

## City of Union

# Guide to Property Maintenance & Required Permits



This enclosure to the Summer 2015 City of Union newsletter generally outlines the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code of the City of Union. Please use this checklist to evaluate your property.

We appreciate your compliance with these important community regulations. If you have questions, please call us at 836-8624. We're happy to discuss specifics.

**Why a Code?** The Property Maintenance Code sets minimum standards so a property owner clearly knows what maintenance is expected. Plus, it provides assurance to all residents that their neighbors will do the same. In general, the exteriors of all properties in the City of Union should be structurally sound, and free of nuisances, unsanitary conditions, and hazards, to ensure the safety of occupants, pedestrians, and others, and to help protect property values. It is the property owner's responsibility to comply with property maintenance measures. To further protect property values in our neighborhoods, the City of Union also passed legislation requiring the exterior inspection of properties before they are sold.

**Pre-Sale Inspections.** An exterior inspection is required of all properties before they can be sold. The current property owner should stop by City Hall to complete an application and pay an inspection fee of \$50. A City of Union building inspector then will inspect the exterior of the property, including the exterior of the building and any other structures on the property, including driveways, storage sheds, etc. Any violations to the City's Property Maintenance Code will need to be resolved before the property is sold, or arrangements will need to be made to transfer the required repairs to the new property owner. Adding a pre-sale inspection is an expansion of the existing zoning code and is designed to prevent deterioration of properties. The pre-sale inspection does not replace other inspections such as those for termites, plumbing, interior, etc.

**Who's Affected?** All owners of properties or structures within the City of Union must comply with the Property Maintenance Code.

**Who Enforces the Code?** The City Building & Zoning Department has the responsibility to enforce the code.

**How Will It be Enforced?** It will be enforced initially by a formal notice of violation when inspectors observe significant deficiencies on a property. Later, specific legal steps may be implemented to gain compliance and protect the rights of all residents.

**Why Comply?** Property maintenance benefits property owners and neighborhoods by protecting property values. Compliance also avoids possible fines that may be imposed if property owners fail to correct property deficiencies.

### CODE CHECKLIST:

**\_\_Refuse.** Properties should be free of broken glass, stumps, garbage, and other debris.

**\_\_Placement of Receptacles.** Containers for all residential garbage and residential rubbish and recycling materials shall be placed at the street curb or alley right-of-way line not sooner than twelve hours before the beginning of the day of normal collection thereof. For the purposes hereof, the beginning of the collection day shall be considered to be at 7:00 a.m.

**\_\_Removal of Empty Receptacles.** Empty containers shall be removed from the street curb or alley right-of-way line within twelve hours after the end of the collection day. For the purposes hereof, the end of the collection day shall be considered to be 10:00 p.m.

**\_\_Natural Growth and Weeds.** Dead trees and limbs or other natural growth that is rotting should be removed. Vines, grasses, rank vegetation, and noxious weeds, any of which that are 6 inches or more in height, should be cut down.

**\_\_Landscaping.** Properties should be maintained, with lawns, hedges, and bushes kept from becoming overgrown or decayed. Grass may not exceed a height of 6 inches. All trees and bushes along sidewalks and streets should be trimmed back to provide a clear height of 10 feet above the surface of the sidewalk and 12 feet above the surface of the street. Overhanging branches should be trimmed back to the property line. If a property backs up to a City-owned greenspace, that area may not be used for gardening, planting of bushes, flowers, trees, etc. If there are any questions concerning this space, then please contact the City's zoning inspector.

**\_\_Yard Waste.** Yard waste should be disposed of properly. Or, if yard waste is composted, it must be maintained properly, and kept in the rear yard, so as to not create a nuisance for adjacent properties. Dumping of grass and weed clippings, tree limbs, or other debris on private property or City parks/greenspaces is prohibited.

**\_\_Foundation Walls and Basements.** They should be structurally sound, free from defects and damage, and capable of bearing loads safely. Basements should be sound and maintained to prevent the entrance of rodents, wood-boring insects, rain, or water runoff.

**\_\_Chimney and Flue-Vent Attachments.** These features must be maintained to be structurally sound, free from defects, and capable of performing the functions for which they were originally designed.

**\_\_General Maintenance.** The exterior walls, trim, doors, and window casings of every structure and accessory building should be structurally sound and kept painted and/or coated to prevent decay. Paint should be lead-free. Exteriors should be free of broken or unusable windows, crumbling stone or brick, peeling paint, or other conditions that reflect deterioration.

**\_\_Roofs, Gutters, and Downspouts.** Roofs should be maintained to be free of leaks and rot. Drainage should be collected in suitable downspouts, which may discharge into splash blocks or other devices provided that no excess water flows into adjoining properties or over sidewalks. Downspouts should be free of clogs and rust. Connecting any pipe carrying roof water or yard drainage to a sanitary sewer is prohibited.

**\_\_Design Schemes.** Garish design schemes must be modified to eliminate obvious negative impacts on surrounding properties.

