THE COMPLETE CONDO BUYER'S GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

Emerald Coast Florida Condo Buyer's Guide

From the Forgotten Coast to Destin

A practical book for out-of-state buyers, second-home owners, and investors

Research checked November 4, 2026

PCB · 30A · Destin · Forgotten Coast



PREPARED BY

Kinsey Haddock, P.A.

Broker Associate – REALTOR®

Coldwell Banker Realty

(850) 340-0646

kinseyhaddock@flpanhandlerealtor.com

emeraldcoastbuyersguide.com

FL License #BK3253849

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A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Buy the view. Understand the responsibility.

A practical reference for a purchase you can explain and an ownership plan you can maintain.

This book combines a regional buying guide with a building-review framework and an investor workbook. It is written for readers who want the details before making a commitment, especially those buying from another state.

Prepared by Kinsey Haddock, Broker Associate – REALTOR®, Coldwell Banker Realty. Designed for buyers considering a coastal home, a vacation retreat, or a rental investment. Use the worksheets to turn general guidance into a property-specific record of questions, evidence, and decisions.

Edition date and research cutoff: November 4, 2026. Legal and tax passages identify official sources in Appendix G. Recheck current law and the facts of the transaction before relying on a deadline, rental permission, financing assumption, or tax treatment.

Educational information only. No guarantee of legal outcomes, building safety, insurance availability, financing, investment returns, or tax savings. Use qualified Florida legal counsel and appropriate tax, engineering, insurance, inspection, and lending professionals.



YOUR LOCAL GUIDE

Kinsey Haddock, P.A.
Broker Associate – REALTOR®
(850) 340-0646
kinseyhaddock@flpanhandlerealtor.com
emeraldcoastbuyersguide.com

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BEFORE YOU READ

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Please read before using this guide. Each chapter also closes with a short disclosure for its topic.

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Accuracy and changing rules

Information is deemed reliable but is not guaranteed and should be independently verified. Florida condominium law, local rental rules, association documents, insurance markets, lending guidelines, tax law, and market conditions change frequently. Research for this edition was checked as of November 4, 2026; recheck current law and the facts of your transaction before relying on any deadline, rental permission, financing assumption, or tax treatment.

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All numbers, scenarios, and investment examples are hypothetical illustrations. None represents a current listing, market average, appraisal, lender quote, tax result, or promise of rental income, appreciation, cash flow, or tax savings. Real estate investing involves risk, including the possible loss of capital.

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> *Always consult the correct professional should you have questions. This guide helps you ask better questions; your attorney, CPA, lender, insurance agent, and inspector answer them.*

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CHAPTER 01

Welcome to the coast

A thoughtful purchase begins with a clear purpose.

A guide for the decision, the purchase, and ownership

A coastal condo can be a home, a family gathering place, a rental business, or some combination of all three. The same unit can be a satisfying lifestyle purchase and a weak cash-flow investment. The right decision starts by being honest about what you want the property to do and what you can afford if rental income disappoints.

This guide follows a buyer from choosing a stretch of coastline through evaluating a building, making an offer, financing, closing, and operating the property. It gives special attention to buyers who live elsewhere and cannot stop by when a leak, hurricane warning, or association vote needs attention. Read the legal and financial chapters before committing a deposit, then use the appendices as a working purchase file.

How to use this book

Begin with Chapters 2-5 to narrow location, property type, and budget. Before an offer, read Chapters 6-13 on documents, deadlines, structural condition, insurance, and financing. Investors should complete the models in Chapters 15-19 before treating advertised rental revenue as a reason to buy. Keep the checklists beside your contract and have your professionals fill in the actual dates and answers.

Every numerical investment example in this book is hypothetical. None represents a current listing, market average, lender quote, tax result, or promise of performance. The sources appendix links to the authorities checked for this edition. Bracketed source numbers beside legal and tax passages identify those references.

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About this edition

Prepared by Kinsey Haddock, Broker Associate – REALTOR®, Coldwell Banker Realty. Research cutoff: November 4, 2026. This edition combines a coastal buying reference with practical tools for comparing properties, reviewing documents, and planning ownership.

This is educational material, not individualized legal, tax, engineering, insurance, investment, or lending advice. A Florida real-estate attorney should interpret your contract and association documents; a qualified tax professional should evaluate your circumstances.

Laws, forms, lender standards, premiums, and local rental rules can change between reading and closing.

> *Your best protection is a documented answer from the person responsible for the issue, received before the deadline that protects your ability to act.*

Disclosure

This guide is for educational purposes only. It does not replace advice from a Florida real estate attorney, CPA or tax advisor, licensed insurance agent, licensed mortgage loan originator, or licensed inspector or engineer. Always consult the correct professional should you have questions about your specific purchase.

CHAPTER 02

Find your stretch of coastline

From the Forgotten Coast west to Destin and beyond.

Coastal Orientation · East to West

EAST → WEST

- **Forgotten Coast**
  Franklin and Gulf counties; Mexico Beach in Bay
- **Panama City Beach**
  Bay County; confirm city versus unincorporated
- **30A and South Walton**
  Walton County; community rights vary by parcel
- **Miramar Beach and Sandestin**
  Walton County; review every resort layer
- **Destin and Okaloosa Island**
  Okaloosa County; confirm municipality

Schematic only. Not a boundary, navigation, flood, or legal-access map.

A regional orientation

The names Emerald Coast, Forgotten Coast, and 30A are useful descriptions, not a single legal jurisdiction. A mailing address or rental listing can use a destination name while the parcel falls outside that city's limits. County, municipality, condominium declaration, and sometimes a master association all matter. The following east-to-west route is an orientation rather than a boundary map.

Forgotten Coast: Franklin and Gulf counties

Think of Apalachicola, Eastpoint, St. George Island, Port St. Joe, Cape San Blas, Indian Pass, and Mexico Beach as separate searches. Apalachicola's historic riverfront experience differs from a barrier-island beach stay. St. George Island lies in Franklin County; Cape San Blas and Port St.

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Joe lie in Gulf County; Mexico Beach is in Bay County. The phrase Forgotten Coast does not make their rules interchangeable.

Condo availability and building form vary considerably. Confirm whether an attractive attached property is legally a condominium, fee-simple townhome, or another ownership arrangement. For a remote purchase, examine access roads, bridge reliance, utility service, repair logistics, and the manager's ability to reach the property after a storm. A smaller building can have fewer amenities but also fewer owners sharing a major repair.

Panama City Beach and Bay County

Panama City Beach offers a wide range of beachfront and near-beach condominium buildings. Panama City and Panama City Beach are distinct municipalities. A beach-area address can also fall in unincorporated Bay County. Compare the particular tower, stack, parking arrangement, elevator capacity, beach access, and association rather than relying on a destination-wide reputation.

A high floor may improve a view but increase dependence on elevators. A building near attractions may suit some guests and create traffic or noise concerns for others. Visit the actual unit at different times, including an arrival or turnover period if possible.

South Walton and the 30A corridor

Inlet Beach, Rosemary Beach, Seacrest, Alys Beach, Seagrove, Seaside, WaterColor, Grayton Beach, Blue Mountain Beach, and Dune Allen are familiar names along or near the Scenic Highway 30A area. They do not share one set of association rules, amenity rights, or beach entitlements. Some named communities have limited condo inventory. Review the individual parcel and recorded rights.

A bicycle-friendly location is not proof that a guest can use every nearby pool, beach walkover, parking lot, tram, or beach-club service. Ask who owns each facility, how access is granted, what fees apply, and whether the right passes with title or depends on a separate agreement.

Miramar Beach, Sandestin, and Destin

Miramar Beach is in Walton County, while Destin is in Okaloosa County. A property marketed as Destin may therefore have Walton County taxes and regulations. Sandestin is a resort area with property-specific condominium, master-association, amenity, and rental arrangements. Request every layer of charges and rights.

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Destin buyers should distinguish Gulf-front, harbor, bay, canal, and inland locations. A water view does not guarantee water access, a boat slip, or permission to operate a rental. On Okaloosa Island and around Fort Walton Beach, verify county or city jurisdiction rather than assuming Destin rules apply. Farther west, Navarre and Pensacola-area searches bring additional jurisdictions and different travel patterns.

Narrow your search: an area-by-area comparison

Start with the experience you want, then compare individual buildings within that area. The profiles below distinguish documented geography and amenities from practical buyer judgments. Potential pros and cons are decision considerations, not rankings, current price claims, rental forecasts, or assurances that an area is always quiet or busy. Tourism sources establish location context; your records, inspections, and scouting visit establish whether a specific condo works. [29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34]

For PCB, East End, Middle Beach, and West End are search labels with overlapping usage, not legal boundaries. Middle Beach here means the central beach and Long Beach area; it does not mean every property on Middle Beach Road is beachfront. Pier Park and Open Sands deserve separate attention even when a listing groups them into the west or central beach. [29]

Start your search here if you prioritize...	Areas to compare	Main tradeoff to test
Lagoon activities and boating outings	PCB East End / Grand Lagoon	Gulf versus lagoon access and driving routes
Central beach dining and amusements	PCB Middle Beach / Long Beach	Noise, crossings, and peak-period circulation
Pier Park access or the western approach to 30A	PCB West End; compare Pier Park and far west separately	Walkable activity versus a quieter block
A specific village center and bicycle outings	30A; choose the actual neighborhood	Beach rights, practical walking route, and total cost
Resort amenities with several ownership choices	Miramar Beach / Sandestin	Layered fees, amenity rights, and management terms
Harbor activities plus Gulf beach options	Destin	Different waterfront types and congestion exposure

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Start your search here if you prioritize...	Areas to compare	Main tradeoff to test
A Gulf-front condo with access to Fort Walton Beach services	Okaloosa Island	Island versus mainland location and road dependence
Beach, pier, and nearby protected shoreline outings	Navarre Beach	Bridge logistics, services, and leasehold review

PCB condos: East End and Grand Lagoon

Search focus: The eastern beach, Thomas Drive area, and Grand Lagoon surroundings. The official tourism guide identifies Grand Lagoon on PCB's east end as a hub for boating, fishing, sightseeing, and water activities. That is a location advantage to investigate, not a guarantee that a condo has a slip or boat access. [29]

Potential pros

- A useful starting point if marina outings and lagoon activities are part of your ownership plan.
- A chance to compare a Gulf-oriented stay with lagoon-oriented views and activities within the same broader search area.
- A location-based rental angle for guests who value the area's boating outings, provided actual comparable bookings support it.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- A lagoon view, marina proximity, and direct Gulf beach access are different benefits. A buyer wanting all three may have to compromise.
- A property convenient to the lagoon may be less convenient for frequent Pier Park or west-end trips; test the actual drive rather than an optimistic map estimate.
- Nearby marinas, roads, loading areas, and commercial activity can affect an individual stack's sound and view.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Decide Gulf-front versus lagoon-side first. Then verify the legal beach route, any water-access or slip rights, trailer and boat parking, balcony orientation, and the route to the activities you actually plan to use. Ask a rental manager for comps on the same side of the water with similar

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access, rather than a generic PCB projection.

A useful fit when: Your priorities include east-end activities or lagoon outings and you are comfortable evaluating the specific building separately from the destination label.

PCB condos: Middle Beach and Long Beach

Search focus: The central beach and Long Beach surroundings, using each listing's actual address. The official tourism guide describes Middle Beach around the point where Middle Beach Road branches from Front Beach Road and identifies dining, shopping, amusements, and beach attractions. [29]

Potential pros

- A starting point for buyers who want beach time combined with nearby restaurants and amusements.
- Central positioning can be useful for a household whose outings span both sides of PCB, depending on the exact address.
- Buildings can be compared by the actual guest experience: direct beach entry, pool setup, parking, and the walk to chosen activities.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- Proximity to activity can bring road noise, pedestrian crossings, and busy arrival periods; a high floor does not automatically eliminate sound.
- A central location is not proof that every daily errand is walkable or that crossing Front Beach Road is comfortable for your household.
- Similar-looking towers can have very different parking decks, elevator loads, and repair obligations.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Request a continuous video of the route from parking to elevator to unit to beach. Test balcony sound during daytime and evening, where feasible. Compare building circulation during a turnover period. For investment analysis, use the same view class, legal sleeping capacity, and amenity access in your comp set.

A useful fit when: You value a central beach setting with access to activities and can accept the actual level of activity around the selected building.

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PCB condos: West End, Pier Park, and the far west

Search focus: Treat the Pier Park/Russell-Fields Pier vicinity, Open Sands, and the farther-west beach as separate micro-searches. The official tourism guide distinguishes the Pier Park activity area from western attractions such as Camp Helen State Park and the Conservation Park. Those labels should not be collapsed into one experience. [29]

Potential pros

- Near Pier Park, the appeal can be convenient access to shopping, dining, and the pier when the actual pedestrian route works.
- Farther west, a buyer can search for a setting oriented toward the western shoreline and trips toward Inlet Beach and 30A.
- Different micro-locations allow you to prioritize either proximity to a named activity center or distance from it.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- A unit advertised as near Pier Park may still require a drive or an inconvenient road crossing.
- West End does not mean uniformly quiet. Event schedules, road exposure, and the building's own occupancy matter.
- Moving farther from activity centers can trade walkable choices for additional driving; the preferred tradeoff is personal.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Choose an actual walking-distance requirement or a preferred block, not just West End. Verify the unit's view from its own balcony; another tower in the same development may have a different exposure. Check upcoming neighboring construction and access arrangements. Drive both your grocery route and your preferred route toward 30A.

