



Division of Inspections
City of Plainfield

Homeowner's Handbook



CITY OF PLAINFIELD

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From the Mayors Desk . . .

Greetings Residents and Property Owners,

On behalf of the staff of the City of Plainfield I bring you greetings and well wishes.

The Office of the Mayor and the Department of Inspections has partnered to provide our residents and Property Owners with this homeowner's handbook that will help our homeowners manage the maintenance on their homes. In this handbook you will find useful information about the general maintenance and upkeep of your homes.

My Office and Administration is deeply concerned for the safety of its residents, citizens and visitors. This handbook is designed to help homeowners with what we call preventative maintenance. Preventative maintenance helps homeowners take care of small problems before they become larger issues. This preventative maintenance will also help homeowners to avoid the pressures and problems that occur when the city inspectors arrive to do property inspections. Our goal is to ensure that your experience with the City of Plainfield is a mutually beneficial one.

Our city has valuable stock of both new and older homes that require periodic maintenance; many of our homeowners are not familiar with some of the tasks that should be undertaken at various intervals to ensure that our homes remain safe and comfortable. Homes that are well maintained make the neighborhoods look good and when the neighborhood looks good people want to live there.

A home is a great investment that we should all take pride in. This handbook will assist in protecting a resident's home and help protect the City's investment in their residents. Best wishes from the City of Plainfield.

Sharon M. Robinson-Briggs
Mayor



NOTES:



NOTES:



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Dear Resident,

The City of Plainfield - Division of Inspections is pleased to provide a Homeowners Handbook that contains useful information for maintaining the City's housing stock.

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 Plainfield Zoning Ordinance, the Uniform Construction Code and a host of other local and State codes.

The information contained in this handbook is designed to familiarize you with the property maintenance requirements of the City of Plainfield. Please review the handbook at your convenience. If you have any questions, feel free to contact this office for additional information. Also, take an opportunity to visit City Hall and become familiar with the services available to you.

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

Sincerely,

Oscar L. Turk, Jr.

Director



INTERIOR MAINTENANCE FOR MONTHLY 3 & 6 MONTH MAINTENANCE CHORES

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



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.

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.



City Administration

Marc Dashield, City Administrator

Department Directors

Administration & Finance, Health, and Social Services

Martin R. Hellwig
Director of Public Affairs and Safety

Jennifer Wenson Maier
Director of Public Works and Urban Development

Frequently Called
CITY AGENCIES

Police & Fire Emergencies **911**

Mayor	753-3310
City Administrator	226-2570
City Clerk	753-3221
Code Enforcement/Inspections	753-3386
Building	226-2665
Economic Development	226-2514
Community Development	226-2514
Engineering	753-3380
Fire Prevention Bureau	753-3446
Health	753-3092
Municipal Court	753-3062
Parking Bureau	753-3200
Personnel	753-3219
Plainfield Action Services	753-3525
Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority (PMUA)	226-2518
Planning/Zoning	753-3391
Public Works	753-3426
Recreation	753-3097
Senior Citizen's Center	753-3508
Tax Assessor	753-3203
Tax Collector	753-3215
Vital Statistics	753-3094



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.

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

Lawn/Hedges/Bushes

Grass and shrubbery shall be cut/trimmed regularly and maintained.

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.



HOMEOWNERS

MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

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 creosote. 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.



**EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE CHART FOR
SPRING AND FALL**

SPRING	FALL	NOTES	
	DATES →		
	ROOF SHINGLES		
	CHIMNEY/FLASHING		
	GUTTERS/SPOUTS		
	SIDING		
	WINDOWS/SCREENS		
	WEATHERSTRIPPING		
	FOUNDATION		
	ENTRANCES		
	DECKS/PORCHES		
	GARAGE		
	DRIVEWAY/WALKS		
	FENCING/SHRUBS		



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.



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.



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. Clip 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. 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.

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.



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.

