

# BUYING A CO-OP OR CONDO IN NEW YORK

Everything You Need To Know About The Apartment You Are Buying Before You Buy It.

**Don't walk blindly into a big purchase! Whether the cooperative or condominium apartment is in a new or vintage structure, hiring a licensed home inspector may save you a lot of heartaches and thousands of dollars in the future. – Caveat Emptor! – Let The Buyer Beware!**

## A Holistic View

It's the perfect studio apartment – it comes with a parking space and a roof top garden! You have taken a good look at the apartment, but what about the building that surrounds that perfect apartment?

## The Building's Board Minutes

When considering an apartment for purchase, start by asking to see the board minutes. You should know that not everything is in the minutes. Items may have been left out of the minutes, not for any malicious reason, but sometimes the management or building managers do not have the construction expertise to analyze the building systems or that perfect apartment. If you have any unanswered questions about the building, this is a good time to hire a trained and licensed building inspector to help you uncover any problems that would affect the apartment and its livability.

## The Building's Infrastructure

A trained licensed home inspector will help you understand the mechanical and electrical systems that support the apartment. An aging infrastructure including the boiler, water heater, plumbing system, or electrical systems will work if they are well maintained, or become a constant interruption in your daily living. One area to look for is whether the building has or may develop dampness issues. Is there evidence of a previous flood from a mechanical failure such as a pipe leak or burst? Is the location prone to a natural flood disaster? Though most per-purchase inspections are not environmental inspections, it is important to consider that additional testing might be necessary to determine if leaks or flooding have made the apartment and or building unsafe. A home inspector could advice you on these issues.

## Who Owns the Problem?

The major building systems like the boiler, sewage drain lines, electrical boxes, etc, are typically the



cooperatives or condominiums responsibility. The systems and appliances within the apartment are the unit owner's responsibility. So when is an apartment problem a building problem, or your problem? Does the co-op/condo reserve fund have enough money to pay for the repair or replacement? A structural problem in the apartment will be a building issue that may influence the long-term costs of owning the apartment. Therefore, when a building maintenance issues are discovered, they should be discussed and negotiated before contract, and not after closing.

## A Legal Perspective

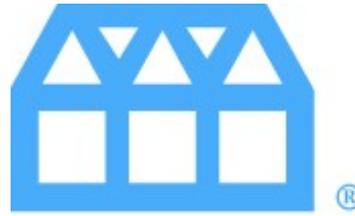
When making any major property purchase, you might also consider talking with a real estate attorney. An attorney is your legal representative who can advocate on your behalf throughout the buying transaction, and will protect you from the pitfalls and traps of the co-op, or condo apartment buying process. Your attorney may recommend a thorough inspection because this information can be used to compare your goals with the purchase costs and to negotiate a better deal.

**Note:** Clients that decline an inspection may be required to sign a **"No Inspection Request Form"** by their attorney. Food for thought! Let us know what you think.



# Inspector's Checklist

The following is a list of some of the many issues we have found during the thousands of pre-purchase apartment inspections that we have performed. To correct some of these defects, you may have to bear the cost of repair, increase in monthly maintenance, or have to pay an additional assessment.



## Building's Public Spaces

Evidence of vandalism.  
Stair and emergency stair defects.  
Noxious odors in halls/cellar/basement.  
Ventilation systems not working.  
Entry door not working properly.  
Apartment intercom/doorbell not working.  
Elevator(s) do not level off at floors or landings.  
Elevator clatters and makes noise during operation.  
Side yards not being maintained and cleaned.  
Building facade loose and cracked bricks.  
Building shifting parapet wall.  
Building settlement & failure evidence.  
Sidewalk vault deteriorating, imminent danger of failure.  
Is there an entity in the building that could prove to be objectionable (odors or noise).  
Cheap construction materials.