A useful fit when: You can specify whether the goal is Pier Park convenience or a farther-west setting, and compare each building on that basis.

30A condos: East 30A and Inlet Beach

Search focus: Inlet Beach, Rosemary Beach, Seacrest, and the surrounding eastern corridor. Named communities have distinct ownership, access, and amenity arrangements. The South Walton tourism agency documents neighborhood differences and public beach-access options. [30, 31]

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Potential pros

- A logical starting point if a particular eastern village center, shopping or dining cluster, or Inlet Beach outing is central to your plans.
- The location can support a stay organized around beach visits and walking or bicycle outings where the unit's actual routes allow them.
- The opportunity to compare village-centered units with properties outside a named community's boundaries.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- A nearby community's name in a rental description does not confer its beach, pool, tram, parking, or amenity rights.
- Prices and ongoing charges require unit-level comparison; proximity to a well-known destination is not proof of stronger investment yield.
- Pedestrian activity, bicycle traffic, service access, and parking can be important constraints at the exact building.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Draw the legal beach route on a map and verify where guests may actually sit, not only where they may cross. Identify who owns every advertised amenity. Test arrival with luggage and beach gear. Determine whether your preferred listing is legally inside the community used in its marketing.

A useful fit when: You want a specific village experience and are willing to verify and pay for the rights the particular condo actually provides.

30A condos: Seagrove and the central corridor

Search focus: Seagrove and properties around the central 30A destinations, including the Seaside and WaterColor surroundings. A unit near a named community is not automatically part of it. Compare actual walking and bicycle routes, beach access, and legal ownership form.

Potential pros

- A starting point for buyers who want to compare a central 30A base with access to multiple chosen outings.
- An opportunity to select between proximity to a village center and a building farther from its immediate activity.

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- A search that can emphasize practical use: a repeatable beach walk, usable balcony, storage, and a convenient daily routine.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- Short distances on a map can conceal road crossings, missing sidewalks, limited parking, or beach access that is unavailable to guests.
- The value of being near a famous community can be overstated if the amenities you want are not included.
- Differences in building age, scale, exterior maintenance, and reserves can outweigh the similarity of the mailing address.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Pick two or three destinations you will actually visit and walk or drive each route. Compare the cost and convenience of a Gulf-front unit with a documented beach-access unit. Ask whether bikes, beach gear, and owner belongings have approved storage. Underwrite the building and the legal beach entitlement before assigning value to a neighborhood name.

A useful fit when: You want a central 30A routine and can identify exactly which nearby activities and rights make that location worthwhile.

30A condos: Grayton, Blue Mountain, Gulf Place, and Dune Allen

Search focus: Western and west-central 30A, with separate comparisons for Grayton, Blue Mountain, the Gulf Place area, and Dune Allen. Official neighborhood information and the beach-access directory provide the starting geography; individual associations provide the ownership terms. [30, 31]

Potential pros

- A useful search for buyers prioritizing particular beach accesses, outdoor outings, or the western portion of the corridor.
- The ability to compare a location around a dining or gathering area with one farther from it.
- A chance to prioritize the everyday beach routine over proximity to a different 30A village you may rarely visit.

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Potential cons and tradeoffs

- West 30A is not a guarantee of solitude, low fees, lower purchase price, or an uncrowded beach.
- Some locations may require more driving to the eastern corridor; avoid treating all of 30A as one compact walking district.
- A low-rise setting does not establish exemption from every regulation, adequate reserves, or lower total repair exposure.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Confirm the closest usable beach access, facilities, parking, stairs, and accessible route where needed. Test the route with your own gear. Identify any separate association or commercial component, shared parking agreement, and permitted guest use. Compare storm exposure and maintenance with the same rigor used for a larger tower.

A useful fit when: Your priorities point to a specific western neighborhood, beach access, or outdoor outing rather than the broad 30A label.

Miramar Beach and Sandestin: the bridge between searches

Search focus: Keep this as a separate comparison between 30A and Destin. Miramar Beach is in Walton County. Resort, Gulf-side, bay-side, and other settings can have different associations, services, access, and charges even when marketing uses Destin broadly.

Potential pros

- A useful place to compare a resort-oriented ownership plan with a simpler stand-alone condominium arrangement.
- Potential access to a coordinated collection of amenities or transport services when those rights are documented and included.
- The ability to decide whether a beach-oriented, bay-oriented, or resort-activity-oriented property best serves your actual use.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- Multiple layers of dues, recreation charges, rental rules, and management contracts can complicate both the budget and guest experience.
- A shuttle, club, pool, golf, or beach benefit can depend on membership, management affiliation, or additional payment.

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- A bay-side unit and a Gulf-front unit should not share a revenue projection simply because both use the same resort name.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Request a written all-in fee schedule and a list of benefits that transfer to you and your guests. Identify what requires a separate membership or program. Walk or ride the actual beach route and ask how it operates during busy periods or disruptions. Separate condo, master-association, and management obligations in the financial model.

A useful fit when: You value the particular amenities enough to justify their documented costs and conditions.

Destin condos: Gulf-front, harbor, and other waterfront settings

Search focus: Split Destin into the water experience you want before searching by bedroom count. Gulf frontage, harbor access, and bay or canal exposure are not substitutes. Use the city's official beach information to begin checking public access, then confirm the condo's own recorded rights. [32]

Potential pros

- A starting point for a buyer wanting Gulf beach use, harbor-oriented activities, or a different waterfront routine within the Destin search.
- The ability to choose a property around a specific activity rather than accepting every destination feature as equally relevant.
- A building with documented access and amenities can offer a clear, accurately described personal-use or rental proposition.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- The word waterfront may describe a view without a beach, swimming access, or boat rights.
- Harbor activity, road noise, event exposure, and beach crowds vary by micro-location and unit orientation.
- A building with a more complicated financing or repair situation can narrow the future buyer pool regardless of destination recognition.

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Specifics to narrow before touring

Decide whether beach, boat access, view, or walkability is the first priority. Verify slip title or lease, dimensions and use restrictions if boating matters. Test the route between your actual building and your preferred activities during the times you will travel. Obtain same-building comps when available and avoid applying one Destin-wide income estimate.

A useful fit when: You can name the specific Destin experience the unit delivers and have confirmed that the relevant rights belong to it.

Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island condos

Search focus: Separate mainland Fort Walton Beach from the Gulf-front condominium search on Okaloosa Island. A Fort Walton Beach mailing description does not establish Gulf frontage. The official tourism authority lists island public-access locations, including the Boardwalk and John Beasley Park. [33]

Potential pros

- Okaloosa Island provides a distinct Gulf-oriented condo search alongside access to Fort Walton Beach services and outings.
- A buyer can compare the convenience of a building near the Boardwalk with a different island block and its own activity level.
- Mainland properties may suit a different daily routine, waterfront preference, or intended use and deserve a separate cost comparison.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- Island and mainland units can differ substantially in beach access, guest expectations, and the need to drive.
- Bridge and road dependence can matter for errands, arrivals, evacuation, and a commute; test your actual route.
- Some buildings' salt exposure, insurance, and capital needs can erase an apparent price advantage. No area label establishes better value by itself.

Specifics to narrow before touring

Confirm the parcel jurisdiction, exact beach route, parking layout, elevator arrangement, and balcony exposure. Test access to groceries and medical services rather than assuming proximity means an easy trip. Compare similarly situated island properties for rentals, and do not use an

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island Gulf-front projection for a mainland condo.

A useful fit when: You want to compare an island beach base with mainland convenience and are clear about which setting the chosen unit actually offers.

Navarre Beach condos: a separate ownership review

Search focus: Distinguish Navarre Beach on the island from mainland Navarre. The state tourism guide identifies the pier, Marine Park, and the protected shoreline toward Pensacola Beach as location features. These support an outdoor-oriented search, not a promise of empty beaches or higher returns. [34]

Potential pros

- A starting point for buyers who put beach use, pier outings, and nearby protected-shoreline recreation high on their list.
- An alternative itinerary to a vacation centered on PCB or Destin activity districts.
- The chance to compare Gulf-facing and Sound-oriented properties according to the water experience you actually want.

Potential cons and tradeoffs

- Mainland services and many errands can require a bridge trip; evaluate the routine in both normal conditions and emergency planning.
- If a household wants a particular shopping or entertainment district elsewhere, distance may reduce the convenience of this choice.
- Navarre Beach's leasehold arrangements require extra title, lease, lender, and insurance review. Do not assume a fee-simple land interest, a uniform lease term, automatic transfer, or a particular future ownership reform. Santa Rosa County maintains a lease-amendment process identifying leasehold parcels. [35]

Specifics to narrow before touring

Have counsel and the closing professional identify the exact estate being purchased, underlying lease and amendments, remaining term, renewals, rent or fees, transfer approvals, restrictions, and lender requirements. Ask the property appraiser about the actual tax treatment. Then apply the same structural, reserve, rental, and insurance review used everywhere else.

A useful fit when: The location matches your plans and you understand both the condominium obligations and the specific underlying land or leasehold arrangement.

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Turn area preferences into a three-building shortlist

Select at most three areas to scout, then choose one or two buildings in each using the same criteria. Score only features you have verified: legal beach access, actual walking route, parking, noise, view, all-in charges, structural evidence, reserves, financing, and permitted rental use. Keep lifestyle preferences separate from financial results.

If your priority is less activity, choose a specific block and test it during the season and hours you will use it. If it is walkability, walk the route rather than measuring straight-line distance. If it is rental income, compare documented net results from genuinely similar units. If it is lower cost, compare purchase basis plus dues, insurance, taxes, reserves, and expected capital work. No region wins all four automatically.

Shortlist worksheet

Area / exact building: _____

Three reasons it fits my intended use: _____

_____

Most important tradeoff and how I tested it: _____

_____

Legal access / ownership / rental questions still open: _____

_____

Total annual cost and downside cash need: _____

Next building to compare on the same basis: _____

Let your use select the location

Make a short list based on beach access, travel, daily services, preferred building form, and the rules needed for your actual use. Avoid steering decisions through assumptions about who lives in an area. If schools matter, verify attendance assignment, enrollment rules, and programs directly with the district for the exact address. Assignments can change.

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A useful scouting trip

Stay in or near the building you are considering. Drive to groceries, medical services, and the airport during the hours you expect to travel. Walk the beach route carrying the gear your household would use. Test parking, luggage transport, cell reception, accessible routes, and the noise level inside with doors closed. Record inconveniences that a vacation brochure will not show.

Disclosure

Area descriptions are general orientation, not boundary, flood, zoning, school, or legal-access determinations. Confirm jurisdiction, beach access, rental rules and flood zone for any specific property with the county property appraiser, the local government, and qualified professionals.

Kinsey Haddock, P.A., Broker Associate – REALTOR® | Coldwell Banker Realty | FL License #BK3253849
(850) 340-0646 | kinseyhaddock@flpanhandlerealtor.com | emeraldcoastbuyersguide.com

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CHAPTER 03

Choose the right ownership model

A condo, a house, and a townhome solve different problems.

Understand what you are buying

A condominium is a form of ownership, not an architectural style. You own the unit described in the declaration and an interest in common elements. A townhome-shaped property can be a condo; an attached home can instead be fee simple with an HOA. The deed, declaration, survey or condominium plat, and title review determine the arrangement.

In a condo, shared decision-making can reduce personal maintenance work while placing important spending decisions in the association's hands. The declaration determines unit boundaries and maintenance allocation. Never assume all windows, balconies, air-conditioning equipment, or exterior doors are the association's expense.

Condo advantages

Shared exterior maintenance can simplify ownership from another state. Amenities and Gulf-front access may be available at a purchase price below that of a comparable detached beachfront home. Professional management, common security systems, and shared services can be convenient. Those features still have costs, and their reliability depends on the building's finances and contracts.

Condo tradeoffs

You share financial and physical risk with other owners. Fees, assessments, insurance deductibles, construction closures, rental rules, and governance decisions can affect both enjoyment and resale. A beautifully renovated unit does not offset a deteriorating building. Your ability to finance or sell can depend on conditions elsewhere in the project.

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House advantages and tradeoffs

A detached home can offer greater control over interior and exterior work, private outdoor space, and fewer shared building systems. The owner bears direct responsibility for roof, siding, landscaping, drainage, pool, pest prevention, and storm preparation. An HOA or local restrictions may still limit alterations and rentals. A house is not automatically cheaper to operate or easier to rent.

Compare the same ownership period

Use a five- or ten-year ownership budget for both choices. Include roof and HVAC replacement, landscaping, pool service, insurance, taxes, utilities, management, travel, and expected capital work. For the condo, include regular dues, master dues, amenity or ground-lease charges, known assessments, and a separate personal contingency fund.