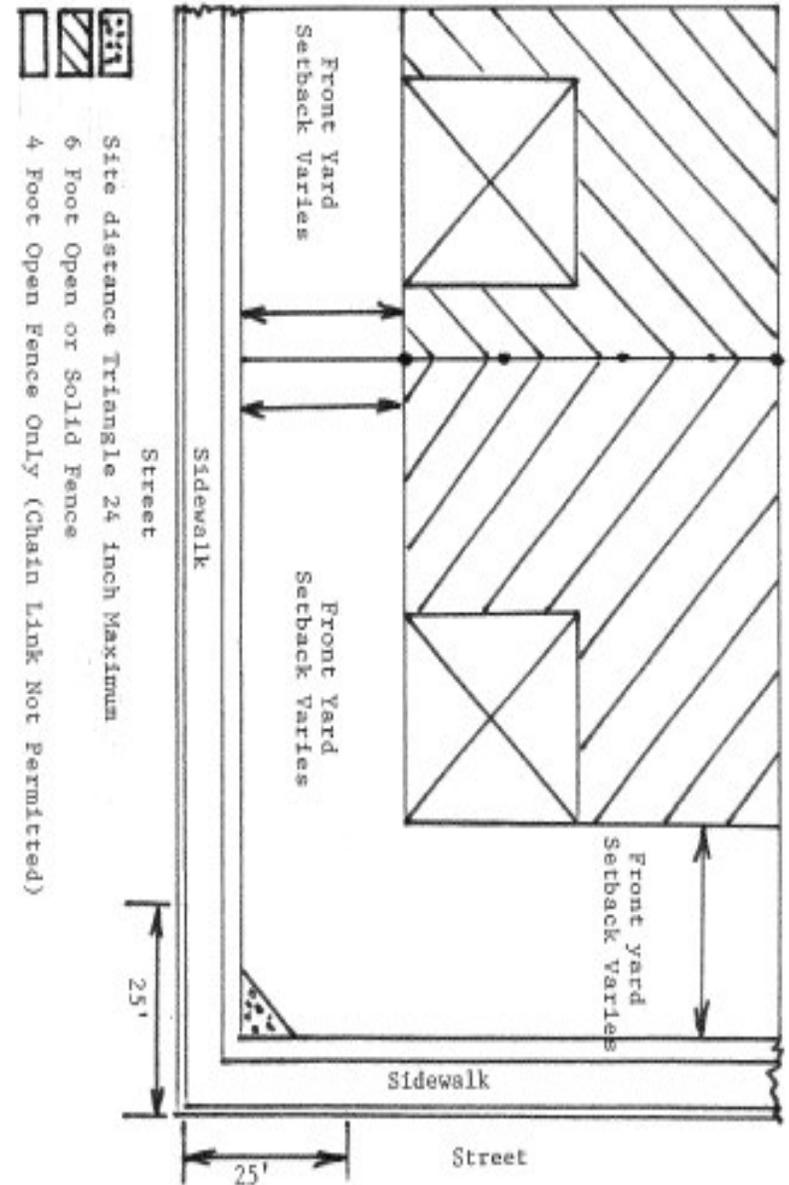
DECKS & PORCHES

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.

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





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 beaming wall & installing a new beam, columns, & footings.
12. Alterations to the interior layout.
13. Finishing an attic or basement.



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 thereby causing water to 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.

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, otherwise 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.



HOMEOWNERS MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

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.

