



St. Petersburg Up to Code

Information for Responsible Property Owners

As we age, many of us will take steps to maintain our good health. The neighborhoods and structures in St. Petersburg likewise require maintenance to stay in good health. Individual structures and neighborhoods that are not maintained not only deteriorate, they cost citizens more money. Property values may fall, and poor maintenance is often associated with higher rates of vandalism and crime. Individual property owners can be the most important partners in the effort to maintain healthy neighborhoods. Unfortunately, many people are not responsible owners. That is why citizens band together to ask government to create minimum standards for housing, yards, parking, etc. These standards protect surrounding property owners and tenants, who might otherwise suffer substandard conditions.

Even the most responsible property owners may experience difficulty in maintaining their property at one time or another. In the event that you receive a Notice of Violation from Codes, please review the letter and find out how to correct the problem and do so promptly. You can ask for additional time if you are making progress to correct the violations. Some problems are serious and correction must not be delayed. There may be assistance available to low-income homeowners in the form of low interest loans or volunteer labor. Please contact your Codes Investigator or area Neighborhood Planner for suggestions. Remember to get proper permits that may be required for some repairs.

If you are unwilling to take prompt action to correct the problems, there are several possible consequences. The City can arrange for a lot to be mowed or for a vacant, open structure to be boarded. The cost is then billed to you. If legal action becomes necessary, you will be served a notice and must appear before the Code Enforcement Board and Special Magistrate or before a judge in the Pinellas County Court. You must explain your case, and ultimately correct the violations in order to avoid fines and liens.

This information has been developed to explain some of St. Petersburg's minimum housing and neighborhood standards. Look at the Property Check List on the following page and use it to evaluate your own property. Also included are descriptions of the ten most common code violations. Thank you for being a responsible property owner.

Did You Know?

- On any day the Codes Compliance Assistance Department's active case load is over 6,000 cases.
- The most common violations cited are: (1) failure to maintain grass, plants and trees, (2) failure to clean up junk and rubbish or outdoor storage, and (3) inoperative motor vehicles.
- **Before work begins, permits** are required for any structural repairs, most plumbing and electrical work, driveway installations, and even removal of certain trees. Call Construction Services and Permitting at 727-893-7231 for more information.



Municipal Services Center Building – 3rd Floor
One 4th Street North St. Petersburg, FL 33701
To report a violation in St. Petersburg: 727-893-7373

This article is provided for informational purposes only. Readers should consult the complete City Code before taking any action affecting property in St. Petersburg.

✓ Property Check List

Structures

Repair rotted wood, broken or missing boards, siding, or shingles and make all exterior parts weather tight, water tight, and rodent proof. Exteriors must be resistant to weather and be covered with a protective coating such as paint, siding, or brick that is in good repair.

Inspect:

- Exterior walls
- Roof parts including rafters, soffit, and fascia.
- Roof coverings
- Railings on stairs, elevated landings, and porches.
- Fences (should be in good repair and of legal height)

Keep housing safe, sanitary, in good repair and sound condition. Inspect both interior and exterior:

- walls, ceilings, floors
- plumbing pipes and fixtures
- windows and screens

Make sure that:

- address numbers are permanently attached to the house, clearly visible from the street and alley, and at least 4 inches high.
- garbage is properly disposed of.
- insects and rodents are exterminated.
- there are no areas where stagnant water collects and breeds mosquitos.

Yard Maintenance

- Mow the lawn so that grass is 10 inches or less in height.
- Edge or remove growth from sidewalks, curb lines, and gutters.
- Properly trim hedges according to the code for height limits.
- Trees over the sidewalks must be trimmed up to a height of 8 feet above the sidewalk surface.
- Trees over the street must be trimmed up to a height of 14 feet above the street surface.
- Provide ground cover, such as grass, for all areas where sand or soil is exposed.
- Trim vegetation at traffic and sidewalk intersections to a maximum height of 3 feet to allow motorists and pedestrians safe visibility (consult the code for details).

Storage

- Store furniture, building materials, junk, disabled or untagged motor vehicles, appliances, and auto parts inside of a legally constructed, fully enclosed structure.
- Store lumber or fire wood in the rear yard on open racks elevated to 18 inches above the ground.
- No parking of domestic equipment (boats, utility trailers, and recreational vehicles) in front of the main structure. Some storage may be permitted in private yards under special conditions. Check with your area Codes Investigator of see following page for details.

Paving/Parking

- Driveways, steps, sidewalks and other paved areas must be in good repair and free of debris.
- Vehicles and motorcycles in front yards must be parked on a legally recognized and approved parking surface.
- Commercial vehicles and equipment maybe never be parked or stored anywhere in a residential area except for one commercial vehicle designed as a limousine, hearse, passenger or conversion van, pickup truck, SUV, car, or similar motor vehicle with advertising or lettering covering less than 50% of the body of the vehicle, is less than 9 feet in overall height and 22 feet in overall length, and is good repair and properly licensed and is parked or stored in accordance with codes governing passenger motor vehicles.

