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INVESTING ON THE EMERALD COAST

# The Single-Family Investor Pack

Houses that work as rentals — the numbers, the neighborhood rules, and the setup, in the order you'll actually need them.




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# Run the Numbers First

A house gives you more control than a condo — and more line items that are yours alone. No association is maintaining your roof, your yard, or your pool. Underwrite all of it.

## The Income Side

- ☐ **For a short-term rental:** start with comparable houses' actual performance nearby — bedrooms, pool, and beach distance drive the number more than square footage.
- ☐ **For a monthly or annual rental:** pull real lease comps within the neighborhood, not across town.
- ☐ **Subtract vacancy honestly** — STR houses swing with the season; annual leases trade top-end income for steadiness.
- ☐ Projected gross annual rent: _____ Realistic occupancy: _____

## The Cost Side — It's All Yours

- ☐ **Insurance:** a full homeowner's/landlord policy — there is no master policy here. Wind and flood quotes can make or break a coastal house deal; get them early.
- ☐ **Flood zone:** confirm the zone and get the elevation certificate. A house in a high-risk zone carries a flood premium every single year you own it.
- ☐ **Property taxes at the new value** — the county reassesses at purchase; never underwrite the seller's bill.
- ☐ **Exterior upkeep:** lawn care, pool service if there's a pool, pest control, tree trimming, exterior paint, and a roof reserve. Price them monthly, not hopefully.
- ☐ **Big-ticket schedule:** roof age, HVAC age, water heater, septic or sewer — write down the year each will need money.
- ☐ **Management:** STR management percentage, or roughly 8–10% for long-term management — or your own time, priced honestly.
- ☐ **HOA dues if the neighborhood has one:** _____ per month — smaller than condo dues, but the rental rules attached to them are not small (next page).
- ☐ **Tourist taxes (STR):** state transient rental tax plus county tourist development tax — collected from guests; confirm who files.

### The house advantage

No rental-program percentages, no building-wide assessments, and land that appreciates. The trade: every storm, stain, and system is yours. The investors who win with houses are the ones who budget like it.

# Rental Restrictions — Read This Before You Make an Offer

## No HOA Does Not Mean No Rules

The most expensive assumption in this market: "it's a house, so I can rent it however I want." Zoning, city and county ordinances, and neighborhood covenants all get a vote — and many single-family neighborhoods prohibit short-term rentals outright. **Verify every item on this page before you go under contract.** A great deal that can't be rented the way you planned is not a deal.

## Zoning & Local Ordinances

- ☐ **Is short-term rental actually permitted at this address?** Single-family residential zoning in many areas prohibits rentals under 30 days — confirm with the city or county, in writing where possible.
- ☐ Does the city or county require an **STR registration, license, or inspection**? What does it cost, and does it transfer to a new owner?
- ☐ Are there **occupancy, parking, noise, or trash rules** written for rentals in this jurisdiction that affect how the house can operate?
- ☐ Any announced or pending changes to local STR rules that could take effect after you buy?

## HOA Covenants — Houses Have Them Too

- ☐ **Minimum rental period:** many house and townhome HOAs require minimum leases of 6 or 12 months — or ban rentals under 30 days — even in otherwise ordinary neighborhoods.
- ☐ **Rental cap:** is there a maximum percentage of homes that may be rented, and is it full?
- ☐ **Waiting period:** must you own the home for a period before renting it at all?
- ☐ Does the HOA require **lease approval, tenant registration, or a copy of every lease**?
- ☐ If there's **no HOA**, check the recorded covenants anyway — older subdivisions sometimes carry deed restrictions without an active association.

## If STR Is Off the Table

- ☐ **30+ day rentals** (traveling nurses, military on orders, snowbirds, relocators) often fit where nightly rentals don't — do the numbers work at monthly rates?
- ☐ **A 12-month lease** converts a banned-STR house into a straightforward buy-and-hold — see the Long-Term Investor Guide for how that math runs.
- ☐ Or walk away before contract. The cheapest time to learn a house can't be an STR is before your earnest money is down.

# Questions to Ask — The House & the Neighborhood

With a house, you're underwriting a structure, a lot, and a street. These are the questions that surface the costs nobody puts in a listing.