Decision worksheet

Write one sentence each for desired personal use, rental use, maximum annual subsidy, and the level of maintenance you will personally handle. Rank privacy, convenience, beach access, accessible design, rental flexibility, parking, and control over decisions. Choose based on those priorities rather than the lowest advertised monthly fee.

> *A low fee can mean efficiency, fewer services, or deferred spending. Find out which before calling it a bargain.*

Disclosure
Comparisons are general and educational. Ownership, maintenance and cost obligations depend on the specific recorded documents. Have a Florida real estate attorney review the declaration and governing documents before you commit.

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CHAPTER 04

Define your buying plan

Separate lifestyle value from investment performance.

Three different buyer plans

A primary-residence buyer should evaluate daily living, insurance, long-term maintenance, and local services. A second-home buyer should focus on carrying costs during vacancy, reliable oversight, and personal-use expectations. An investor must first establish legal rental permission and then test an operating business under conservative assumptions.

A hybrid owner needs two budgets. The first shows rental performance with realistic owner blocks; the second shows the cost of the vacation time the household reserves. If the family takes the highest-demand weeks, removing an annual average nightly rate will understate the income sacrificed.

Set boundaries before touring

Decide the maximum cash needed at purchase, the maximum recurring payment, the amount available for a surprise assessment, and the annual deficit you can sustain without selling. Keep emergency household savings separate from property reserves. A lender's approval ceiling is not your personal comfort limit.

Write nonnegotiable property requirements: legal occupancy, rental minimum, pet needs, parking, storage, accessibility, beach access, view protection, renovation limits, and travel time. Separate a requirement from a preference. Two properties can have the same bedroom count and very different permitted occupancy or guest appeal.

Assemble a decision team

Use a real-estate professional familiar with the building type, a condo-experienced lender, Florida attorney, title or closing professional, inspector, insurance agent, CPA, and a local management contact. Add an engineer when building reports or conditions call for one. Ask

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each professional what their work does and does not cover.

A buyer representation agreement should explain services, duration, cancellation, and compensation. Compensation is negotiable and should be understood in writing. Do not assume a seller will pay every buyer cost. Obtain the lender's treatment of any credits or compensation arrangement before relying on them.

Build a purchase file

Keep documents organized by unit, association, financing, insurance, tax, and closing. Name files with their dates. Use a single decision log: question, evidence requested, person responsible, due date, answer, and remaining risk. Save emails and the documents behind verbal summaries.

An out-of-state buyer should designate a local person with explicit authority for property access and emergency decisions. Establish approval limits, backup contacts, and how notices are received. The association's mail address and emergency contact should be correct immediately after closing.

Disclosure
Your goals, budget and risk tolerance are personal. Consult a licensed financial professional, lender and tax advisor before setting purchase limits or making financial commitments.

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CHAPTER 05

The true cost of ownership

Purchase price is only the first number.

Cash at purchase

Budget for down payment or purchase price, closing charges, lender fees, appraisal, inspections, attorney review, association application and transfer charges, prepaid insurance, tax escrows, initial furnishings, utility setup, licenses, and an opening repair fund. Obtain a property-specific estimate; generic percentages are too blunt for comparing two buildings with different requirements.

Keep refundable escrows separate from fees. Separate one-time acquisition costs from recurring operations. A working-capital contribution paid to an association is not the same as money held in your personal emergency account.

Annual carrying costs

Start with the adopted association budget and the unit's actual assessment schedule. Add master association, recreation, parking, storage, or club charges. Identify which utilities and insurance layers are included so that you neither omit nor double-count them. Then add your unit policy, flood needs, property taxes at your expected new-owner value, electricity, internet, maintenance, pest service, equipment replacement, and management.

A rental adds booking commissions, credit-card charges, housekeeping gaps, linens, supplies, deep cleans, repairs, photography, software, licensing, tax administration, and vacancy. A guest-paid cleaning fee may not cover all turnover expenses. Ask for settlement statements showing gross charges and all deductions.

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Your reserve is separate from the association's

Association reserves pay shared obligations under the governing documents. Your reserve pays your unit's appliances, furnishings, HVAC responsibilities, deductibles, lost rent, and personal share of surprises. Keeping both is not double counting when they cover different obligations.

Create a capital schedule: item, expected replacement window, installed estimate, and annual saving. Do not assume an appliance will last until the seller's optimistic replacement date. Salt exposure, guest turnover, and deferred service can shorten practical life.

Two comparisons that expose hidden costs

First, compare annual ownership cost before financing. This isolates differences in building fees and insurance. Second, compare the fully financed budget using the same down payment, interest-rate assumption, and term. Otherwise, a financing difference can conceal a more expensive property.

Test a fee increase, higher insurance renewal, a special assessment, and several months with no rental proceeds. If the purchase works only when appreciation pays for a negative cash flow, describe it honestly as a leveraged appreciation bet with lifestyle benefits, not a self-funding rental.

Ask for evidence

Obtain current statements, renewal notices, adopted budgets, assessment notices, and written quotes. Seller bills are historical evidence, not promises of your future costs. Put an expiration date next to every quote and repeat critical checks before closing.

Disclosure
Cost categories and figures are illustrations only and are not quotes or estimates for any property. Obtain written quotes from your lender, insurance agent, title company, and association, and consult a CPA about your situation.

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CHAPTER 06

Buying from another state

A practical sequence from first call to keys.

Before the search

Confirm cash, financing path, intended occupancy, and title preferences with your team. Secure a lender who will review the project as well as your income. Agree on how video tours will cover less photogenic spaces: mechanical equipment, exterior corridors, parking, building envelope, and nearby construction.

Have the attorney explain Florida contract choices and default provisions before an offer is urgent. Ask how deposits are held, what constitutes timely notice, whether email is sufficient under the signed contract, and when funds become exposed. Avoid assuming your home state's practices apply.

At offer and acceptance

Use the exact legal unit and include assigned parking, storage, furnishings, and transferable rights. Address inspection, financing, appraisal, association approval, document delivery, rental use, and assessment allocation. A furnished sale should have an inventory and a process for replacing missing items. Decide how existing bookings, deposits, taxes, and management obligations will be handled.

Immediately after acceptance, create a deadline calendar from the signed agreement. Record deposit due dates, document receipt dates, inspection end, financing milestones, approval requirements, and closing. These clocks can run concurrently. Sending documents to your lender is not the same as delivering a cancellation notice to the contractually required party.

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During due diligence

Order the unit inspection and insurance quotes early. Request association records through the seller where needed and have the lender begin its questionnaire. Give the attorney complete documents, not only screenshots or a manager's assurance. If a required item is missing, ask promptly about written requests, extensions, and rights before a deadline passes.

Attend the inspection remotely if necessary, then receive a narrated follow-up. Ask for close-ups, component ages, moisture findings, and the inspector's recommended specialists. A video tour cannot establish concealed condition or replace a physical inspection.

Before travel or remote signing

Confirm the closing agent's identification, notarization, witness, power-of-attorney, and original-document requirements. Remote online notarization or a mobile notary may be possible, but lender and title acceptance must be established in advance. A power of attorney needs approval before it is signed.

Verify wiring instructions using a phone number independently obtained at the start of the transaction. Never trust a late email changing payment instructions. Ask the closing agent to confirm receipt of funds through the established channel. Avoid making travel arrangements dependent on a guaranteed recording or possession time.

After closing

Obtain recorded documents and the final settlement statement. Change locks or codes through an approved process, transfer utilities, update association notices, confirm insurance is active, and establish local response coverage. If rented, do not accept guests until licensing, registrations, insurance, management, and safety requirements are complete.

Disclosure

Wire fraud warning: never send funds based on emailed instructions alone. Verify all wiring instructions by phone with your title company or closing attorney using an independently confirmed number. Consult your closing attorney or title agent about remote closings and notarization.

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CHAPTER 07

Florida condo law: the 2025–26 landscape

Read the current rules through the lens of the specific building.

What changed and what to verify

Florida's post-2022 condo reforms expanded structural inspections, reserve studies, and financial transparency. HB 913 took effect July 1, 2025, adding funding flexibility and other changes. The state's official 2026 statutory pages and DBPR resources were checked for this edition. Older articles can be wrong on cancellation periods, deadlines, and reserve options. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

For owner-controlled associations existing on or before July 1, 2022, the general initial SIRS completion deadline moved to December 31, 2025. A qualifying association with a milestone inspection due by December 31, 2026 may coordinate its SIRS with that inspection, with December 31, 2026 as the outside date for that pathway. This is not a blanket extension for every association. [1, 2]

A required SIRS generally recurs at least every ten years for qualifying residential condo buildings of three habitable stories or higher. Exclusions and responsibility allocations matter. Ask the association's attorney to identify the building-specific rule, any permitted delay, and the evidence supporting it. [2, 3]

Reserve funding after the reforms

SIRS-related reserves generally cannot simply be waived for budgets adopted on or after December 31, 2024. Statutory financing alternatives and limited exceptions exist. A claim that owners voted to keep dues low does not by itself establish compliance. [2, 3]

The 2025 law permits qualifying funding through assessments, loans, and lines of credit under specified approval requirements. For budgets adopted through December 31, 2028, certain owner-controlled associations with a recent milestone inspection may, with the required owner

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vote, pause or reduce contributions for up to two consecutive annual budgets to fund recommended repairs. Conditions and an updated study apply. A pause changes timing; it does not make repair costs disappear. [3]

Transparency in 2026

Beginning January 1, 2026, the online-records requirement extends to associations managing a condominium with 25 or more units, excluding timeshares, subject to the statute. Protected information and access rules still apply; a buyer is not automatically entitled to an owner's login. Ask the seller to supply the appropriate records. [1, 5]

The buyer's compliance questions

Which buildings are subject to milestone and SIRS requirements? What date was each inspection due? Was it completed, accepted, or extended in writing? Are phase-two work and permits outstanding? Does the adopted budget follow the current reserve funding plan? If there is a loan, what is the unit's economic burden? Who verified the legal basis for any pause or delay?

Use current enacted law and the local building official's file. A proposed bill, social-media summary, or prior year's budget is not proof of today's compliance. Even a legally exempt low-rise building still needs maintenance, adequate insurance, and money for future repairs.

Disclosure
This chapter summarizes laws as researched through November 4, 2026, for general education. It is not legal advice and laws change. A licensed Florida real estate attorney should interpret how current law applies to a specific building and contract.

CHAPTER 08

Documents, disclosures, and cancellation rights

Receive the package early and track every receipt date.

A document package is a decision tool

Request the recorded declaration and amendments, articles, bylaws, rules, current budget, most recent annual financial statement, FAQ document, and applicable milestone summary, turnover report, and SIRS. Add meeting minutes, assessment notices, insurance policies, litigation information, reserve schedules, and material contracts for a fuller review. Some items are statutory deliveries; others are additional due-diligence requests.

For resale transactions, section 718.503 provides a seven-day cancellation framework excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, tied to execution and receipt of specified documents and written-request provisions. Applicable structural reports have their own statutory treatment. The right terminates at closing. Developer sales generally have a different fifteen-day framework, including certain materially adverse amendments. Have counsel calculate the actual trigger and notice deadline. [4]

Do not use an old three-day resale summary. Do not sign an acknowledgment that documents were received when they were not. Statutory rights, inspection contingencies, financing conditions, and negotiated document-review rights are distinct. One may expire while another remains, and missing a contractual notice can carry serious consequences.

Read in a practical order

First confirm the use you need: rental minimum, occupancy, pets, parking, renovation, and access rights. Next evaluate shared obligations: maintenance allocation, assessments, insurance, reserves, and financing. Then examine governance, disputes, significant contracts, and restrictions on resale or transfer. Record unresolved issues rather than assuming silence means permission.

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Look for amendments and incorporated exhibits. A rules summary is not a substitute for the recorded declaration. If two documents conflict, let counsel determine hierarchy, validity, and enforceability. Ask whether new rules or assessments are proposed but not yet adopted.

Estoppel: useful but limited

Under section 718.116, the association generally must issue an estoppel certificate within ten business days after a qualifying request. Its effective period is generally thirty days, or thirty-five when mailed. Ask the closing professional to verify timing, current statutory fee limits, all association layers, balances, and any amended certificate. [6]

An estoppel helps establish financial and other specified association information for closing. It does not certify structural safety, guarantee future dues, or eliminate the need to review proposed projects. A clean current balance can coexist with an imminent repair assessment.

Flood and condition disclosures

Florida's residential flood disclosure statute calls for delivery at or before contract execution and includes seller knowledge of flood damage, insurance claims, and assistance. Condo-specific sales disclosures also address flood matters. Request the current applicable form and supporting records. [4, 7]

A seller's lack of knowledge is not proof that a property never flooded. Cross-check available permits, association records, inspection findings, and insurance information. Ask your attorney how incomplete or inaccurate disclosures affect your particular transaction.

Disclosure
Deadlines and cancellation rights depend on your contract, the documents delivered, and current statutes. This is not legal advice. Have a Florida real estate attorney confirm every deadline and right in writing before relying on it.

