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Permitted Decks

Two million decks are built and replaced every year in the United States, but only about 40 percent of all existing decks are considered completely safe according to home inspection experts. Deck collapses can cause major injuries and, sometimes, death. This explains why Plainfield requires all residents to obtain a permit before installing, replacing, or reconstructing a deck.

Included in this notice are the regulations and procedures all property owners are encouraged to review in order to understand the process of repairing, renewing, or reconstructing a rear deck.



The definition of a deck is “An open, unroofed porch or platform extending from a house or other building.”

According to Section 17:9-44 “Decks 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 decks zoning conformance”.

Regulations to remember:

- ❖ Decks. For residential structures, decks shall not be located in front yards, but may be located in the required side or rear yard, provided they do not extend more than fifteen (15) feet into the rear yard setback area or closer than six (6) feet to the side lot line. Decks are not permitted above the first story line of any structure.
- ❖ Steps for decks shall not be located closer than six (6) feet from a property line.
- ❖ For townhouses, apartments, and nonresidential uses, decks and porches may not extend into any required yard setback area.
- ❖ Upper story structures are not permitted over decks if those decks encroach into required yards.

In order to begin the process of reconstructing, or repairing decks, or constructing a new deck applicants are required to complete the following steps: (Applicants are required to obtain a demolition permit from the building department to remove a deck; no zoning approval is required.)

- ❖ Visit the Planning Division on the 2nd Floor of City Hall in (Room 202) or the city’s website (www.plainfieldnj.gov) by clicking the “All Downloads” and “Forms” links on the left of the page to obtain the Development Permit Application.
- ❖ After completing the Development Permit Application, along with a current property survey of not more than ten years of age noting the deck location, submit both documents and construction plans to the Building Division (Room 302; 908 226-2665) of City Hall to pay the \$20 application fee and receive a receipt for proof of payment for the permit application and a construction jacket (a tan folder that will include the above documents)
- ❖ Bring the construction jacket to the Planning Division to be reviewed by planners for consistency with the zone regulations described on the front page of this guideline, (*application review typically takes anywhere from 10-14 days*)
- ❖ Within the two week review period, the Zoning Officer will forward an email to the applicant to confirm whether the proposal for the deck conforms to the city’s ordinances and regulations.
- ❖ If the application does not conform to the zone regulations the Zoning Officer will advise the applicant of the items that need to be addressed/corrected/resubmitted.
- ❖ If the application conforms to the city land use ordinance, the Zoning Officer will forward the construction jacket to the Building Division, and the applicant will be advised via email to go to the Building Division to pay for and obtain a building permit.
- ❖ Applicants then work with the Building Division to schedule necessary inspections and complete the project.



Please Note: Applicants must have a copy of their property survey in order for their application to be approved. Property Surveys should be found with the deed of the applicant’s home. City Hall does NOT have property surveys.

We hope this notice is beneficial to residents who have concerns or interest regarding the process of repairing, replacing, or constructing a deck. We further hope that this notice helps reduce some of the confusion, and time spent being sent from office to office without fully understanding the process. Please do not hesitate to contact Ron Johnson, Assistant Zoning Officer (908-753-3603) if there are any further questions or the need for any additional information.