## The Structure

- ☐ **Roof:** age, material, and any insurance claims. In Florida, roof age is an insurance question before it's a condition question.
- ☐ **Systems:** HVAC age, water heater age, electrical panel type, plumbing material (ask about polybutylene or cast iron in older homes).
- ☐ **Water history:** any flooding, leaks, or storm damage? Ask for the seller's disclosure and read the insurance-claims history if available.
- ☐ **Septic or sewer?** If septic: age, last pump-out, and any county sewer-connection requirements coming.
- ☐ **Pool and equipment:** age of pump, heater, and surface; who services it now and at what monthly cost?
- ☐ **Storm readiness:** shutters or impact windows? Elevation above flood level? Trees that need a professional opinion?

## The Neighborhood

- ☐ How many homes on the street are already rentals — and are the neighbors glad about it? Friction is an operating cost.
- ☐ Parking reality: driveway and garage space for the occupancy you plan, and any street-parking rules.
- ☐ School zones, commute times to the bases and hospitals, and the everyday errands drive — your long-term tenants will judge all three.
- ☐ Any coming changes nearby: new development, road projects, zoning proposals?
- ☐ Flood-map vs. lived experience: has this street flooded in a storm, even if the map says low risk?

> **Drive it twice**
> Once midday, once in the evening. A rental house lives in its neighborhood around the clock — so should your decision.

# Under Contract — Investor Due Diligence

Your inspection period is short and the findings are expensive. Front-load everything that can kill the deal or the insurance.

## Insure It Before You Own It

- ☐ **Insurance quoted during the inspection period** — homeowner's/landlord policy, wind, and flood. Order the 4-point and wind-mitigation inspections immediately; your insurer will require them.
- ☐ **Flood zone and elevation certificate** verified, and the flood premium locked into your numbers.
- ☐ If the roof or a system makes the house uninsurable as-is, that's a renegotiation or an exit — inside the contingency window.

## Paper & Property

- ☐ **Full home inspection,** plus sewer or septic evaluation where applicable, and a wood-destroying-organism (termite) report.
- ☐ **Survey** reviewed — fences, easements, encroachments, and where a pool or addition actually sits.
- ☐ **Permits verified** for additions, pools, and renovations the seller advertises.
- ☐ **If tenants are in place:** get the lease, the payment history, the security-deposit accounting, and an estoppel from the tenant confirming terms. The lease transfers with the house.
- ☐ **If it's a planned STR:** re-confirm the restrictions page answers with fresh eyes — ordinance, covenants, licensing — before contingencies expire.
- ☐ **What conveys, in writing:** appliances, furnishings if any, lawn and pool equipment — inventoried with photos.

### Deadlines are the deal

Inspection, insurance, and document contingencies only protect you inside their windows. Calendar them the day the contract signs, and make decisions before they lapse — not after.

# Rental-Ready Setup

A house becomes a rental in the two weeks after closing. Set it up once, properly, and it runs quietly for years.

## Licenses, Taxes & Accounts

- ☐ **STR registration/license** completed with the city or county where required, and the **DBPR vacation rental license** in place if your rental type requires one.
- ☐ **Tax registrations set:** state transient rental tax and county tourist development tax — or written confirmation your manager collects and remits both.
- ☐ **Insurance bound** as a rental (landlord policy for annual leases; STR-rated coverage for nightly rentals).
- ☐ **Money in its own lane:** separate property account, and a monthly rhythm for reviewing income, expenses, and reserves.

## The House

- ☐ Deep clean, full condition photo set, and serial numbers/appliance ages recorded — your baseline file.
- ☐ **Smart lock** with per-guest (or per-tenant) codes; every seller code and device removed from locks, garage, and alarm.
- ☐ **Service contracts in place:** lawn care, pool service, pest control, HVAC filter schedule — with your name on the accounts (see the utilities page).
- ☐ **Hurricane-ready:** shutters or impact protection accounted for, tree hazards trimmed, and a written storm plan shared with your manager.
- ☐ For STR: furnish for durability, stock the kitchen and linens properly, post the house manual (Wi-Fi, trash days, quiet hours, parking, who to call).
- ☐ For annual leases: fresh paint, working everything, and a lease that matches Florida law and the HOA's rental rules.

## Going Live

- ☐ Manager selected — or your self-management stack ready — before the first booking or listing.
- ☐ Professional photos after the house is fully set, never before.
- ☐ Rate or rent set from real comparables, with a seasonal calendar for STR or a renewal strategy for annual leases.
- ☐ Cleaner and turnover crew (STR) or a reliable handyman list (annual) agreed in writing.