Business Activity

- Garage sales** may be conducted up to 4 times a year, lasting no more than 3 consecutive days, and no more than one in any 60 day period. Garage sales are prohibited Monday through Thursday.
- Home occupations** (any business conducted from your home) must be properly licensed and meet strict criteria. No traffic or outside display may occur and the home occupation must be clearly recognized as the secondary use of the residence.

Rental Properties

Rental property owners must have:

- If two or more units, a Certificate of Occupancy and Occupational License.
- In certain areas, a Certificate of Inspection.
- A designated Legal Premises Agent form filed with Codes Compliance Assistance

For further information, please contact the Codes Compliance Assistance Department at 727-893-7373.

St. Petersburg Top 10 Code Violations

Yard Maintenance

Yard maintenance standards are the responsibility of every property owner and include the maintenance of plant material in any right-of-way around the property. Grass type ground cover must be maintained at ten inches or less. Hedges located within 5 feet of the property line must be properly trimmed to height limits specified in the code. The branches of a tree extending over any public sidewalk, street or other public way should be trimmed to a height of no less than eight feet above the sidewalk and fourteen feet above the street. Vegetation and trees must be trimmed so as not to impair vision or obstruct the travel of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians upon any street, sidewalk or alley.

Junk, Rubbish, & Outdoor Storage

Junk and rubbish cannot be left in the yard and must be properly disposed of. This includes junk auto parts, appliances, furniture, building materials and tires; trash such as discarded paper, cardboard, plastics, etc; and debris such as tree trimmings and fallen limbs.

Outdoor storage is prohibited. Generally, any equipment, materials, or furnishings that would ordinarily not be used outdoors may not be stored outdoors. For example, you may not keep indoor furniture, household appliances, auto parts, or building materials outside. You may not store firewood outside unless it is stacked on open racks eighteen inches above the ground. You may store a barbecue grill, lawn furniture, garden hoses, garden tools, outdoor play equipment for children, or a lawn mower outside in an orderly fashion.

Inoperative Motor Vehicles

Inoperative motor vehicles cannot be stored except in a fully enclosed structure that was constructed with a permit. An inoperative vehicle is a vehicle that does not display a current license tag and/or is not equipped with all parts that are required to legally and safely operate on public streets and/or cannot be driven under its own power (whether or not designed for use on the public streets).

Paint

Paint or other water resistant treatment is required on the exterior of structures. Approved exterior siding or brick that is well maintained and water resistant will also meet the code. Any repairs to the exterior of a structure must be made with materials that match the balance of the structure. Therefore, siding or brick must be repaired using similar siding or brick. When damaged wood is repaired, the replacement wood must be painted the same as the surrounding wood.

Parking

Parking in the required front yard set back is permitted for passenger cars and motorcycles on residential lots only on a legal driveway or in a garage. A driveway or parking area must be constructed with approved parking surfaces. There

are limits to the amount of yard area that can be used for a driveway or parking. Check with the Development Review Services Division at 727-893-7471 for more information about legally recognized parking areas.

Condition of Structures

The maintenance of a structure is the responsibility of the property owner. Any wood, siding, shingles, roof covering, railings, fences, walls, ceilings, porches, doors, windows and screens, and other exterior parts of a structure must be maintained in weather tight, rodent proof, sound condition and good repair. The property owner is responsible for maintaining secure windows, doors or other openings that cannot be readily opened for the outside. An owner may need to board up a vacant structure if a break-in occurs. Security boards must be made of exterior grade plywood painted in a neutral color that blends inconspicuously with the exterior colors of the building.

Domestic Equipment

Domestic equipment includes motor homes, trailers, utility trailers, boats and campers. Up to two pieces of domestic equipment may be located on certain areas of a residential lot. Domestic equipment may be located in the rear yard or interior side yard of a lot; but not in a front yard, a street side yard, or a waterfront yard. On weekends only, equipment may be brought into the front yard to allow easy access and more frequent use.

Commercial Equipment

Generally, commercial equipment and commercial vehicles may not be parked in a residential area unless they are within a fully enclosed structure that was constructed with a permit. For each residential lot, one commercial vehicle designed as a van, pickup truck, or similar vehicle of up to 22 feet long and up to 9 feet high may be parked on a legally recognized parking area provided that the vehicle does not display commercial identification lettering or advertising covering in excess of 50% of the visible surface area, is in sound condition, and properly licensed.

Illegal Dwelling Units

Dwelling units that have been added to the interior or the exterior of a structure without proper permits are illegal, regardless of how long the units have existed. The city will require closure of such units.

Prohibited Business

Most businesses are not allowed to operate in residential areas. This means that car and boat repairs, construction of cabinets and furniture, and other activities that are not normally carried on in a residential district are prohibited, except that you may work on your own car, boat, cabinets, etc., provided the activity does not disrupt or injure nearby residents.