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CHAPTER 09

Read the association like a business

The balance sheet belongs in your purchase decision.

Start with governance and responsibility

Identify the condominium association, any master association, and any resort or recreation entity. Get the exact legal names, management contacts, assessment schedules, and governing documents for each. Determine which entity owns or maintains roofs, elevators, roads, pools, beach facilities, seawalls, and utilities.

Ask whether the community is developer-controlled, recently turned over, or controlled by a concentrated owner group. Concentrated ownership can affect votes, finances, and financing. Ask about staff continuity, board experience, management contracts, and recurring owner concerns without treating disagreement alone as proof of mismanagement.

Read a budget in layers

Compare current budget with prior-year actual spending and the next proposed budget. Separate operating expenses, reserve contributions, debt service, and nonrecurring projects. Determine whether a large cash balance is unrestricted operating cash, restricted reserves, insurance proceeds, or borrowed money.

Look for unpaid owner balances, recurring operating deficits, unpaid vendors, insurance financed in installments, and reserves drawn for expenses they were not intended to cover. Ask the accountant or association for explanations. A financial review is not a forensic audit, and different reporting levels provide different assurance.

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Follow every large project to its funding

For each roof, balcony, concrete, plumbing, waterproofing, elevator, or fire-system project, collect scope, engineer recommendation, bids, contract, permits, schedule, contingency, and funding. A board estimate is not a fixed construction contract. Ask what happens if concealed damage expands the scope.

Read at least the recent year of minutes and longer when major work is underway. Search for recurring references to leaks, insurance renewals, reserve studies, financing, engineer reports, litigation, or amenity closures. Ask for notices issued after the most recent meeting minutes.

Translate association debt into owner cost

If an association borrows, determine principal, interest terms, maturity, collateral, required assessments, prepayment terms, and what happens if owners become delinquent. The unit's share may be based on declaration percentages rather than equal division. Do not add the full loan balance to an assessment estimate if both represent the same repair; reconcile the funding sources.

A buyer can negotiate who pays an assessment, but the association's collection rights and the parties' private allocation are different questions. Have the attorney draft the allocation and the closing agent document the payment or credit. Clarify assessments adopted before closing but payable in installments afterward.

Look beyond the fee

A higher fee with funded reserves and completed maintenance may be more sustainable than a low fee with deferred repairs. Conversely, high dues do not prove prudent management. Judge the link between condition, reserve schedule, adopted funding, and execution.

> *Ask for the next three expensive decisions, not just the current monthly payment.*

Disclosure
Financial review guidance is educational only. Have a CPA and a Florida real estate attorney review association budgets, reserve studies, debt, and assessments before you rely on them.

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CHAPTER 10

Milestone inspections and structural review

A unit inspection cannot evaluate the whole building.

Know the purpose of each report

A milestone inspection evaluates structural condition; a SIRS estimates future repair and replacement funding needs for specified components. Neither is your unit's home inspection. A reserve study can identify a cost without proving repairs are complete. A report noting no substantial structural deterioration is not a warranty against every building defect. [2, 8]

Qualifying residential condo and cooperative buildings of three habitable stories or more generally face milestone inspection at thirty years and every ten years afterward. The local enforcement agency may require the first inspection at twenty-five years based on local circumstances, including saltwater exposure. Exceptions, transitional dates, and approved extensions must be checked for the building. [8]

Phase one is a visual structural examination by a licensed architect or engineer. Substantial structural deterioration can require phase two, involving more detailed evaluation. Get the full report as well as the inspector's summary, written local notices, permits, and follow-up status. [8]

Read findings, limitations, and follow-through

Identify what was observed, what was inaccessible, what testing was recommended, and what remains unresolved. Confirm that a report actually covers the building containing your unit. A multi-building association may have different ages and findings across structures.

Ask an independent engineer to interpret concerns outside the home inspector's scope. Useful questions include: Is additional testing needed? What must be repaired urgently? Is the proposed scope adequate? Are temporary supports or occupancy limits in place? What evidence establishes completion? Do not ask a real-estate agent to certify structural safety.

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Common coastal review areas

Concrete spalling, exposed or corroded reinforcement, balcony edges, garage decks, water intrusion, expansion joints, exterior sealants, roof drainage, windows, and waterproofing deserve professional attention. Rust staining or a crack can have different causes; appearance alone is not a reliable diagnosis. Repeated cosmetic repairs without resolving water entry warrant questions.

Review fire alarms, sprinklers, stairwells, emergency lighting, elevator status, generator coverage, and corrosion-prone mechanical equipment. A generator may serve only limited common systems. Ask what works during an outage and how residents with mobility needs evacuate.

Completion means more than paying a bill

Obtain signed engineer letters where appropriate, permit closeouts, warranties, punch-list status, lien releases, and the local authority's record. Confirm whether repairs remain under dispute. An assessment paid by the seller does not mean construction will end before your rental season.

Low-rise and newer buildings

Statutory exemptions do not remove physical risk. A small low-rise still needs roof, drainage, envelope, and reserve review. New buildings need warranty, turnover, construction-defect, and developer-budget analysis. Evaluate the actual evidence rather than using age alone as a safety rating.

Disclosure
Structural and safety questions must be answered by a licensed Florida engineer or architect and the local building official. Nothing in this guide is an engineering opinion or a statement about the safety of any building.

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CHAPTER 11

Inspect the unit and its rights

Look past finishes and verify the details that transfer.

Physical inspection priorities

Hire an appropriately licensed inspector and discuss condo-specific scope. Review HVAC age and condition, condensate drainage, water heater, shutoffs, plumbing fixtures, electrical panels, visible moisture, appliances, ventilation, windows, doors, and safety devices. Ask which items are inaccessible and whether systems were operational during the visit.

An inspection is a limited observation, not a guarantee or a destructive examination. Have specialists investigate moisture, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, or environmental concerns when recommended. Do not label discoloration as mold or cosmetic damage without evidence. Document who pays for testing and what repair standard is required under your negotiated agreement.

Maintenance allocation

Use the declaration to determine responsibility for windows, sliding doors, balcony surfaces, railings, HVAC lines, exterior condensers, and plumbing inside walls. An association may insure an item while the owner maintains it, or vice versa. Maintenance, replacement, insurance coverage, and deductible allocation are separate questions.

Ask whether planned interior renovations need association approval, permits, licensed contractors, floor-sound ratings, work-hour limits, elevator protection, deposits, or specific insurance. A seller's unpermitted alteration can become your problem. Request permits and approvals for changed walls, plumbing, electrical, windows, and enclosed balconies.

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What exactly comes with title?

Verify parking and storage as deeded property, limited common elements, assigned spaces, or revocable licenses. Determine whether a boat slip is owned, leased, separately taxed, subject to transfer approval, or unavailable to renters. Check dimensions, height limits, trailers, EV charging, and vehicle restrictions.

For a view, look at nearby parcels, approved projects, and recorded easements. A current view is not necessarily protected. For beach access, review the recorded path and rights, gates, guest access, and any separate agreements. Do not rely on an agent's shorthand such as private beach without supporting documents.

Furniture and operating readiness

Inventory furnishings, linens, electronics, appliances, artwork, patio furniture, owner closets, and exclusions. Photograph condition and serial numbers where useful. Verify that any rental permits, platform listings, reviews, websites, phone numbers, and booking accounts actually transfer; many do not transfer automatically.

At the final walk-through, confirm the agreed condition, completed repairs, inventory, utilities, access devices, and absence of new water damage. If something is missing, resolve it through the closing professionals before funds are disbursed. Do not assume possession includes early entry, parking passes, or a place to store furniture.

Disclosure
Hire a licensed Florida home inspector and appropriate specialists for any property you are considering. This guide does not evaluate any specific unit, system, or condition.

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CHAPTER 12

Insurance, hurricanes, and flood exposure

Understand how the layers fit before binding coverage.

Start with the master policy

Have a condo-experienced insurance professional review the association's property, wind, flood, liability, and other relevant coverage. Obtain actual declarations, schedules, deductibles, exclusions, limits, valuation basis, renewal dates, and available loss information. A certificate of insurance is a summary, not the whole contract.

Ask how section 718.111 and the declaration allocate insured property and owner responsibilities. Do not assume walls-in is a complete description. Confirm what the association covers, what your unit policy must cover, and how an uninsured or deductible expense could reach owners. [5]

Your unit policy

Discuss HO-6 building coverage or improvements, contents, liability, loss of use, loss assessment, water backup, ordinance or law, and rental-related endorsements. Tell the agent the actual occupancy and rental plan. A personal second-home policy may not cover the business use you intend. Ask about guest injury, property management, and any umbrella requirements.

Loss-assessment coverage has limits and exclusions; it is not a promise to pay every assessment. Ask specifically about hurricane deductibles, flood, excluded causes, and assessments arising from inadequate master coverage. Get written explanations for important gaps.

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A percentage deductible example

Suppose a hypothetical master policy applies a 3% hurricane deductible to a $30 million scheduled building value. That calculation produces $900,000 before considering the policy's precise application. It does not mean an automatic $9,000 bill for each of 100 units. Covered causes, declaration allocation, other insurance, reserves, and claim handling determine actual outcomes.

Flood is a separate question

The NFIP Residential Condominium Building Association Policy, or RCBAP, is designed for eligible condominium associations. Have the lender and agent evaluate whether master flood limits satisfy applicable requirements and whether separate unit coverage is needed. An association policy does not protect all of your personal belongings. [9, 10]

Use FEMA's Map Service Center to identify the effective mapped zone, panel, and relevant map changes for the address. Ask about elevation information, prior water entry, drainage, surge exposure, and access roads. Mapped zones describe regulatory hazard information, not a guarantee of safety outside a high-risk area. [11]

A high floor still shares building risk

An upper-floor unit can lose access, utilities, elevators, parking, and rental availability when lower systems flood. Ask where electrical, mechanical, and emergency systems are located. Review damage history and whether repairs addressed underlying vulnerabilities rather than restoring the same exposure.

Make an evacuation and recovery plan

Identify official county emergency-management alerts, evacuation zones, routes, shelter options, and a local contact. Plan for guests who lack transportation or cannot climb stairs. Agree who removes balcony items, installs approved protection, checks for leaks after reopening, and documents damage. Never enter a restricted building or bypass official orders to inspect an investment.

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Bind suitable coverage to begin at the required time and understand any waiting period or binding restriction. Recheck quotes if closing is delayed or a storm approaches. A quote obtained months earlier is not evidence that coverage is active.

Disclosure

Insurance information is general and educational. Coverage, availability, premiums and deductibles vary by carrier and property. Consult a licensed Florida insurance agent and review actual policy documents before binding coverage.

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CHAPTER 13

Financing and project eligibility

The lender approves a borrower and a condominium project.

Two approvals, two sources of risk

A strong credit profile and preapproval do not guarantee a loan on a particular condo. Project review can examine condition, repair obligations, insurance, finances, litigation, ownership concentration, commercial use, and hotel-like operations. Start this review before spending heavily on a transaction.

Fannie Mae's current ineligible-project guidance includes critical repair concerns, certain hotel or motel operations, and other project characteristics. The lender must apply the rules to the actual project and loan. A prior financed sale or a claim that a building is warrantable does not guarantee your approval. [12]

Ask for the questionnaire and supporting documents early. If a questionnaire is incomplete, determine who can answer and by when. A lender's refusal may reflect missing information rather than a final finding that the property is unsafe. Conversely, alternate financing does not resolve an underlying repair or insurance issue.

Match the loan to truthful use

Primary residence, second home, and investment property have different requirements. Tell the lender how often you will occupy, whether rentals are planned, and whether a manager controls availability. Do not choose an occupancy label simply to obtain better pricing.

Conventional, portfolio, jumbo, DSCR, FHA, and VA financing follow different rules and availability. A DSCR lender may underwrite income differently from your own cash-flow model. Ask whether calculations use market rent, gross short-term revenue, or another method, and whether association fees, insurance, taxes, and vacancy are fully considered.

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Compare complete terms

Compare interest rate, APR where applicable, points, fees, down payment, reserve requirements, amortization, balloon maturity, adjustable-rate changes, prepayment penalties, and escrow requirements. Ask when the rate locks and what an extension costs. A lower initial payment may reflect interest-only terms rather than lower economic cost.

Use the same price and occupancy assumptions in each quote. Confirm whether the association or unit insurance meets the lender's requirements. A project insurance shortfall can appear late if no one requests the correct documents early.

Protect the transaction

Have the attorney and agent align financing and project-review milestones with contractual protections. Determine what happens if the borrower qualifies but the project fails review, an appraisal is low, or insurance is unavailable. Do not assume every standard financing contingency covers every project problem.

Cash removes the lender's approval condition but also removes one source of outside review. A cash buyer should still examine marketability and likely financing options for a future purchaser. A discount can be reasonable compensation for risk only when the risk is understood and affordable.

Disclosure
This is not a loan offer, commitment to lend, or rate quote. Loan programs, eligibility, and terms change and are subject to lender approval. Consult a licensed mortgage loan originator about your situation.