# Turnover Clean — The Between-Stays Standard

Guests judge cleanliness against hotels, not houses. This is the summary standard your cleaner works to after every stay — the full room-by-room detail lives in your cleaner's own checklist; this page is what you verify.

## The Deep-Clean Pass

- ☐ **Kitchen:** inside the oven, microwave, and refrigerator; cabinet fronts and a spot-check inside; sink sanitized, disposal run.
- ☐ **Bathrooms:** sanitized top to bottom — shower, tub, toilet, mirrors, floors; restock and fold fresh towels.
- ☐ **Floors everywhere:** vacuum and mop, including under beds and furniture that never moves for anyone else.
- ☐ **Windows inside,** sills and tracks; ceiling fans and vents dusted; laundry room wiped down and lint trap cleared.
- ☐ **Outside spaces in scope** — balcony, porch, or patio swept; grill cleaned if there is one.

## Restock & Reset

- ☐ All linens laundered and beds made to the photo standard; towel counts matched to the inventory.
- ☐ Kitchen basics restocked (coffee, filters, dish and laundry supplies); paper goods and toiletries refilled.
- ☐ Smart-lock code rotated for the next guest; thermostat set; Wi-Fi and TVs tested, remotes present.
- ☐ Welcome materials back in place; anything the last guest left behind removed.

## Inspect & Report — Before the Next Check-In

- ☐ Walk every room against your baseline condition photos; photograph and report any damage within the hour, not after the next guest arrives.
- ☐ Test what fails silently: AC, appliances, locks, hot water, pool or balcony doors.
- ☐ Flag maintenance in writing — a drip reported at turnover is a repair; reported at check-in, it's a refund.

# Utility Providers — Accounts for the Property

Decide which utilities stay in your name and which transfer to your manager — then write down who holds every account. On a house, essentially all of them start out as yours.

### Internet & Cable TV

For a rental this stays in your name — and speed matters, because Wi-Fi is a review category. Schedule installation right after closing.

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____ Start date: _____ Confirmation #: _____

### Electric

Start service in your name effective closing day, so the house is never dark or unconditioned between stays.

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____ Start date: _____ Account #: _____

### Water & Sewer

City water or a private well — verify which the house has. Any account in your name starts effective the closing date.

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____ Start date: _____ Account #: _____

### Gas

Transfer effective closing day. If the property uses propane, confirm the supplier and the tank level at closing.

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____ Start date: _____ Account #: _____

### Trash & Recycling

Confirm pickup days and cart rules — turnover days depend on them. Some associations include trash service in dues.

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____ Start date: _____ Pickup day: _____

### Smart Locks & Security

Move smart locks, cameras, and alarm monitoring into your name (or your manager's) at closing — never leave the seller's access active.

Company: _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____ Start date: _____ Account #: _____

**Who holds the account?**

Next to each account, note whether it's held by you or your property manager, and where the login lives. When you change managers someday, this page is your handover checklist.

# Change of Address — For This Property

Tax bills, association notices, and insurance documents go where the records point. Update the address on file for the property everywhere below, so nothing important lands in the seller's mailbox — or a stranger's.

### The Property

Street: _____

City / State / ZIP: _____

Closing date: _____

### Owner Mailing Address

Street: _____

City / State / ZIP: _____

Effective date: _____

## First: The Post Office

☐ **If your own mailing address is changing too,** file the USPS change-of-address about a week before the move and set forwarding to start on your move date. For the property itself, the updates below matter more.

### Taxes & Association

- ☐ County tax collector & property appraiser — tax bills and TRIM notices
- ☐ HOA / condo association management — dues statements, notices, estoppels
- ☐ Tourist tax accounts — county & state registrations in the right name

### Insurance & Lender

- ☐ Insurance agent — policy, billing & claims notices
- ☐ Lender & loan servicer
- ☐ DBPR license record for the unit

### Money

- ☐ Banks & credit cards tied to the property
- ☐ Accountant & financial advisor
- ☐ Listing platforms — where rental payouts land

### Operations

- ☐ Property manager — your address for statements & owner mail
- ☐ Utility companies — every account on the utilities page
- ☐ Your on-the-ground team: cleaner, handyman, lawn & pool service

### If Held in an LLC / Entity

- ☐ Registered agent & state entity records
- ☐ IRS records for the entity
- ☐ Entity bank & credit accounts

### Government & Personal

- ☐ DMV, IRS & voter registration — if you moved personally
- ☐ Subscription services tied to the property (smart locks, Wi-Fi, monitoring)
- ☐ Employer & payroll — if applicable

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