The HOA Documents Checklist

Four documents to audit during your review period - HOAFeeCalculator.com

When you buy in an association, state law generally gives you a short rescission or due-diligence window - typically 3 to 10 calendar days - to review the association's records and walk away if they worry you. Work through each document below and tick off every item.

1. The Latest Full Reserve Study

The reserve study is the association's savings plan for every big shared component - roofs, pavement, elevators, pools. It tells you whether the dues you are about to inherit have actually been keeping up with wear, or whether a special assessment is quietly scheduled in your future.

- ■ Find the percent funded ratio. 70% or higher is considered healthy; below 30% signals severe underfunding and likely special assessments.
- ■ Check the study's date. A study more than about five years old may not reflect current construction costs or the building's real condition.
- ■ Confirm the big components are listed - roof, structure, elevators, pavement, waterproofing - and none are quietly excluded.
- ■ In Florida condominiums, confirm the structural integrity reserve study (SIRS) components are funded and not waived.
- ■ Compare the study's recommended annual contribution with what the budget actually collects.

2. Two Years of Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes are where problems appear first - months before they become assessments. Read them for what the board is worried about, not just what it decided.

- ■ Look for mentions of unbudgeted emergency repairs - plumbing, elevators, roofs, concrete - especially if they repeat.
- ■ Note any contractor lawsuits, owner disputes, or legal spending. Litigation is paid from your dues.
- ■ Watch for discussions of dues increases, special assessments, or loans, even ones that were 'tabled'.
- ■ Check the delinquency picture if it is mentioned: when many owners stop paying, the rest carry more.
- ■ See how often the board meets and whether elections and budgets happen on schedule.

3. The Master Insurance Policy Certificate

The master policy covers the building and common areas - and its deductible can land on you. Some aging buildings carry deductibles of $100,000 or more per occurrence, which get passed to homeowners when a pipe bursts or a storm hits.

- ■ Find the deductible per occurrence for wind, hail, and water damage - and ask how it is split if a claim lands.

- Confirm what the master policy covers (structure, common areas) versus what your own HO-6 policy must cover inside your unit.
- Check the renewal date and whether the premium jumped at the last renewal - premium shocks flow straight into dues.
- Make sure your own HO-6 loss assessment coverage is high enough to cover your share of a master-policy deductible.
- Ask whether the association has had claims denied or a policy non-renewed recently.

4. The Official Resale Disclosure Certificate

The resale certificate (estoppel letter) is the legally binding snapshot of the specific home you are buying. Listing figures and the seller's memory are not a substitute for it.

- Verify the exact current monthly dues and that the seller's account is paid up to date.
- Confirm there are no outstanding violations or unpaid fines attached to the specific lot or unit.
- Check for board-approved but not-yet-billed capital or special assessments - you inherit them at closing.
- Look for pending litigation or insurance claims disclosed against the association.
- If you plan to rent the home out, confirm the rental rules and any cap - before you close, not after.

Free tools that go with this checklist: the Reserve Fund Percent-Funded Calculator, the Special Assessment Calculator, and the HOA Fee Calculator at hoafeecalculator.com. General information, not legal advice.