



The Broker's Acoustic Due Diligence Checklist

Seven Questions Every Luxury Real Estate Broker Should Ask Before Their Client Closes

Acoustic problems are among the most common sources of post-closing buyer dissatisfaction in the luxury market — and among the least likely to be discovered during standard due diligence. This checklist gives you the questions to ask and the issues to flag **before** your client signs, not after they move in.

SECTION 1 — THE BUILDING

1 What mechanical systems are located within two floors of the unit — above, below, or adjacent?

Ask the building super or managing agent for the location of elevator machinery rooms, HVAC equipment, boiler rooms, compressors, pump rooms, and trash compactor areas relative to the specific unit.

■ *Why it matters: Mechanical systems are the single most common source of post-closing acoustic complaints in NYC luxury buildings. A buyer whose master bedroom sits adjacent to an elevator shaft or above a mechanical room may discover this only after they have moved in.*

2 What is the building's construction type and era — and what does that mean acoustically?

Prewar masonry buildings offer strong lateral isolation but minimal vertical isolation between floors. New glass-curtain-wall towers have sophisticated floor systems but acoustically permeable building envelopes. Mid-century concrete slab construction varies widely in actual performance.

■ *Why it matters: No two building types present the same acoustic vulnerabilities. A broker who understands the acoustic fingerprint of the building type they are selling can have a meaningfully different conversation with their buyer before closing.*

3 Has the building had documented noise complaints, broken leases, or acoustic-related board proceedings?

Review available board minutes for noise-related complaints or disputes. Ask the managing agent directly. Request disclosure of any known noise or vibration issues in the building.

■ *Why it matters: A building with a history of noise complaints is a building whose acoustic vulnerabilities are already documented. That information belongs in your buyer's hands before they commit.*

SECTION 2 — THE UNIT

4 What is behind every wall of the master bedroom — on all six sides?

Identify what occupies the spaces directly above, below, and on all four sides of the master bedroom specifically. Elevator shafts, service corridors, mechanical chases, and neighboring unit bedrooms are all acoustic risk factors that a floor plan alone will not reveal.

■ *Why it matters: The master bedroom is where acoustic problems cause the most damage to a buyer's quality of life and satisfaction with their purchase. It is the room that deserves the most acoustic scrutiny — and the one that receives it least.*

5 What are the floor-ceiling assembly specifications — and what do they actually mean for impact sound?

Request the STC (Sound Transmission Class) and IIC (Impact Insulation Class) ratings for the floor-ceiling assembly if available. Understand that STC measures airborne sound only — not footsteps, dropped objects, or the impact noise that defines most inter-floor complaints.

■ *Why it matters: A building can publish an STC rating that sounds reassuring and still deliver a lived acoustic experience that falls far short of what a luxury buyer expects. The specification and the reality are not always the same document.*

6 Was the property visited at different times of day — including evening and weekend hours?

A midday weekday showing reveals a fraction of a property's acoustic environment. HVAC systems cycle at different hours. Building activity peaks in mornings and evenings. Neighboring tenants are home on weekends. Street noise profiles change dramatically by hour and day.

■ *Why it matters: The most common post-closing acoustic complaint begins with the phrase 'I never heard that during the showing.' A showing that only happens at 2pm on a Tuesday is not a complete acoustic picture.*

SECTION 3 — THE PROTECTION



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Has an independent pre-purchase acoustic assessment been conducted by a qualified consultant?

A professional acoustic assessment uses calibrated measurement instrumentation to evaluate the property's actual sound environment — mechanical system noise, inter-unit transmission, building envelope performance, and any site-specific acoustic conditions. It delivers a written report with findings, risk ratings, and remediation recommendations before closing.

■ *Why it matters: Every other element of luxury real estate due diligence produces a written, professional document. Acoustic performance is the one material condition of a property that currently does not. Until now.*

“The Annoyance Factor”

Many acoustic problems in luxury properties never rise to the level of a NYC Noise Code violation — yet they define a buyer's daily lived experience in their home. The measured decibel level may be legal. The experience of living with it is not acceptable. This gap between *code-compliant* and *livable* is where most post-closing acoustic disputes originate — and where pre-purchase assessment provides its greatest value.

Ready to add acoustic due diligence to your client process?

Contact Mark Hermann at Silver Cloud Acoustical Consultants for a brief introductory conversation about pre-purchase acoustic assessments for your luxury buyers.

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A Silver Cloud assessment is not an expense. It is insurance — for your client's investment, your professional relationships, and the integrity of the transaction.