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CHAPTER 14

Rental rules and legal permission

Verify four layers before projecting one dollar of revenue.

The four-layer test

First, confirm state licensing requirements. Second, identify county and city jurisdiction and obtain written local guidance for the exact parcel and condominium form. Third, review the recorded declaration, amendments, and valid rules. Fourth, examine master-association, resort, management, amenity, or lease obligations. Permission at one layer does not override a prohibition at another.

DBPR has a Vacation Rental-Condo license pathway; licensing scope and who holds the license should be confirmed with the agency and your manager. A manager's umbrella arrangement, if applicable, needs clear documentation identifying your unit. Local registration and safety obligations must be checked separately. [13]

Walton County maintains a short-term vacation-rental registration office and current FAQs. Panama City Beach has a business-registration process and pre-registration inspection requirements for short-term rentals. Determine condo-specific applicability, exemptions, renewal, and ownership-change requirements directly; avoid importing a detached-home rule into a condominium transaction. [14, 15]

Read the restrictions precisely

Confirm minimum rental term, maximum leases per year, waiting period after purchase, advance approval, registration fees, occupancy, age-related booking rules, parking, quiet hours, guest pets, service-animal obligations, and owner-use restrictions. Have counsel address fair housing and disability-related issues rather than making blanket rules from a rental ad.

Section 718.110 addresses how certain rental amendments apply to existing and later purchasers. A seller's personal exemption or grandfathered status may not carry to a new buyer. Ask counsel to identify what applies to you after title transfers, including any entity transfer. [16]

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Rental contracts can outlive a sale

Collect the management agreement, booking terms, future reservation list, deposits, guest credits, chargebacks, cancellations, and refund obligations. Find out whether the seller can terminate management and at what cost. A required rental program, use restriction, or mandatory amenity arrangement affects both income and financing.

Do not count a reservation as collectible income until you understand its cancellation terms, tax treatment, manager deductions, and who receives the money after closing. Obtain a written allocation for stays spanning closing and for funds already paid to the seller or manager.

Compliance is ongoing

Record renewal dates, inspections, local contact requirements, occupancy postings, safety rules, and tax accounts. Verify that ads display required information and do not promise unauthorized amenities. Keep a copy of the actual permits and registrations, not only the manager's assurance.

A purchase that depends on short-term renting should be evaluated as unsuitable if legal permission remains unresolved before your decision deadline. Do not rely on the fact that neighbors are doing it or that an online platform accepted the listing.

Disclosure
Rental permission depends on state licensing, local ordinances, and association documents that change. Confirm with the applicable agencies, the association, and a Florida real estate attorney before relying on rental use or income.

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CHAPTER 15

Market due diligence and valuation

Underwrite the unit, the building, and the exit.

Use comparable evidence

Start with recent closed sales in the same building when available. Compare floor, view, stack, size, legal configuration, condition, parking, furnishings, rental rules, and assessment status. Adjust thoughtfully rather than assigning a universal dollar value per floor or view. A list price is a seller's request, not a closed transaction.

Expand outward only when the building has too few relevant sales. Document why each comparable competes with the subject. A newer tower with completed repairs and stronger financing eligibility may not be a fair direct substitute for an older building with uncertain assessments.

Investigate why a unit is discounted

Ask whether price reflects condition, blocked view, parking difficulty, restrictions, litigation, insurance, financing, upcoming work, or a motivated seller. A discount is not automatically distress and distress is not automatically opportunity. Compare total basis after known repairs and assessments, not purchase price alone.

Examine listing history, failed contracts, concessions, withdrawn listings, and time on market where reliable information is available. Seek current, dated reports from your agent or appropriate data source. This guide intentionally gives no unsupported market-wide appreciation, occupancy, or average-return forecast.

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Build a rental comparable set

Choose properties with similar location, bedrooms, legal sleeping capacity, view, amenities, condition, access, parking, and rules. A guest's price comparison is often more important than a property's architectural similarity. Separate true beachfront from a beach walk and a partial view from an unobstructed one.

Distinguish booked nights from blocked nights, asking rates from achieved rates, and gross guest payments from owner receipts. Data services may estimate bookings; their models are not audited financial statements. Reconcile estimates to actual manager statements, seller tax reporting where voluntarily provided, and unit-level booking history.

Examine future competition and disruptions

Check nearby permit activity, approved construction, beach-access changes, planned building work, major amenity repairs, and potential view obstruction. Ask the manager how construction noise or closures affect cancellations. A temporary revenue problem can still create a permanent cash shortage for an undercapitalized owner.

Underwrite the future buyer

Who can finance and use this unit under current rules? How large is that buyer pool? Could a required assessment, rental restriction, or hotel-like operation narrow it? Plan for a longer marketing period and transaction costs. An investment should not require selling promptly at a higher price to remain solvent.

Make an offer range using both comparable sales and your ownership model. If the lifestyle value supports paying more than the investment model, identify that amount explicitly. Knowing why you are paying is better than hiding the difference inside an optimistic revenue estimate.

Disclosure
Market discussion is educational and is not an appraisal or a guarantee of value. Values can decline. Consult a licensed appraiser and review current comparable data for any property.

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CHAPTER 16

Short-term rental economics

Follow money from the guest charge to spendable cash.

Build a monthly model

For each month, enter calendar nights, owner blocks, maintenance closures, available nights, booked nights, average nightly accommodation rate, and room revenue. Occupancy equals booked nights divided by available nights; also track booked nights divided by total calendar nights so owner blocks do not make performance look artificially strong.

If a unit has 365 nights, 28 owner nights, and 12 maintenance nights, available inventory is 325 nights. Booking 210 nights is 64.6% of available inventory but only 57.5% of the calendar year. Both measures can be useful if clearly labeled.

Define gross revenue before using it

Room revenue is nightly rent before operating deductions. Cleaning fees, taxes, refundable deposits, damage waivers, and platform charges may appear in guest totals without becoming owner income. Ask every manager to define each line. Compare room revenue to room revenue rather than one company's guest total to another's owner payout.

Underwrite management commission, platform and payment fees, housekeeping shortfalls, linen replacement, consumables, utilities, internet, unit insurance, property taxes, association charges, routine repairs, licensing, accounting, and a replacement allowance. Determine which fees are included in management and which are extra. Some commissions apply to more than room rent.

Fixed and variable costs

Dues, taxes, debt service, and much insurance continue when bookings fall. Some commissions and turnover expenses fall with revenue. Model them separately so a downside scenario is not unrealistically forgiving. A closure can produce both lost income and extra expenses.

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Distinguish returns

Net operating income, or NOI, excludes financing and income taxes. State whether your model subtracts a replacement allowance, because common practice differs. Capitalization rate uses NOI divided by purchase price or another clearly labeled value. Cash-on-cash return uses annual pretax cash flow after debt service divided by cash invested. Neither includes appreciation unless explicitly stated.

Total return can include cash flow, principal reduction, appreciation or loss, selling costs, capital spending, and taxes. Avoid adding a tax deduction dollar-for-dollar to cash flow. A deduction changes taxable income and may be limited or deferred; it is not rent collected.

Revenue quality matters

Ask for at least a full seasonal cycle and preferably multiple years of owner statements and booking data. Normalize for seller owner-use, renovations, unusually strong events, and temporary closures. Forecasting from one summer month can badly misstate annual results.

> *A manager's revenue projection is an input to verify. Your purchase decision needs the expenses and the cash reserve beside it.*

Disclosure
Rental revenue models are hypothetical and educational, not projections or promises of income. Actual results vary. Consult a licensed property manager, CPA and financial professional before relying on rental income.

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CHAPTER 17

A worked investment example

Illustrative math that makes the tradeoffs visible.

The hypothetical purchase

Assume a $600,000 condo, 25% down, and a $450,000 fully amortizing thirty-year loan at an illustrative fixed 7.0%. Monthly principal and interest are about $2,994; annual debt service is about $35,926. This is not a rate quote. Assume no points or mortgage insurance in this illustration.

Initial cash is $150,000 down payment, $18,000 acquisition costs, $20,000 furnishing and setup, and $25,000 personal property reserve: $213,000 total. The reserve remains cash, but including it in committed capital makes the cash-on-cash denominator transparent.

The annual operating model

Assume 240 paid nights at $350 average accommodation rate: $84,000 room revenue. For illustration, cleaning is paid directly by guests at exact turnover cost, with no margin or shortfall, and lodging taxes are collected and remitted separately. Real quotes must replace those simplifying assumptions.

Annual line	Illustrative amount
Room revenue	$84,000
Management: 20% of room revenue	($16,800)
Platform/payment costs: 3% of room revenue	($2,520)
Association charges, including master where applicable	($12,000)
Property taxes at assumed new-owner amount	($7,500)
Unit insurance, including assumed flood needs	($3,000)

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Annual line	Illustrative amount
Utilities and internet not in dues	($4,800)
Repairs, supplies, licenses, and accounting	($4,500)
Operating NOI before replacement allowance	$32,880
Owner replacement allowance	($3,000)
Cash available before debt service	$29,880
Annual debt service, rounded	($35,926)
Pretax cash flow after replacement allowance	($6,046)

The operating cap rate on price is $32,880 / $600,000 = 5.48%, before the replacement allowance. After that allowance, the analogous yield is 4.98%. Cash-on-cash is -$6,046 / $213,000 = -2.84%. The purchase does not pay for itself under these assumptions even though the room revenue looks substantial.

Break-even and owner use

The variable cost assumption is 23% of room revenue. Fixed operating costs plus the replacement allowance total $34,800. Adding $35,926 debt service requires about $70,726 of contribution after variable expenses. Revenue break-even is $70,726 / 0.77 = approximately $91,852. At a $350 average rate that is about 263 paid nights, subject to rounding and actual rate seasonality.

If owner use displaces fourteen nights that otherwise would each book at $500, room revenue falls $7,000. At the same 23% variable cost, cash flow declines about $5,390 before other changes. Personal enjoyment can be worth that cost; it should still be visible in the decision.

Cash purchase comparison

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Without debt, the same operations provide $29,880 after the replacement allowance and before income taxes. Total initial cash, using the same acquisition, setup, and reserve assumptions, would be $663,000. That produces about 4.51% pretax annual cash yield. It is not directly comparable to a leveraged return without considering risk, opportunity cost, taxes, and resale.

Disclosure

Every figure in this example is hypothetical, rounded, and illustrative. It is not a projection, appraisal, lender quote, or promise of return. Consult a CPA, lender and financial advisor for your own analysis.

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CHAPTER 18

Stress tests and capital risk

Plan for the year you hope will not happen.

Keep the example assumptions consistent

Using Chapter 17, hold fixed operating costs and the replacement allowance at $34,800, debt service at $35,926, and variable costs at 23% of revenue. The table changes only room revenue unless specified. These are scenarios, not probabilities or market forecasts.

Scenario	Room revenue	Pretax cash flow
Base assumptions	$84,000	-$6,046
Revenue down 15%	$71,400	-$15,748
Revenue up 15%	$96,600	$3,656
Base plus $20,000 owner assessment	$84,000	-$26,046
Revenue down 15% plus $20,000 assessment	$71,400	-$35,748

A further $3,000 increase in fixed insurance or association costs reduces each scenario's cash flow another $3,000. If a closure removes peak weeks, use the revenue for those weeks rather than a flat fraction of annual rent. Deductible and repair demands may occur during the same period as lost revenue.

Separate predictable replacement from extraordinary risk

The replacement allowance is for ordinary future unit capital spending. An assessment, uninsured loss, major defect, or lengthy building closure can exceed it. Use actual building information and policy deductibles to size a separate liquidity plan. Do not treat an unused

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credit card as the only backstop.

The example's $25,000 reserve would not cover the combined $35,748 deficit on its own. The owner would need other available cash or a changed plan. Demonstrating that shortfall before purchase is the point of the stress test.

Price risk and the exit

A 10% decline from $600,000 is $60,000 before selling costs. With leverage, that loss represents a much larger share of the original down payment. A forced sale can occur when revenue falls and an assessment becomes due together. Borrowing against appreciation that has not occurred does not solve today's liquidity requirement.

Debt and refinance risk

A fixed-rate loan reduces rate uncertainty on the existing debt but does not freeze taxes, dues, insurance, or repairs. An adjustable-rate, interest-only, balloon, or short-maturity loan adds future payment or refinance risk. Model the contractual reset and maturity, not the assumption that refinancing will always be available.

Set a decision threshold

Write the maximum annual subsidy, maximum one-time cash demand, minimum unrestricted cash, and holding period you can tolerate. Decide what you would do if rental permission changed, management failed, or the project became harder to finance. If your answer is sell immediately, test whether selling would actually be possible at an acceptable price.

An investment can still fit a household that consciously accepts negative cash flow for personal use or other goals. The important distinction is between a planned subsidy and an unpleasant surprise.

Disclosure
Scenarios are hypothetical illustrations of risk, not predictions. Real estate investing involves risk, including loss of capital. Consult a licensed financial advisor and CPA before investing.

