azzets

FREE GUIDE FOR SUBSCRIBERS · NOVEMBER 2026

The NYC Building Due-Diligence Kit

Check any New York City building in about ten minutes using free city records. A step-by-step checklist, the red flags worth a second look, the questions to put to a sponsor, and a real deal worked through end to end.

Inside

1. The ten-minute records check
2. Red flags in the public record
3. Questions to ask before a passive investment
4. Worked example: 2 Grand Central Tower
5. A glossary of the codes and ratios you'll meet

Azzets is an independent research publication. This kit is education, not legal, tax or investment advice, and not an offer of any security. Every source is linked on the last page. azzets.com

PART 1

The ten-minute records check

New York City publishes almost everything you need to know about a building's ownership, debt and condition, for free. Work through these seven stops in order. The shortcut: azzets.com/tools/building-check pulls most of them in one search and links to every source record.

	STOP	WHAT YOU'RE CHECKING	WHERE
☐	1. Get the BBL	The borough-block-lot number every city system shares. Ten digits, e.g. 1-01299-0027.	ZoLa (zola.planning.nyc.gov) or the Dept. of Finance tax map
☐	2. Owner and sales	Latest deed, the buyer and seller of record, the stated price, the signed and recorded dates.	ACRIS (nyc.gov/acris) for Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens; Richmond County Clerk for Staten Island
☐	3. Debt	Mortgages, consolidations and assignments recorded against the lot, and who the lender is.	ACRIS, same search, sorted by document type
☐	4. Taxes	Tax class, assessed value, exemptions or abatements, and whether bills are current.	Dept. of Finance Property Tax Public Access
☐	5. Zoning and size	Zoning district, lot area, gross building area, floors, year built, built FAR.	ZoLa and PLUTO (NYC Open Data)
☐	6. Condition	Open DOB and ECB violations, complaints, permits, stop-work orders. For housing, HPD violations and registration.	DOB BIS and DOB NOW (check both); HPD Online
☐	7. Energy and LL97	Benchmarking data and whether the building falls under Local Law 97 emissions limits.	nyc.gov/ll97; LL84 data on NYC Open Data

Three rules that prevent most mistakes

- ☐ **Use the official sites.** They're free. The Department of Finance warns that some look-alike ACRIS services aren't approved.
- ☐ **Check both DOB systems.** Some violations appear only in BIS, others only in DOB NOW.
- ☐ **Compare like with like.** PLUTO reports gross square feet; marketing quotes rentable square feet. Price per foot moves a lot depending on which you use.

PART 2

Red flags in the public record

None of these proves a problem. Each one is a reason to ask a question before you rely on a number.

- ☐ **A deed for $0 or a token price between related-sounding companies.** Often a restructuring, not a sale. Don't treat it as a market price.
- ☐ **Recorded loans close to, or above, the last sale price.** Little equity cushion means the lender's view drives what happens next.
- ☐ **A recent sale far below the previous one.** Find out why before using either as a comparable.
- ☐ **A loan maturity, refinancing or modification shortly before a sale.** Ask whether the seller had a choice about timing.
- ☐ **A notice of pending lawsuit (lis pendens), tax lien or mechanic's lien.** These can follow the property, not just the owner.
- ☐ **Many open violations, large unpaid ECB penalties or a stop-work order.** Real costs and delays the pro forma may not show.
- ☐ **A building over 25,000 square feet with no LL97 plan.** Most such buildings face emissions limits that started in 2024, with stricter limits from 2030.
- ☐ **Square footage that doesn't match.** If the offering memo's size differs from PLUTO's, ask which number the rent and price math uses.
- ☐ **A city assessed value used as a "valuation."** It's a tax figure, not an appraisal.
- ☐ **An owner LLC you can't connect to anyone.** Check the deed's signature page, HPD registration (for housing) and the NY Department of State entity search.

How we label numbers at Azzets. VERIFIED comes straight from a primary record. REPORTED comes from a credible secondary source, like the press. ESTIMATE is our own math, with the method shown. Use the same habit in your own notes: you'll always know how much weight a number can carry.

PART 3

Questions to ask before a passive investment

If you're considering a private real estate offering, records tell you about the building. These questions tell you about the deal and the people running it. A good sponsor will welcome them.

