites

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