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CHAPTER 19

Rental strategy and management

Choose an operating model you can sustain from afar.

Short stays, seasonal stays, and long-term leases

Short stays offer pricing flexibility and personal access between bookings, with frequent turnover, higher service demands, and variable revenue. Seasonal or medium-term stays can reduce turnover but require careful rental-rule, tax, insurance, and tenancy analysis. Annual leasing may produce steadier collections and less owner access. No strategy is automatically permissible or more profitable.

Model each strategy with its own actual rent, vacancy, fees, utilities, furnishing costs, legal obligations, and insurance. Do not simply substitute a monthly rent into a short-term spreadsheet. Ask counsel about applicable landlord-tenant law, deposits, notices, and enforcement for the planned arrangement.

Compare management proposals on owner net

Obtain written proposals from more than one qualified manager. Compare base commission, fee base, marketing, platform charges, housekeeping, maintenance markups, after-hours charges, inspections, licensing, tax administration, owner-use restrictions, and termination costs. Ask whether the manager or an affiliate receives vendor compensation.

Request a sample owner statement and a sample guest settlement. Follow the same hypothetical booking through both. Find out who sets rates, authorizes discounts, refunds guests, handles chargebacks, and pays for accidental damage. Determine whether damage-waiver receipts are income to you, insurance, or a manager program with exclusions.

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Define response standards

Specify local contact availability, emergency access, water-leak response, HVAC failure, guest relocation, hurricane preparation, and post-storm checks. Set approval limits with exceptions for urgent safety or property protection. Confirm the manager's insurance and any required licenses without assuming those cover your own liability.

Protect the business relationship

Know who owns photos, descriptions, guest records, direct-booking domain, listing accounts, and reviews. Identify what remains available when the agreement ends. A promise to keep bookings full is not a guarantee of profitable bookings. Avoid contracts that reward gross volume while hiding unusually high owner costs.

Owner oversight

Review statements monthly, reconcile bank deposits, confirm tax remittances, and investigate maintenance patterns. Track revenue per available night, realized nightly rate, booking pace, cancellations, net owner proceeds, repair spending, guest issues, and personal-use cost. Use the same definitions each month.

For self-management, build reliable local coverage before launch. Remote locks, leak sensors, and dashboards help, but they do not replace someone who can reach the property. Budget the value of your own time when comparing self-management with paid service.

A first-year review

After a full seasonal cycle, compare actual results with the purchase model. Separate pricing mistakes, repairs, market conditions, and owner blocks. Adjust reserves and management rather than assuming year two will fix every gap. Retain records for tax preparation and eventual resale.

Disclosure
Management agreements are legal contracts. Have a Florida real estate attorney review them, and confirm licensing and insurance of any property manager. Nothing here endorses any manager or company.

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CHAPTER 20

Property taxes, homestead, and lodging taxes

Use the new-owner picture rather than the seller's bill.

Property tax basics

Florida property taxes depend on assessed and taxable values, exemptions, millage, and non-ad valorem assessments. The property appraiser values property and administers exemptions; the tax collector handles collection. A seller's current tax bill may reflect years of assessment protection that a new buyer does not inherit. [17, 18]

A change of ownership generally leads to reassessment at just value as of the following January 1, subject to applicable rules. Ask the county property appraiser for an estimate using the actual parcel, purchase timing, and expected eligibility. An estimate is not a final tax bill. [18]

Homestead is for qualifying permanent residence

Eligibility generally depends on ownership and permanent residence as of January 1, with application ordinarily due March 1. A vacation or investment condo does not become homestead merely because the owner buys in Florida or changes a mailing address. Discuss residency evidence and conflicting exemptions in other states with the property appraiser. [17, 19]

The Save Our Homes assessment limitation generally caps annual increases in assessed value after qualifying homestead treatment at the lower of 3% or the applicable CPI change. It does not freeze the entire tax bill. Portability and additional exemptions require separate eligibility review. This guide avoids a fixed exemption-dollar promise because applicable adjustments and personal circumstances matter. [18, 19]

Renting a claimed homestead can affect eligibility and trigger consequences. Obtain advice before changing use, title, or ownership entity. Property-tax homestead, creditor protection, and federal income-tax residence rules are different legal subjects.

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Rental taxes are not rental profit

Florida transient-rental charges generally involve state sales tax, applicable discretionary surtax, and local tourist-related taxes for taxable short stays. County administration and rates vary. Use current Department of Revenue guidance and the local tax authority for the exact address and dates. The repeal of a tax on commercial real-property rentals should not be assumed to eliminate tax on transient lodging. [20, 21]

Determine the tax base for rent, mandatory cleaning, and other charges with your accountant or tax authority. Confirm who collects and remits each tax for direct, platform, and manager bookings. A platform can handle one tax while leaving another to the owner. Keep confirmations and file required returns, including zero returns where applicable.

Out-of-state and international owners

Ask your CPA about federal reporting, home-state tax on Florida income, credits, entity treatment, and any nonresident requirements. Florida's lack of individual state income tax does not eliminate all state or federal obligations. International ownership can involve withholding and reporting issues at purchase, operation, or sale, including FIRPTA when relevant; use qualified counsel and tax advice early.

Disclosure
Tax information is general and educational only, not tax advice. Confirm property tax, exemption and lodging-tax obligations with the county property appraiser, tax collector, Florida Department of Revenue, and a CPA or tax professional.

CHAPTER 21

Depreciation and cost segregation

A timing tool that requires a defensible tax analysis.

What depreciation does

Depreciation allocates qualifying rental-property basis over time. Land is not depreciable. Residential rental buildings generally use a 27.5-year recovery period, but transient-use classification and other facts can change the analysis. Have your CPA determine classification and placed-in-service date rather than assuming every vacation condo is identical. [22, 23]

The price allocation should account for land, building, and separately identified assets without double counting. Acquisition costs can receive different tax treatment. A cash purchase does not eliminate depreciation, and mortgage principal is not itself a depreciation deduction. [22]

What cost segregation adds

A study analyzes costs and identifies assets that may belong in shorter recovery classes, such as qualifying personal property or land improvements, rather than leaving everything in the building account. A condo's common-element interest and declaration make the scope important. You cannot depreciate assets you do not own or invent a land allocation to maximize deductions.

A credible study should connect the legal ownership, purchase and improvement records, inspection or other documented analysis, methodology, classifications, and tax schedules. The IRS Cost Segregation Audit Technique Guide describes examination considerations; it is a training guide, not binding authority or IRS approval of a provider's study. [24]

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The current bonus-depreciation check

Public Law 119-21 reinstated 100% bonus depreciation for certain qualified property acquired and placed in service after January 19, 2025. It does not make land or an entire residential building immediately deductible. Earlier acquisition dates, binding-contract rules, placed-in-service timing, elections, and qualification can produce different outcomes. Confirm the law and guidance for your actual tax year. [23]

A simplified allocation example

Assume $600,000 total purchase basis for illustration, with $90,000 allocated to land and $510,000 depreciable basis. A defensible hypothetical study assigns $75,000 to qualifying shorter-life assets, leaving $435,000 to the building. The short-life share is about 14.7% of depreciable basis. This is an invented allocation, not a recommended percentage.

If all $75,000 qualified for 100% bonus and no limitation applied, that component could produce a $75,000 first-year deduction, with separate building depreciation determined by the applicable method and convention. The building's remaining basis cannot also be depreciated as though it still included those assets.

At an assumed 32% marginal federal rate, $75,000 multiplied by 32% is $24,000. That arithmetic is a potential timing illustration only: the usable current benefit could be smaller or zero. It ignores state differences and must not be added to cash flow as a guaranteed check. The study also accelerates deductions that might otherwise occur later.

Why a large deduction may not help this year

Basis, at-risk, passive-activity, personal-use, and other limitations can restrict use. The passive-activity rules contain an exception to rental-activity treatment when average customer use is seven days or less, but material participation still needs separate analysis. A manager does not automatically prevent qualification, and owning an STR does not automatically allow losses against wages. [25]

Personal use beyond the greater of fourteen days or 10% of fair-rental days can cause dwelling-unit-as-home limitations. Renting fewer than fifteen days while using the dwelling as a home has special treatment. Track use accurately and have the CPA apply the rules. [22]

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Think through the exit

Accelerated depreciation reduces basis and can affect gain and recapture on disposition. Discuss future taxes, expected holding period, sale structure, and exchange plans before ordering a study. Later-year studies may require accounting-method procedures such as Form 3115 rather than a simple amended return; the CPA must select the proper approach. [23, 24, 26]

Obtain a written comparison of study fee, defensible allocation, usable deduction now, future deductions surrendered, likely disposition tax, compliance cost, and state conformity. The investment should make sense before any tax benefit. Cost segregation is a professional analysis, not a cure for poor operating economics.

Disclosure

This chapter is educational only and is not tax advice. Tax treatment depends on your facts and current law. Consult a CPA or qualified tax professional and a qualified cost-segregation provider before taking any position.

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CHAPTER 22

Investment structures and exit planning

Choose the strategy before choosing the tax headline.

Match the strategy to the asset

A buy-and-hold rental needs sustainable operating cash and a repair reserve. A lifestyle hold prioritizes personal use with an explicit subsidy budget. A value-add purchase needs an approved renovation scope, reliable contractor pricing, downtime allowance, and a realistic resale or rental premium. Buying an assessment discount needs a funded, technically credible repair plan.

Avoid assuming every outdated unit can be renovated profitably. Building work rules, permit delays, elevator reservations, supply logistics, and limited work windows can constrain a project. Obtain association approval and professional estimates before committing to a tight renovation budget.

Entity and co-ownership decisions

An LLC can change liability, financing, insurance, tax administration, and transfer issues. It is not a universal shield or automatic tax reduction. Obtain lender, insurance, attorney, and CPA guidance before taking title or later transferring a financed unit.

For partners or family buyers, put capital contributions, personal-use scheduling, distributions, repair decisions, guarantees, death, disability, buyout, dispute resolution, and sale procedures in writing. Decide how an owner who cannot fund an assessment is treated. Friendship does not replace an operating agreement.

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Selling costs and net proceeds

Estimate sale price less selling costs, negotiated concessions, loan payoff, prepayment charges, assessments, repairs, and taxes. Do not call the difference between purchase and sale price your profit. Add all acquisition and capital costs when evaluating total investment performance.

Keep permits, warranties, study files, assessment proof, association documents, rental statements, and depreciation schedules. A well-organized file supports buyer confidence and tax work, though it cannot guarantee price or speed of sale.

Section 1031 exchanges

A qualifying exchange can defer some tax on real property held for investment or business use. Personal-use vacation property does not automatically qualify. For a deferred exchange, identification generally occurs within forty-five days, with receipt by the earlier of 180 days or the tax-return due date including extensions. Engage qualified tax and exchange professionals before transferring the relinquished property or receiving proceeds. [26, 27]

Cost-segregated personal property, debt changes, cash received, related parties, and personal use can complicate the result. An exchange is tax deferral under conditions, not a promise that all taxes disappear. Do not choose a poor replacement condo merely to meet an exchange deadline.

Write a hold-or-sell policy

Review annually: net cash flow, liquidity, building condition, insurance, upcoming capital needs, rental permission, personal enjoyment, and alternative uses of capital. Use current sale evidence and after-tax estimates. The right exit is the one consistent with your goals and constraints, not an assumed appreciation schedule.

Disclosure
Entity, co-ownership, and Section 1031 decisions have legal and tax consequences. Consult a Florida attorney, a CPA or tax advisor, and a qualified intermediary before acting. Nothing here is legal or tax advice.

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CHAPTER 23

Offer, closing, and possession

Turn negotiated terms into a clean handoff.

Offer terms that deserve precision

Price is only one term. Address deposit timing, inspection and financing, document receipt, association approval, appraisal, furnishings, rentals, repair standards, assessment responsibility, and possession. Have the attorney handle special terms involving unresolved structural work, litigation, association loans, or conditional access rights.

Clarify who pays regular assessments prorated at closing and who pays adopted special assessments, including future installments. If an assessment is merely discussed, determine what protection is realistically negotiable. An oral promise that the seller will take care of it needs a written mechanism and evidence.

Title and closing review

The closing professional should examine title, recorded restrictions, liens, mortgages, legal description, parking or storage interests, and applicable association approvals. Ask about title exceptions and whether a survey, condominium plat, or additional documents are needed to establish the rights you expect. Title insurance is not a building-condition or profitability warranty.

Ask about owner and lender title policies, closing fees, recording, documentary and mortgage-related taxes where applicable, prorations, escrows, and local allocations. Costs depend on contract and transaction; customary practice is not a substitute for a written agreement.

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Review the settlement before signing

For covered consumer mortgage transactions, the Closing Disclosure generally must be received at least three business days before consummation. Investment or business-purpose loans can follow different disclosure rules. Ask the lender which rules apply and whether a change requires a new waiting period. [28]

Compare price, deposits, loan terms, credits, cash to close, prepaid items, tax estimates, association balances, and assessment payments. Resolve unexplained differences. Obtain evidence of active insurance and lender satisfaction of project conditions. Keep wire verification independent of email instructions.