**\_\_Junk, Inoperable, or Unlicensed Vehicles.** Properties must be free of junk, inoperable, or unlicensed vehicles. Repairing any such vehicle or trailer is prohibited anywhere on the exterior property, including on the front driveway.

**\_\_Utility Trailers.** These trailers must be stored in the rear yard only.

**Trailers, RVs, Mobile Homes, and Boats.** Trailers, recreational vehicles, tents, garages, or temporary buildings cannot be used as residences. RVs, trailers, and boats more than 6 feet in height cannot be parked or stored in the front or side yard of residential properties, except for a loading or unloading period, not to exceed 48 hours. RVs, trailers, and boats less than 6 feet in height may be parked or stored in the side yard of residential districts if screened by a 6-foot solid or privacy fence. Temporary parking of a mobile home is permitted for up to 48 hours; it cannot be used as a residence.

**Operable Vehicles and Commercial Trucks.** All operable vehicles should be parked on a paved surface. Parking or storing any truck or commercial vehicle more than 11,500 pounds is prohibited in the front yard, including on the front driveway.

**Porches.** Foundations should be sound; the porch, guardrails, handrails, and porch stairs should be safe and without rot. Porches require a building permit.

**Additions or Separate Structures.** They should be sound and capable of serving their original purpose. Applicable permits should have been obtained for their construction. If the structure has a garage door, it must have a paved driveway. If a garage is to be converted to living space, the permit will require the existing driveway to be enlarged to accommodate the loss of a parking space. The enlargement of the driveway will not be required if the property is in compliance with parking requirements. When converting a garage into a living area, the construction must include adding a footer under the garage door, leveling the floor, and adding appropriate insulation.

**Driveways and Other Paved Areas.** All off-street parking areas must be either asphalt, concrete, brick, brick paver, or other similar hard-surfaced material. Specific requirements are available at the City Building. Permits are required for replacing deteriorating concrete or blacktop. Best results occur when the original, crumbling layer is removed. Sealing a driveway does not require a building permit.

**Fences, Walls, and Other Non-Residential Exterior Structures.** Accessories such as fences, walls, signs, etc., should be maintained and firmly anchored, with painted and/or protected surfaces to prevent decay and hazard. All fences and signs require a permit. Regulations may vary among subdivisions.

**Reconstruction of Walls and Siding.** Reconstruction of these features should be of standard quality and appearance commensurate with the character of the neighborhood.

**Free From Infestation.** All areas of properties should be maintained to prevent infestation from rodents, insects, and other animals.

**Pools.** Pools are regulated in Union for safety reasons. Even inflatable pools, if the sides are 24 inches or higher, require a building and if applicable an electrical permit. Check with the City's zoning inspector for details.

**Storage Sheds.** Storage sheds require a building permit and must be located in the rear yard. Check with the City's zoning inspector for regulations regarding the size, foundation, and placement on the property.

**Temporary Storage Containers.** Containers such as PODs (Portable on Demand) are permitted but do require a permit. The location and time used are specified in the City of Union's building code.

**Permanent Signs and Billboards.** All signs and billboards exposed to public view must be maintained or otherwise removed. Permits are required.

**Home Occupations.** Generally, office-related home occupations that do not change the appearance of the residential property or increase traffic on the street are permitted, but please contact the City first about the proposed home occupation.

**Pets.** Dogs must be secured on the property of the owner, either by way of leash, fence, or contained inside the home. Dogs are not allowed to run loose while on walks; they should be tethered on a leash no longer than 6 feet. By City Ordinance, pet owners must immediately pick up after their pets on walks and in public areas and also routinely take care to keep their property clean of pet waste. Also, owners should take measures to prevent a dog's prolonged howling or barking. Vicious animals, including vicious dogs, are prohibited in the City of Union. Vicious animals are those that bite or have a propensity to cause harm to humans or animals. Residents must limit the number of dogs and cats to no more than two of each per household.

#### PERMITS:

The City of Union requires permits for certain projects, structures, and activities. Some projects, such as plumbing projects, require a permit from Montgomery County. Please contact the City of Union for details about each permit or if you have any questions about if a project does or doesn't require a permit. Items requiring permits: Air conditioning • Decks • Driveways • Electrical • Fences • Fireplaces/wood stoves • Garages • Garage sales • Gas • Heating • Home construction and structural remodeling, including converting garages • Patios/patio enclosures • Peddlers/solicitors • PODs (Portable on Demand) storage containers • Pools • Pre-sale property inspections • Rehabilitation of properties • Room additions • Satellite dishes • Sewer lateral replacement\* • Sidewalks • Signs • Storage sheds • TV and radio towers

\*Residents must notify City Hall if they plan to replace their sewer lateral. Because most sewer laterals are connected to the City's sewer main within the street, either the contractor or the homeowner must post a \$500 bond to ensure that any sidewalk, curb, or street asphalt is properly replaced. The City will inspect these repairs before releasing the bond.

Corner and regular lots have different definitions of "front yard." Use this representation to understand the definition as it applies in the City of Union Property Maintenance Code.

