

Managing HOA fees

How to Audit Your HOA Fees (Even as a Non-Expert)

You don't need to be an accountant to evaluate whether your HOA fees are reasonable. Use recent data and these steps to compare and assess effectively:

1. Request key financial documents

Your HOA should provide, at a minimum:

- The **latest annual budget**
- Year-end **financial statements**
- The most recent **reserve study**
- Any **audit or review reports***

If access is restricted or delayed — that's an immediate red flag.

2. Compare your HOA to national benchmarks

- Use the national median monthly fee (\$135 in 2024) as a rough baseline. If your dues are significantly higher, ask *Why?*
- If you're paying **more than \$500/month**, recognize you're in the top tier of U.S. homeowners. That level should come with relatively generous amenities or heavy maintenance.

3. Review budget line items

Pay special attention to:

- Insurance costs — rising premiums often drive-up HOA fees.
- Maintenance and vendor contracts — are services bundled and justified?
- Reserve contributions vs. actual repairs — underfunded HOAs may delay maintenance or impose special assessments.
- Administrative/management overhead — high fees for minimal services are common in poorly managed HOAs.

4. Ask for trends, not just current year numbers

Ideally, you want 3–5 years of data. That way you can see if fees are increasing steadily, spiking, or justified by actual maintenance and upgrades.

What to Do If Fees (or Increases) Look Unjustified

If you determine your HOA fees — or planned increases — are unreasonable, you can:

- **Ask direct questions:** “Why has the fee increased from \$110 to \$125 in one year? What changed?” Use public data (like national medians) as context.
- **Request a breakdown of expenses:** insurance, maintenance, reserves, vendor costs.
- **Encourage competitive bidding** for services (insurance, landscaping, maintenance).
- **Advocate for realistic but consistent reserve contributions** — ideally less reliant on special assessments.
- **Attend board meetings**, vote in HOA elections, or even run for a board seat to improve financial oversight.*

*To find your HOA audit laws:

1. Check your HOA's **bylaws and CC&Rs (Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions)**, as they often specify requirements; and
2. Research your **state's specific condominium/HOA statutes**, often found on the state's Attorney General or Real Estate Division website, looking for mandates based on revenue or frequency, and if needed, consult a local attorney.

Real-world examples from HOA communities

Here are several recent, real-world examples from around the U.S. that illustrate how dramatically Homeowners Association (HOA) fees — or proposed increases — have hit actual communities. Use them as cautionary examples when reviewing or auditing your own HOA costs.

Latigo community, near Metzler Ranch, Castle Rock, Colorado

- In 2024, this community's HOA premiums ballooned after insurance costs reportedly [increased by 600%](#). As a result, HOA dues jumped from about **\$300/month to roughly \$820/month**.
- The spike was driven by soaring property valuations and heightened risk (wildfire / natural-disaster risk), which led insurance carriers to demand much higher premiums—or in some cases to stop offering coverage, forcing the HOA to cover the gap via dues.

Carolina Park neighborhood in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

- A longtime [homeowner there reported](#) that when she bought her home (circa 2017), HOA dues were about **\$860 per year**. By 2025, the dues had risen to **\$1,255 per year** — a 46% increase over about eight years.
- The increases reportedly reflect rising costs for maintenance and insurance, and also pay for amenities such as swimming pools and tennis/pickleball courts.

Communities in Florida — especially Tampa, FL, Orlando, FL and Fort Lauderdale, FL

- According to a 2024 report by [Redfin](#), HOA dues in Tampa rose **17.2% year-over-year**, the largest uptick among 43 major metro areas analyzed.
- Orlando and Fort Lauderdale saw rises of **16.7%** and **16.2%**, respectively.
- The surge has been driven in large part by [skyrocketing insurance costs](#) (many coastal buildings face increased risk from hurricanes, storms, and rising insurance premiums), along with stricter safety regulations and repair mandates following major events (e.g. building-inspection laws spurred by tragedies in the condo sector).
- In parts of [South Florida](#), over a five-year span, condo-association fees have reportedly jumped nearly **60%**, reflecting how cumulative cost pressures — maintenance, insurance, regulatory compliance — add up over time.

How This Informs What You Should Do

These examples illustrate why it's not enough to assume HOA fees will stay stable. Instead:

- **Always compare your HOA's fee history to regional and national benchmarks**; if your community is seeing 15–20% jumps or more, dig deeper.
- **Scrutinize why fees are increasing** — insurance, maintenance, regulation — and whether those increases are reasonable or manageable over time.
- **Push your HOA for transparency**: historical budgets, reserve-fund studies, and breakdowns of insurance or repair costs.
- **Be aware of special assessments (large one-time fees)** — sometimes the burden is hidden until a major repair or compliance issue arises.