The final walk-through

Confirm repairs and documentation, furniture inventory, appliances, water and electricity, access devices, parking rights, and property condition. Check for new leaks or storm damage. If tenants or guests occupy the unit, follow the agreed possession terms and avoid assuming a vacancy right that was never negotiated.

Transfer the operating details

Collect keys, fobs, parking passes, mailbox keys, gate access, approved lock administration, warranties, equipment service records, management contacts, and emergency procedures. Transfer utility and internet accounts and confirm how guest reservations and deposits settle.

Closing should not end with an unanswered list of operating questions. Have a named person responsible for every handoff item, a completion date, and a place to store proof.

Disclosure
Contract terms carry legal consequences. Have a Florida real estate attorney or your title professional review the contract, title, and settlement statement. Never wire funds without verifying instructions by phone with your closing agent.

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CHAPTER 24

Your first ninety days

Stabilize the property before expanding expectations.

Days 1-7: establish control

Verify deed recording and final settlement documents. Confirm association owner records, mailing address, email notices, emergency contact, payment setup, and every insurance policy's effective date. Change access credentials through approved procedures and preserve access needed for management and emergency response.

Locate water shutoffs, electrical disconnects, HVAC filters, fire and safety devices, and emergency instructions. Have a local professional document baseline condition with photos. Address urgent safety or moisture items before decorating or accepting guests.

Days 8-30: build the operating file

Create a maintenance calendar for HVAC, water heater, leak detection, pest prevention, appliances, sealants where owner-responsible, and safety equipment. Set reminders for permits, licenses, insurance renewals, property-tax notices, and association meetings. Keep the declaration's maintenance allocation attached to the calendar.

For rentals, confirm licensing and local registration, permitted occupancy, tax collection, accounting categories, guest rules, management authority, and emergency response. Obtain written proof rather than assuming the sale transferred everything. Test the guest arrival route with luggage and the instructions a first-time visitor will see.

Days 31-60: reconcile the financial picture

Review the first association charges, utility bills, management statement, and bank deposits. Compare every line with the purchase model. Investigate fees that were absent from the proposal and update the budget. Put the personal reserve in an account that remains accessible for a real emergency.

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Provide the CPA with settlement documents, allocation support, improvement invoices, furnishings, loan records, rental launch date, personal-use log, and any cost-segregation proposal. Do not wait until filing season to discover that needed evidence was never collected.

Days 61–90: refine and participate

Attend or review an association meeting and learn how official notices are distributed. Track upcoming projects and proposed budgets. Confirm your manager's response to actual maintenance or guest issues and adjust authority limits if needed.

Review marketing accuracy: actual view, legal sleeping capacity, amenities, beach access, parking, and house rules. Correct exaggerated claims before they create disputes. Make rate decisions from booking pace and net proceeds, not from a desire to match a neighbor's headline price.

The annual owner review

Each year, refresh insurance, reserves, taxes, condition, rental compliance, legal updates, and financial performance. Ask whether the property still meets the reason you bought it. A well-run condo purchase becomes a repeated ownership discipline rather than a one-time document exercise.

> *A successful closing gives you title. A successful ownership plan gives you a way to manage the responsibilities that come with it.*

Disclosure
Ownership checklists are educational. Consult your association, insurance agent, CPA, and attorney about obligations that apply to your specific property.

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Appendix A | Buyer's master checklist

A printable decision record from search through closing.

Before searching

- Define primary residence, second home, rental, or hybrid use in writing.
- Establish cash-to-close, annual subsidy, assessment capacity, and emergency reserves.
- Select condo-experienced lender, agent, attorney, inspector, insurer, and CPA.
- Decide target coastline, parcel jurisdiction, access, parking, and required rental term.
- Review representation and compensation agreements.

Before making an offer

- Confirm legal ownership form and complete unit description.
- Verify rental permission at state, local, association, and resort levels.
- Request current fees, budget, assessments, structural reports, and insurance information.
- Identify all association layers and separate amenity or ground-lease obligations.
- Test the economics using new-owner taxes, actual quotes, and realistic owner use.
- Discuss project financing eligibility and contractual protections.

Immediately after acceptance

- Calendar deposits, inspections, financing, document review, approvals, and closing.
- Send written document requests and log actual receipt dates.
- Order unit inspection, specialist work, insurance quotes, and project questionnaire.
- Arrange attorney review of contract, documents, restrictions, and assessment allocation.

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- Request building-official records, permits, and current repair status.

Before releasing protections

- Resolve inspection concerns and major building questions in writing.
- Confirm reserve plan, adopted funding, assessments, association debt, and insurance gaps.
- Reconcile rental history, management costs, and stress-tested cash flow.
- Verify financing, appraisal, and association approval status.
- Have counsel confirm all applicable notice and cancellation deadlines.

Before closing

- Review title exceptions, estoppels for all associations, and settlement figures.
- Confirm assessment payments, credits, deposits, bookings, and inventory.
- Bind suitable insurance and verify any storm-related restrictions.
- Complete walk-through and receive repair proof.
- Independently verify wiring instructions and remote-signing requirements.
- Confirm possession timing, keys, utilities, access, and local response coverage.

Decision sign-off

Property and unit: _____

Date and document version reviewed: _____

Unresolved issue / responsible professional / deadline:

_____

_____

Decision and conditions: _____

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Disclosure

Checklists are educational tools, not a substitute for professional review. Confirm every item and deadline with your attorney, lender, inspector, insurance agent, and tax professional.

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Appendix B | Association document request

Use through the seller and closing team as appropriate.

Legal and operating records

- Recorded declaration, all amendments and exhibits, articles, bylaws, current rules, FAQ.
- Unit boundaries, maintenance chart, parking/storage assignments, beach and amenity rights.
- Master-association, recreation, resort, ground-lease, or mandatory club documents.
- Current adopted budget, prior-year actual results, most recent annual financial statement.
- Reserve balances by component or pool and current reserve funding schedule.
- Regular assessments, adopted and proposed special assessments, owner balance information.
- Association loan and line-of-credit terms and repayment schedules.
- Recent meeting minutes, pending notices, proposed rules, budgets, and major votes.

Building and insurance records

- Full milestone reports and inspector summaries, phase-two reports, local notices/extensions.
- Current SIRS, updates, completion/reporting information, and documented delay basis if used.
- Turnover report where applicable, engineering evaluations, repair specifications and bids.
- Signed contracts, permits, progress reports, completion letters, warranties, lien releases.
- Insurance declarations and policy schedules, deductibles, exclusions, renewal information.
- Available claim history and documentation of storm, flood, or water-intrusion repairs.

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- Known unsafe-building, code-enforcement, occupancy, or fire-safety notices.

Rental and transaction records

- Rental minimums, waiting periods, approvals, occupancy and guest restrictions.
- Management agreements, mandatory rental programs, transfer and termination obligations.
- Existing leases, future bookings, deposits, tax handling, refunds, and chargebacks.
- Estoppel and approval requirements, transfer fees, application process, current forms.
- Litigation, pre-litigation demands, material disputes, and counsel's status summary where available.

Sample request wording

Please provide the current records listed above for the identified unit and every association or entity imposing mandatory charges or use restrictions. Identify any requested item that does not exist, is unavailable, or is claimed inapplicable, and the reason. Please also identify material updates, proposed assessments, or new notices issued after the date of the supplied records.

This checklist is a due-diligence request, not a claim that a prospective purchaser has an unrestricted statutory right to every record. Counsel should tailor formal notices and contract-based requests to your transaction.

Requested by / date: _____

Received from / date: _____

Missing items and follow-up date: _____

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Appendix C | Building review interview

Questions for the manager, engineer, and local authority.

Manager or board

- What are the next three significant projects and their estimated timing?
- What work is funded, contracted, permitted, underway, and complete?
- Which cost estimates remain preliminary or depend on concealed conditions?
- What assessments or association borrowings are adopted or proposed?
- Does the adopted budget align with the current reserve study?
- Are contributions paused or reduced, under what authority, and until when?
- Are there unresolved leaks, claims, lawsuits, vacancies, or vendor payment issues?
- What is expected to close, restrict access, or disrupt rentals during construction?

Engineer or architect

- Which buildings, systems, and areas did the report cover or exclude?
- What observations need further testing or specialist evaluation?
- Is phase two required, and what is its status?
- What repair priorities and temporary precautions were recommended?
- Does the repair scope address the cause, and how will completion be verified?
- Are there updated estimates, revised recommendations, or unresolved punch-list items?

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Local building or code authority

- What is the official milestone deadline and basis for this building?
- Are there accepted reports or written extensions in the file?
- Are unsafe-building, occupancy, code, or fire orders open?
- Which repair permits are open and what remains before closeout?
- Are inspection acceptance and required repairs fully documented?

Record the answer, not just the conversation

Question: _____

Person, role, date: _____

Written supporting document: _____

Remaining limitation or follow-up: _____

_____

A refusal or inability to answer is a reason to investigate, not automatic proof of wrongdoing. If the purchase depends on a reassuring conclusion, obtain the appropriate professional's written evaluation within the applicable decision period.

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Appendix D | Financial worksheets

Use property-specific evidence in every blank.

Acquisition capital

Cash requirement	Your amount
Down payment or full price	
Closing and financing costs	
Inspections and professional review	
Furnishing, repairs, and launch	
Association contributions and deposits	
Initial personal property reserve	
Total committed cash	

Annual operating budget

Revenue or expense	Your amount
Room rent or lease receipts, excluding pass-through tax	

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Revenue or expense	Your amount
Other retained income, clearly defined	
Management, platform, and payment fees	
Housekeeping gaps, linens, and supplies	
Association and master charges	
Property taxes at new-owner estimate	
Unit insurance and separate flood needs	
Utilities and internet outside dues	
Repairs, licenses, accounting, and other operations	
Operating NOI before replacement allowance	
Replacement allowance	
Debt service	
Pretax cash flow	

Scenario and assessment plan

Base annual cash flow: _____

Revenue down 15% with variable expenses recalculated: _____

Higher insurance/dues assumption and resulting cash flow: _____

Largest modeled assessment/deductible need: _____

Peak-season closure assumption and lost net contribution: _____

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Available unrestricted cash after closing: _____

Additional liquidity needed in combined downside: _____

Calculation conventions

Operating NOI = operating revenue minus operating expenses, before financing and income taxes. Label whether a replacement allowance is included. Cash flow = NOI less any separately stated replacement allowance and debt service. Cash-on-cash = annual pretax cash flow divided by the clearly defined invested-cash denominator. Never count the same reserve expense twice.

Disclosure
Worksheets are for your own educational planning. Have your lender, CPA, and financial advisor review the figures you enter before you make a decision.

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Appendix E | Manager and tax-adviser interviews

Get answers before signing service agreements.

Rental manager

- What exact revenue base is used to calculate your commission?
- Which booking, payment, cleaning, linen, maintenance, and marketing charges are additional?
- May I see a sample guest settlement and owner statement for the same booking?
- What is included in projections, and how do you treat owner blocks and closures?
- Who holds permits, licenses, deposits, tax accounts, and booking-platform accounts?
- What local response is guaranteed by contract and what is the emergency approval limit?
- Who sets prices, grants refunds, and bears chargebacks or guest relocation costs?
- Who owns photos, listing content, reviews, guest records, and future bookings on termination?
- What happens after a storm or during association construction?

CPA and cost-segregation provider

- How should this property's use be classified, including transient-use questions?
- What evidence supports the land/building/assets allocation and placed-in-service date?
- What purchase or binding-contract dates affect bonus eligibility?
- What short-life assets do I actually own, including common-element allocations?
- Which basis, at-risk, passive-activity, personal-use, or other limits apply?
- Can I use the deduction this year, or will it carry forward?

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- Which material-participation test, if relevant, is supported by contemporaneous records?
- What are the study fee, methodology, credentials, documentation, and audit support?
- What deductions are accelerated, and what future deductions are reduced?
- What happens on sale, exchange, inheritance, or conversion to personal use?
- Does my home state conform to the federal treatment?
- If this is an older rental, what filing or accounting-method procedure is required?

Records to keep

Save closing statements, invoices, financing records, ownership documents, land allocation support, depreciation schedules, studies, rental income and expense records, tax filings, booking records, personal-use days, and participation logs when relevant. Ask the CPA for a retention policy that accounts for basis records needed through eventual disposition.

Professional / date: _____

Advice requiring follow-up: _____

_____

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Appendix F | Glossary

Plain-language definitions for the buying file.

Ownership and documents

Association: The entity administering the condominium and its common obligations.

Common elements: Condominium property outside individual units, as defined by the declaration and law.

Declaration: The recorded instrument establishing the condominium and fundamental rights and obligations.

Limited common element: A common element reserved for use by specified units, subject to the documents.

Master association: A separate entity administering shared obligations across multiple properties or associations.

Estoppel certificate: A transaction-related association statement of specified financial and other information, subject to statutory rules.

Rescission or voidability right: A right to cancel under applicable law or contract, with specific triggers and notice requirements.