The people

- ☐ What full-cycle deals (bought and sold) have you completed, and can I see the actual results, including the ones that lost money?
- ☐ How much of your own money is in this deal?
- ☐ Are you or anyone paid to sell this offering registered? Check FINRA BrokerCheck and the SEC's Investment Adviser Public Disclosure.

The debt

- ☐ What is the loan amount, rate, maturity date, and is the rate fixed, floating or capped?
- ☐ What is the debt service coverage today, and what happens if rates or vacancy rise?
- ☐ Does the recorded mortgage in ACRIS match what the offering documents say?

The numbers

- ☐ What rent growth, vacancy and exit cap rate does the plan assume, and where do those assumptions come from?
- ☐ Every fee: acquisition, asset management, refinancing, disposition and the promote. How is each one calculated?
- ☐ Can I see the rent roll and trailing 12-month operating statement, not just the projections?

The paperwork

- ☐ Which exemption is the offering using, and has it filed a Form D? Issuers generally must file within 15 days after the first sale; search it on the SEC's EDGAR system. A filing isn't an SEC approval.
- ☐ How and how often will investors get reports, and what are the rules for getting money out early?

These questions are educational prompts. Talk to your own attorney, accountant or licensed financial adviser before investing.

PART 4

Worked example: 2 Grand Central Tower

A 43-story office tower at 147 East 44th Street (BBL 1012990027), rebuilt from city records pulled November 19, 2026. The full Deal File is at azzets.com/teardowns.

$273,000,000
Sale price, signed Dec. 4, 2025 VERIFIED

$401,000,000
Previous sale, signed Oct. 25, 2011 VERIFIED

−31.9%
Change between the two sales ESTIMATE

$433.80
Price per gross sq ft (629,323 sq ft, PLUTO) ESTIMATE

$262,584,641
MetLife loan recorded July 24, 2025 VERIFIED

$177,450,000
Buyer's loan, about 65.0% of the price VERIFIED

What the checklist turned up

- ☐ **Red flag: debt close to the price.** If the July 2025 loan was fully outstanding and repaid at closing, about $10.4 million was left before taxes, and about $1.5 million after NYC (2.625%) and NY State (0.65%) transfer taxes, before any other costs ESTIMATE
- ☐ **Red flag: size mismatch.** Press quotes about 667,000 rentable sq ft and $409 a foot REPORTED; the city's gross area gives $433.80.
- ☐ **What the records can't show:** the actual payoff, cash paid to investors from earlier refinancings, rents and occupancy. So no cap rate, and no full profit-and-loss.

Every figure is computed in tested code from the ACRIS and PLUTO records listed on the next page.

PART 5

Glossary

TERM	MEANING
BBL	Borough, block and lot: the ten-digit ID for a tax lot (borough 1 Manhattan, 2 Bronx, 3 Brooklyn, 4 Queens, 5 Staten Island).
DEED	A transfer of ownership. The stated price is called the consideration.
MTGE	A mortgage. The amount is what it secures when signed, not the balance later.
AGMT / M&CON	Agreements, often consolidating several mortgages into one larger loan.
ASST / SAT	Assignment (a loan or lease moves to a new holder) / satisfaction (a loan is paid off).
AL&R	Assignment of leases and rents: extra security for a lender, usually recorded with a loan.
FAR	Floor area ratio: building floor area divided by lot area. Zoning sets a maximum.
Cap rate	Net operating income divided by price.
DSCR	Debt service coverage ratio: net operating income divided by annual loan payments.
LTV	Loan to value: loan amount divided by price or appraised value.

Sources

NYC Department of Finance: ACRIS (nyc.gov/acris), Real Property Transfer Tax page, Property Tax Public Access. NYC Department of City Planning: ZoLa, PLUTO 26v2 via NYC Open Data. ACRIS Real Property Master, Legals and Parties datasets via NYC Open Data, pulled Nov. 19, 2026; documents 2025120900893003, 2025120900893005, 2025072300648001, 2011102700596001. NYC Department of Buildings: Find Building Data (BIS and DOB NOW); LL97 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction (nyc.gov/ll97). HPD Online. NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, TSB-M-19(1)R. U.S. SEC, "Filing a Form D Notice." FINRA BrokerCheck. Commercial Observer and The Real Deal, Dec. 2025 (rentable area and price per foot, Reported).

© 2026 Azzets. Education and research only; not legal, tax or investment advice and not an offer to buy or sell any security. Records can be corrected after we pull them; check the live source before you rely on a figure. Questions or corrections: azzets.com/contact