VENTILATION

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



REPAIRS IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

There are nine (9) historic districts in Plainfield, Crescent Area District, Hillside Avenue District, Netherwood Heights District, VanWyck Brooks District, North Avenue, Putnam Watchung, Broadway, Civic and Green Brook Park. Owners of properties located within these districts must obtain approval from the Historic Preservation Commission prior to making any exterior and adopted to assist the Commission in guiding residents in renovation and construction efforts. 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:

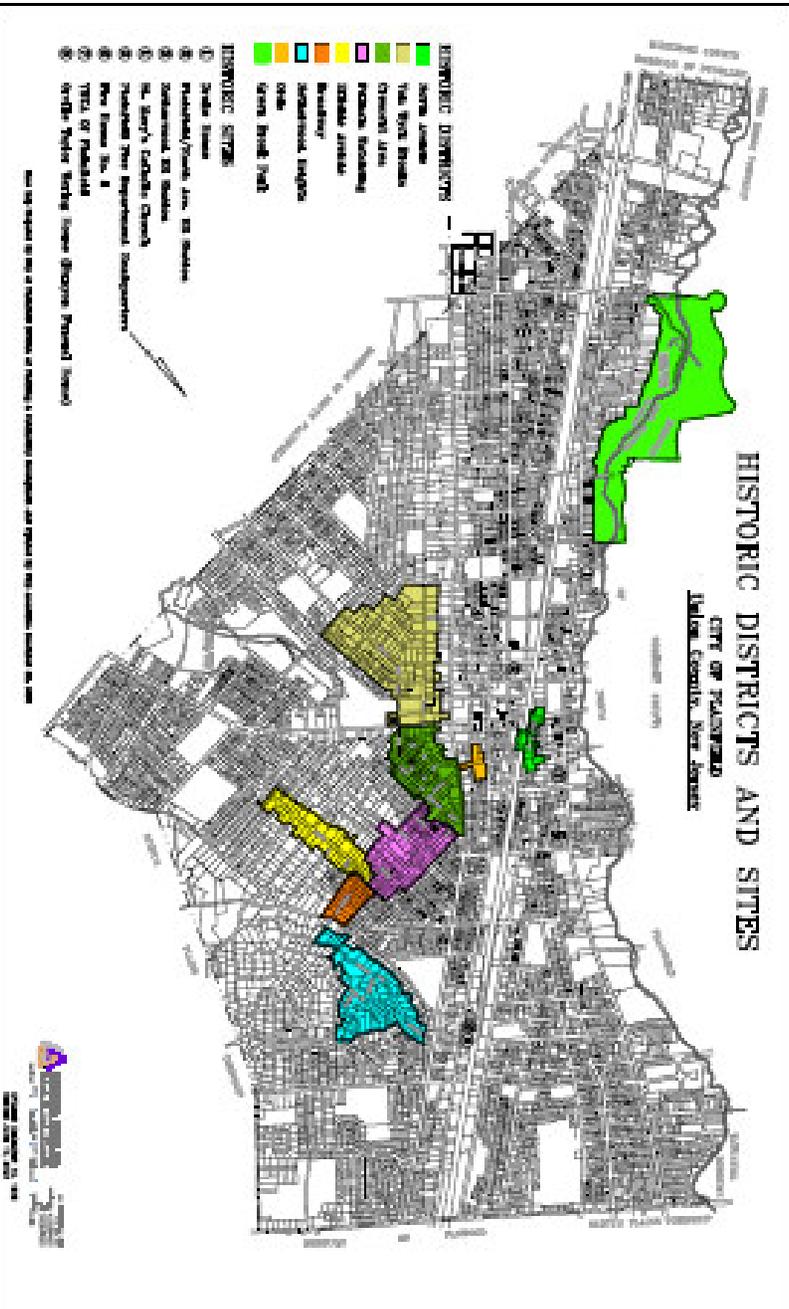
1. Demolish a building, place, or structure.
2. Relocate a building or structure.
3. Change the exterior appearance of a building or structure by additions, reconstruction, alteration or maintenance. If the change can be seen from a public street, AND IF a building permit is required.
4. Create an addition 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, IF a building permit is required.

Note: If a building is classified as "Non-contributing" within a historic district, then it is exempt from the review requirements listed.

Satellite dishes cannot be installed and visible from the front of the structure.



LOCATION MAP: Plainfield Historic District and Sites



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).