Turnover: Transfer of association control from developer to unit owners under applicable requirements.

Condition and insurance

Milestone inspection: A statutory structural inspection for qualifying condo and cooperative buildings.

Phase two: More detailed structural evaluation when required after milestone findings.

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SIRS: Structural Integrity Reserve Study; a study of specified future maintenance and replacement funding needs.

Spalling: Deterioration in which concrete breaks or flakes away; a professional must determine cause and significance.

HO-6: A common form of condominium unit-owner insurance; actual terms and endorsements control.

RCBAP: Residential Condominium Building Association Policy under the NFIP.

Loss assessment: An owner charge for certain shared losses; insurance coverage depends on the policy.

Special assessment: An association charge outside ordinary regular assessments, often for a specific expense.

Rental and investment math

ADR: Average daily accommodation rate, usually room revenue divided by paid nights.

Occupancy: Booked nights divided by the stated inventory of available or calendar nights.

NOI: Net operating income before financing and income taxes; confirm capital-allowance convention.

Cap rate: NOI divided by price or value, with the denominator and NOI convention stated.

Cash-on-cash return: Annual cash flow divided by the specified cash invested.

DSCR: Debt-service coverage ratio; the lender's income and debt definitions may differ from an owner's model.

Warrantable: Industry shorthand for meeting a particular conventional project standard; not a universal permanent approval.

Replacement allowance: A budgeted provision for future capital replacement; distinguish a planning allowance from money actually saved.

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Taxes

Basis: The tax measure of investment in property, adjusted under tax rules.

Placed in service: Ready and available for the qualifying income-producing use, as determined under tax rules.

Cost segregation: Analysis allocating qualifying costs among appropriate asset recovery classes.

Bonus depreciation: An accelerated deduction for qualifying property, subject to current law and limitations.

Material participation: A tax standard determined through specific tests and evidence, not simply ownership.

Recapture: Tax treatment that can apply to prior depreciation or certain gains on disposition.

Homestead exemption: A property-tax benefit for qualifying permanent residences; distinct from other homestead concepts.

Section 1031 exchange: A qualifying exchange of business or investment real property with tax-deferral conditions.

Disclosure
Definitions are plain-language summaries for education and may not match the legal definitions that apply to your transaction. Consult a Florida real estate attorney for legal meaning.

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Appendix G | Verified source library

Primary authorities and official tools for the next check.

Research and use notes

The following primary-source pages were checked on November 4, 2026. Sources support the cited rules and background, not a certification of any building or an individualized legal conclusion. Links are clickable in the PDF and editable manuscript. Online pages may change after this edition.

The official 2026 versions of sections 718.112, 718.111, 718.503, 718.116, 553.899, and 689.302 were reviewed alongside DBPR's reform guidance. The rental-amendment source uses the accessible 2025 section; counsel should cross-check the current version for a specific purchase. IRS Publications 527, 925, and 946 available at review were the 2025 editions with current online guidance. No proposed measure is presented as enacted law.

This is a focused source review rather than a certification that every 2026 enactment, local ordinance, rule, court decision, or agency interpretation has been exhaustively surveyed. Recheck the controlling law and transaction facts immediately before relying on a deadline, tax election, or rental permission.

[1] DBPR | Reform timeline
DBPR | Reform timeline

HB 913 effective date, SIRS transition, and January 2026 online-records milestone.

[2] DBPR | Condominium FAQs
DBPR | Condominium FAQs

SIRS applicability, initial deadline, coordinated inspections, funding and inspection distinctions.

[3] Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.112
Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.112

Budgets, reserve funding, SIRS, alternatives, conditional pauses, and updates. See especially (2)(f)-(h).

[4] Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.503
Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.503

Developer and nondeveloper sale disclosures, seven-day resale and fifteen-day developer frameworks, applicable report deliveries.

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[5] Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.111
Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.111

Association powers, insurance, official records, and electronic records. Review (11)-(13).

[6] Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.116
Florida Statutes 2026 | 718.116

Assessment liability and estoppel issuance, effective periods, and charges; see (8).

[7] Florida Statutes 2026 | 689.302
Florida Statutes 2026 | 689.302

Residential flood disclosure, including knowledge, claims, and assistance.

[8] Florida Statutes 2026 | 553.899
Florida Statutes 2026 | 553.899

Milestone inspection scope, age triggers, local authority, phases, and transitional dates.

[9] FEMA/NFIP | Condo association flood brochure
FEMA/NFIP | Condo association flood brochure

RCBAP purpose and association flood protection.

[10] NFIP | Condo belongings coverage
NFIP | Condo belongings coverage

Explains the personal-property gap in association flood insurance.

[11] FEMA | Flood hazard mapping updates
FEMA | Flood hazard mapping updates

Official map resource and local mapping context. Address lookup: https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home.

[12] Fannie Mae | Ineligible projects
Fannie Mae | Ineligible projects

Project eligibility, hotel operations, critical repairs, and other limitations; lender must apply current rules.

[13] DBPR | Vacation Rental-Condo license
DBPR | Vacation Rental-Condo license

State condo vacation-rental licensing entry point.

[14] Walton County | Vacation-rental registration office
Walton County | Vacation-rental registration office

Local registration entry point. Current FAQs: https://www.mywaltonfl.gov/1524/FAQs.

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[15] Panama City Beach | Business registration
Panama City Beach | Business registration

Local rental registration and inspection entry point; verify condo-specific application.

[16] Florida Statutes | 718.110
Florida Statutes | 718.110

Rental-amendment application, especially (13). Consult current Chapter 718 and counsel for the transaction.

[17] Florida DOR | Property-tax exemptions
Florida DOR | Property-tax exemptions

Homestead and other exemption guidance; current amounts and eligibility.

[18] Florida DOR | Save Our Homes brochure
Florida DOR | Save Our Homes brochure

Assessment limitation, ownership changes, and portability.

[19] Florida DOR | Taxpayer calendar and basics
Florida DOR | Taxpayer calendar and basics

January 1 valuation, March 1 filing, millage and property-tax administration.

[20] Florida DOR | Sales and use tax
Florida DOR | Sales and use tax

Transient rental tax overview and state administration.

[21] Florida DOR | Local transient rental tax rates
Florida DOR | Local transient rental tax rates

County tax administration and rate directory; verify current effective dates.

[22] IRS | Publication 527
IRS | Publication 527

Rental income, expenses, depreciation, and mixed personal/rental use.

[23] IRS | Publication 946
IRS | Publication 946

Depreciation, qualified property, 2025 bonus change, elections, and timing.

[24] IRS | Cost Segregation Audit Technique Guide
IRS | Cost Segregation Audit Technique Guide

Study methodology and examination context; training material rather than binding authority.

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[25] IRS | Publication 925
IRS | Publication 925

Passive and at-risk rules, average customer-use exception, and participation tests.

[26] IRS | Publication 544
IRS | Publication 544

Dispositions, recapture, and exchange treatment.

[27] IRS | Form 8824 instructions
IRS | Form 8824 instructions

Exchange identification and completion deadlines and reporting.

[28] CFPB | When do I get a Closing Disclosure?
CFPB | When do I get a Closing Disclosure?

Three-business-day delivery framework for covered mortgage transactions.

[29] Visit Panama City Beach | Regional guide
Visit Panama City Beach | Regional guide

Official regional context for Grand Lagoon, Middle Beach, Open Sands, Pier Park, and the West End.

[30] Visit South Walton | Beachside neighborhoods
Visit South Walton | Beachside neighborhoods

Official neighborhood geography and distinct community settings; not an investment performance source.

[31] Visit South Walton | Beach and bay access
Visit South Walton | Beach and bay access

Public-access categories and property-specific access context. Recheck the current map and recorded rights.

[32] City of Destin | Beach information
City of Destin | Beach information

Official beach access information for narrowing a Destin search.

[33] Destin-Fort Walton Beach | Public beach access
Destin-Fort Walton Beach | Public beach access

Official tourism authority directory of beach accesses, including Okaloosa Island.

[34] Visit Florida | Navarre beach guide
Visit Florida | Navarre beach guide Location context for the pier, Marine Park, and Gulf Islands National Seashore toward Pensacola Beach.

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[35] Santa Rosa County | Navarre Beach lease amendments
Santa Rosa County | Navarre Beach lease amendments

Official leasehold-parcel amendment process; individual recorded leases and current title documents control.

Disclosure

Links are provided for convenience and were checked as of the research date. Kinsey Haddock and Coldwell Banker Realty do not control third-party websites and are not responsible for their content. Always confirm current information at the source.

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Appendix H | Local verification directory

Route each question to the authority that controls it.

Select the exact jurisdiction first

Use the parcel record and municipal boundary confirmation before asking about rental or building rules. A postal city name is insufficient. Search the official county or municipal website for the department listed below; the department's written answer for the address is more useful than a destination-wide summary.

Area	Jurisdictions to confirm
Apalachicola, Eastpoint, St. George Island	Franklin County; City of Apalachicola where applicable
Port St. Joe, Cape San Blas, Indian Pass	Gulf County; City of Port St. Joe where applicable
Mexico Beach	City of Mexico Beach and Bay County roles
Panama City Beach area	City of Panama City Beach or unincorporated Bay County
30A, Inlet Beach, Miramar Beach, resort areas	Walton County plus applicable association/resort layers
Destin	City of Destin and Okaloosa County roles
Okaloosa Island and Fort Walton Beach area	Okaloosa County or City of Fort Walton Beach

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Area	Jurisdictions to confirm
Navarre and Navarre Beach	Santa Rosa County; confirm leasehold and island-specific requirements

Who answers what?

County property appraiser: Parcel, ownership record, valuation, exemptions, new-owner estimates, and homestead eligibility.

Clerk of court / official records: Recorded declarations, amendments, deeds, liens, and other recorded instruments. Have counsel interpret their effect.

Local planning or zoning: Permitted use, parcel jurisdiction, local rental restrictions, development approvals, and nearby proposed projects.

Building department and fire authority: Milestone notices, permits, unsafe conditions, occupancy, repair closeout, and rental inspection requirements.

Tax collector or local tourist-tax administrator: Tourist-tax registration, local collection, filing, and payment requirements. Confirm state sales-tax obligations separately with Florida DOR.

Emergency management: Evacuation zones, official alerts, storm instructions, and post-event access restrictions.

School district: Current attendance assignment, enrollment, transportation, and program eligibility for the exact address.

Building-specific request record

Parcel number: _____

Municipal jurisdiction confirmed by / date: _____

Building, zoning, tax, and rental contact references:

_____

_____

For educational purposes only. Not legal, tax, financial, insurance, lending or engineering advice. Always consult the appropriate licensed professional with questions.

No single local contact can approve every aspect of a condo purchase. Maintain separate confirmations for association permission, zoning, licensing, taxation, insurance, and financing.

Disclosure
Jurisdictions and contacts change. Confirm the correct authority for any specific parcel directly with the county and municipality.

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Plan your next step

Bring the questions. Build the plan around your goals.

A property-specific conversation

Start with where you want to own, how you will use the property, and the annual cost you can comfortably sustain. Bring your rental requirements, personal-use schedule, financing plans, and travel needs.

Compare building condition, reserves, insurance, rental permission, access rights, financing, and total cost alongside the view and asking price. Involve the appropriate legal, tax, engineering, and insurance professionals before your decision deadline.



YOUR CONTACT

Kinsey Haddock, P.A.

Broker Associate – REALTOR®

(850) 340-0646

kinseyhaddock@flpanhandlerealtor.com

emeraldcoastbuyersguide.com

FL License #BK3253849

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Prepare for your consultation

Bring your preferred locations, maximum acquisition cash, comfortable annual carrying cost, anticipated personal-use weeks, rental expectations, and the date you hope to own. If you already have a candidate condo, bring the unit address, association name, documents received, and any contract deadlines.

The purpose is a purchase you understand and an ownership plan you can maintain. The view matters. So do the records, the reserves, and the people who will help you care for the property.

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THE FINE PRINT

Disclosures and legal notices

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Accuracy and changing rules

Information is deemed reliable but is not guaranteed and should be independently verified. Florida condominium law, local rental rules, association documents, insurance markets, lending guidelines, tax law, and market conditions change frequently. Research for this edition was checked as of November 4, 2026; recheck current law and the facts of your transaction before relying on any deadline, rental permission, financing assumption, or tax treatment.

Hypothetical examples

All numbers, scenarios, and investment examples are hypothetical illustrations. None represents a current listing, market average, appraisal, lender quote, tax result, or promise of rental income, appreciation, cash flow, or tax savings. Real estate investing involves risk, including the possible loss of capital.

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Wire fraud warning

Criminals target real estate transactions with fake wiring instructions. Never wire funds based on emailed or texted instructions alone. Always verify wiring instructions by calling your title company or closing attorney at an independently confirmed phone number before sending money.

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STRAIGHT ANSWERS, ZERO PRESSURE

Kinsey Haddock, P.A.

Broker Associate – REALTOR® · Coldwell Banker Realty

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kinseyhaddock@flpanhandlerealtor.com
emeraldcoastbuyersguide.com
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