## Apartment

Entry door lock needing replacement.  
Entry door hinges needing replacement.  
Poor visibility through peephole.  
Noxious odors previous owner's pets/smokers.  
Sewer gas odor.  
Water damaged flooring.  
Water damaged leaks.  
Active water leaks from apartment above.  
Floor uneven, trip hazard.  
Loose and sagging plaster.  
Cracking due to settlement.  
Missing or inoperative smoke detectors.  
Fireplace missing damper.  
Fireplace poor draft.  
Leaking or poorly installed radiators.  
Why was the apartment freshly painted?

## Electrical

Inadequate amount of electrical outlets.  
Improperly wired electrical outlets.  
Electrical outlets that do not work.  
Excessive use of extension cords.  
No GFCI<sup>1</sup> in bathroom or kitchen.  
Installed GFCIs<sup>1</sup> do not trip.  
Light-switch next to shower or tub.  
Electrical service (amperage) not adequate for apartment.  
Bonded electrically sub-panel-box.  
Exposed and open electrical wiring.  
Electrical system not properly grounded.

<sup>1</sup> GFCI = Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter

## Plumbing

Dishwasher waste pipe not properly installed.  
Sink traps are not vented.  
Improperly installed sink drain traps.  
Low water pressure.  
Hot water too hot or not hot enough.  
Cold water is hot (Piping mix-up).  
Sewer gas odors.  
Leak under sinks.  
Missing sink isolation valves.  
Sink valve leaks.  
Sink is cracked, chipped, and defective.  
Leaking shower pans.  
Aging and deterioration of waste pipes.

## Kitchen

Aging and deterioration of cabinets and counter tops.  
Poorly installed cabinets/door/draws.  
Stove hood not vented to exterior of structure.  
Kitchen has no window or ventilation.  
Gas stove not connected properly.  
Stove-top-burner not level.

## Bathroom

Door lock has no emergency opening method.  
Loose, broken, and/or missing tile.  
Poorly grouted tile.  
Leaking shower stall.  
Active water leak from apartment above.  
Question: Does bathroom leak into lower apartment.  
Sewage backup residue in bathtub and shower bottom.  
Sewer gas odors.  
Room too small for toilet-bowl clearance.  
Door contacts toilet-bowl or sink.  
Low water pressure.  
Toilet-bowl does not flush properly.  
Toilet-bowl loose or leaks at base.  
Showerhead loose, tub spout loose.

## Windows

Windows are difficult to open/close.  
Broken sash weight or spring balances.  
Broken hermetic seals.  
Broken glass.  
Water and air leaks.  
Missing child safety window-guards.  
Lot-line-window(s) - Could be lost as a result of adjacent lot-line construction.

## Terrace

Guard railing loose and defective.  
Guard railing corroded and deteriorated.  
Guard railings are climbable for children.  
Decking broken or loose.  
Blocked drains.  
Leakage from terrace above.  
Water leakage of terrace door flows into apartment.  
Location compromises security.

## Vermin

Roaches, mice, rats, traps.  
Insecticide residue.

## Noise

Running building ventilators or equipment.  
Elevator next to apartment (Noise).  
Garbage shaft next to apartment.  
Adjacent building noise.  
Roof top building equipment noise.  
Basement maniacal equipment noise.

## Fire Protection

Fires escapes not maintained properly.  
Loose and missing step-ladder treads.  
Excessive corrosion and deterioration.  
Window air-conditioning units projecting onto fire escape landing.  
Debris and storage on fire escape landings.  
Emergency stair doors locked, or not working properly.  
Missing or inoperative emergency lighting.  
Fire stair defects, trip hazards.  
Fire stair missing and loose handrails.  
Fire stair and hall with cumulative debris.

## Roof

Aging and deteriorating roof membrane.  
Poor condition of flashing elements.  
Excessive ponding of water.  
Active water leaks into apartments.  
Roof top building equipment not maintained.  
Chimney evidence of deterioration.  
Vent stacks broken or deteriorated.

## Heating and

### Domestic Hot Water Heating

Aging and deteriorating heating equipment.  
Boiler using Cold No. 5 or No. 6 oil.  
Combustion gas leakage from heating equipment.  
Missing or broken boiler safety controls.  
Poorly maintained heating equipment.

