



# Citizen's Guide To Code Compliance

## **BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR**

*Updated May 10, 2007*

Neighborhoods and structures in the City of Sarasota require proper maintenance to stay in good condition as they age. Maintaining good neighborhoods is the cooperation of individual property owners and tenants. The Sarasota City Commission has adopted a standard housing code and other ordinances, which create minimum standards for the betterment of our neighborhoods. These standards protect surrounding property owners and tenants from having property values negatively affected by substandard conditions.

The following are some recommended inspections which you can utilize to evaluate whether your property or your neighbors' property is in compliance with the City's minimum standards.

### **PROPERTY INSPECTION CHECKLIST:**

**Exterior Inspection** (Exterior must be resistant to water and in good condition):

- Roof coverings
- Roof parts including rafters, trusses, soffit, and fascia
- Exterior walls
- Windows and screens
- Railings on stairs, landings, and porches
- Fences

#### **Exterior Inspection Actions:**

- Repair rotted wood
- Replace/repair broken or missing boards, siding or shingles
- Make all exterior parts weather tight, rodent proof, and sound

#### **Interior Inspection:**

- Walls
- Ceilings, and floors
- Plumbing pipes and fixtures

#### **Interior Inspection Actions:**

- Repair holes in walls or ceilings
- Replace/repair broken or missing floorboards or tiles
- Replace/repair broken or leaking plumbing pipes or fixtures (Stopping leaks can also help reduce your water bill)

#### **Additional items to check:**

- Address numbers are attached to the residence and are clearly visible from the street  
(Residential requires 4-inch numbers, commercial 6-

inch numbers)

- Insects and rodents are exterminated.

The following are some maintenance recommendations which you can utilize to keep your property in a safe and sanitary condition.

### **PROPERTY MAINTENANCE:**

- Keep your buildings substantially free of dirt, stains, rust, mold and mildew
- Ensure surfaces are free of broken glass and loose shingles
- Maintain brick, stone, stucco, spray crete and painted surfaces so as to not reflect inadequate maintenance or deterioration

### **YARD MAINTENANCE:**

- Mow the lawn so that grass, weeds, or other vegetation is 10 inches or less in height on developed property
- Mow the lawn so that grass, weeds, or other vegetation is 12 inches or less in height on undeveloped property
- Mow to the edge of any paved roadway or street
- Trees over the public right-of-way and sidewalks must be trimmed up to a height of 10 ft
- Trees over the street must be trimmed to the height of 14 ½ ft. above street surface

### **STORAGE:**

- Outdoor storage of materials not specifically designed for or commonly used outdoors is prohibited
- An inoperable or unlicensed motor vehicle must be completely enclosed in a building otherwise:
  - It must have a current registration
  - A valid license affixed to it
  - Shall be stored outdoors for no more than three calendar days

### **BUSINESS ACTIVITIES:**

#### **Garage sales:**

- Two per calendar year
- No more than two consecutive days
- Between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- Signs must be placed on private property only

#### **Home Occupations** (any business conducted from your home):

- Properly licensed and meet strict criteria
- Information on obtaining Local Business Tax Receipt call (941) 954-4186



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## **SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLABLE CONTAINERS:**

Solid waste and recyclable containers shall be placed at curb or roadside no earlier than 5 p.m. of the day prior to the regularly scheduled collection and returned to the side or rear yard no later than 8 a.m. on the following day. \*Note: (This also applies to a corner or through zoning lot which has frontage on more than one street.)

## **JUNK, TRASH, RUBBISH, AND ABANDONED ITEMS:**

Discarded items that are allowed to accumulate that are valueless, or have only nominal or salvage value and are abandoned or left unprotected from the elements on public or real property are prohibited. Yard waste must be prepared properly for pick up. Refer to Public Works Department information on the website at <http://publicworks.sarasotagov.com> and then click on FAQ for more information or call (941) 953-6559.

## **RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT:**

Boats, trailers, motor homes, campers, etc. may be parked or stored in a rear or side yard, but not in the front yard setback area.

## **SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES FROM VACANT LOTS:**

The sale of motor vehicles is prohibited on property not zoned for this use. Motor vehicle sales on vacant lots are prohibited unless the vehicle and property are owned by the same person.

## **CODE ENFORCEMENT/COMPLAINT RESPONSE:**

In many instances, Code Compliance investigates a code violation and takes compliance action when a citizen reports a potential violation. If you think you know of a potential violation, you may report it in any of the following ways:

**Online:** <http://www.sarasotagov.com/CRM/CRMHomePage.html>

**Telephone:** (941) 954-4125

**In person:** Code Compliance, 2nd floor of City Hall Annex  
1565 1st Street, Sarasota, FL 34236

If you are willing to identify yourself and provide your phone number or email address, you will be contacted in regards to the status of the investigation. You may remain anonymous if you wish, to learn the results of the investigation or to get a status you can either go online to <http://www.sarasotagov.com/CRM/CRMHomePage.html> and Check the status using the number you will be given upon complaint submittal or call (941) 954-4125 and ask for an update.

When reporting a possible violation, you should provide Code Compliance with the exact address of the building, unit number if applicable, or as specific a location as possible to enable the inspector to locate the site. Then describe the condition you have observed. After receiving a citizen request, Code Compliance will inspect any property as soon as possible to determine if a code violation exists. Health and safety related housing complaints are the highest priority. If a violation is found, a notice will be either mailed to the property owner or they may receive a door hanger requiring compliance by a certain date.

IF YOU RECEIVE A NOTICE OF VIOLATION FROM THE CODE COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT, carefully read the notice to find out what the violation is, correct the problem, and do so promptly. You can ask for additional time provided you are making progress on the violations. Some of the problems may be serious and correction must not be delayed. YOUR CODE COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT WILL HELP ANSWER ANY QUESTION YOU MIGHT HAVE AT (941) 954-4125 Weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. If appropriate action to correct the problems is not taken, there are several possible consequences. The City can arrange for property to be mowed, or a vacant open structure can be boarded up, and the cost is then billed to you. A code compliance order can be issued with daily running fines, which could result in liens against your property. If legal action becomes necessary, you will appear before the Code Compliance Special Magistrate to explain your case and ultimately fines and liens may be assessed. If you have a complaint to file, you may call the Code Compliance Department at (941) 954-4125. On Weekends the Code Compliance department's answering machine is on, and you may leave a message and the weekend inspector will return your call, or you may leave a complaint and the weekend inspector will handle it.

For more detailed information on the ordinances, procedures and penalties involved with Code Compliance refer to the relevant codes at <http://www.municode.com/resources/gateway.asp?pid=11553&sid=9> this database is searchable by keyword.

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING KEEP YOUR CITY A BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO LIVE!**

**Legal Disclaimer:** This Citizen's Guide to Code Compliance should not be used in place of the existing codes and ordinances. Details of your situation should be reviewed for specific compliance by Code Compliance Staff.