CINCINNATI SMALL BAY

Flex Space & Small-Bay Industrial Checklist

54 things to check before you lease, buy, or build small-bay industrial, flex, or contractor garage space.

How to use it

- Take it on a site walk or property tour and check each item as you confirm it.
- Use the notes column for answers, measurements, names, and follow-ups.
- Codes, fees, and requirements vary by city, township, and county. Treat each row as a question to ask, and confirm specifics with the local building department, fire marshal, utilities, your lender, and your own advisors.

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Scan to talk through a building or site

Property / site: _____ **Date:** _____

1. Site and location

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Drive time to customers**	Map the surrounding rooftops and business base within a 15–20 minute drive. Look at where competing tenants already operate.	
☐	**Truck access and turning**	Walk the site with the largest vehicle you expect. Check drive-aisle width, curb cuts, turning radius, and gate locations.	
☐	**Road frontage and visibility**	Note traffic counts, sign visibility from the road, and whether the municipality restricts monument or building signage.	
☐	**Zoning and permitted uses**	Read the zoning code's use table for the district, not just the district name. Ask the zoning office about conditional uses and recent variances.	
☐	**Usable acreage and site shape**	Subtract setbacks, easements, wetlands, floodplain, and steep grade before comparing price per acre. Get a test-fit site plan early.	
☐	**Easements and setbacks**	Order a title commitment and ALTA survey before you are committed. Plot every easement on the site plan.	
☐	**Yard and outdoor storage**	Confirm outdoor storage is permitted, whether it must be screened, and the surface (gravel vs. paved). Ask how yard space is allocated and priced.	
☐	**Parking and trailer parking**	Check the required parking ratio for industrial vs. flex or office uses, and whether a variance or shared parking is realistic.	
☐	**Stormwater and detention**	Ask the engineer for detention requirements early, and whether existing detention on a developed site has capacity for expansion.	
☐	**Environmental history**	Order a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment. Ask about underground tanks, floor drains, and prior tenants' uses.	

2. Building and shell

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Unit size and mix**	Compare the unit mix to local demand. Ask what sizes lease fastest in the submarket and how long vacant units have sat.	

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Unit width and depth**	Check bay dimensions against how the tenant will actually use the space, including where a vehicle parks inside.	
☐	**Clear height**	Measure clear height under joists, beams, and lights, not just at the walls. Confirm it supports the racking or lift you need.	
☐	**Overhead door size and count**	Measure the door opening, not the advertised size. Compare it to the tallest vehicle, including roof racks and ladders.	
☐	**Grade-level vs. dock-high doors**	Confirm the loading type each unit has, and whether a ramp or leveler could be added if a tenant needs one.	
☐	**Column spacing and clear span**	Note column locations in each unit. Clear-span bays give tenants more flexibility and are easier to re-lease.	
☐	**Slab thickness and condition**	Ask for construction drawings or core the slab. Look for cracking, settlement, and drainage problems.	
☐	**Construction type**	Confirm the construction type is allowed for the size and use under the local building code, and how it affects insurance.	
☐	**Demising walls and combining units**	Check whether demising walls are structural, and whether fire separation rules allow openings between units.	
☐	**Roof type, age, and warranty**	Get the roof age, warranty, and repair history. For a metal roof, ask whether coating or replacement is the realistic next step.	
☐	**Insulation**	Confirm insulation type and thickness in walls and roof, and whether a liner panel protects it.	
☐	**Mezzanine potential**	Confirm clear height above and below, floor load capacity, stairs and guardrails, and whether accessibility rules require a lift. Ask whether the space is counted as rentable.	
☐	**Office and restroom buildout**	Note which units have a restroom, office, or break area. Decide whether shared restrooms would work for the tenant base.	
☐	**Code compliance and certificate of occupancy**	Ask the building department what a new tenant's use would trigger. Get the existing certificate of occupancy and permit history.	

3. Utilities and building systems

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Electrical service**	Confirm amperage, voltage, and single- vs. three-phase service per unit. Ask the utility what an upgrade would cost.	
☐	**Separate meters**	Confirm whether electric, gas, and water are separately metered, or how shared utilities are billed back.	
☐	**Water and sewer, or well and septic**	Confirm the service provider, line sizes, and capacity. For septic, get the design basis and the reserve area required by the health department.	
☐	**Tap and impact fees**	Get the fee schedule in writing early. If the estimate looks high, ask how it was calculated and bring usage data from comparable buildings.	
☐	**Fire sprinklers and fire separation**	Ask the local fire marshal early. Confirm whether the site has the water pressure and flow a sprinkler system needs.	
☐	**Heating and cooling**	Note the heating type in each unit, who maintains it, and its age.	
☐	**Lighting**	Check interior light levels and exterior site lighting, and whether fixtures are LED.	
☐	**Internet and fiber**	Confirm which providers serve the site and whether fiber is available or would need to be brought in.	
☐	**Security and access**	Note gate type, camera coverage, and how after-hours access works.	

4. Lease terms and operations

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Lease structure**	Confirm which expenses the tenant pays directly, which are in the rent, and how increases are passed through. See the FAQ on Modified Gross vs. NNN.	
☐	**Expense reconciliation**	Ask how and when reconciliations are done, and what the last few years looked like.	
☐	**Lease term and renewals**	Note the term, renewal options, and early-termination rights.	

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Rent escalations**	Confirm the escalation rate and whether it is fixed or tied to an index.	
☐	**Permitted use clause**	Read the use clause, including restrictions on hazardous materials, vehicle repair, and outdoor storage.	
☐	**Tenant improvements**	Agree in writing on what the landlord delivers, what the tenant builds, and who owns improvements at lease end.	
☐	**Tenant equipment and removal**	Spell out what may be installed, who approves it, and whether it must be removed and the space restored at lease end.	
☐	**Insurance requirements**	Confirm required tenant coverage, additional-insured language, and how the landlord's premium is shared.	
☐	**Signage rights**	Confirm what signage the tenant may install and what the municipality allows.	
☐	**Maintenance responsibilities**	List each building system and who repairs and replaces it.	
☐	**Property rules**	Ask for the rules in writing before signing, and how they are enforced.	

5. Investment, financing, and exit

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Rent comps**	Use comparable unit sizes and finish levels in the same submarket. Be skeptical of rents from much larger buildings.	
☐	**Occupancy and tenant mix**	Review the rent roll for lease expirations by year, tenant concentration, and payment history.	
☐	**Price vs. replacement cost**	Estimate today's all-in cost to build a comparable building, including land and site work, and compare it to the price per square foot.	
☐	**Operating expenses and property taxes**	Get actual operating statements and estimate taxes at the purchase price, not the seller's current bill.	

✓	Factor	What to check	Notes
☐	**Financing and appraisal**	Talk to lenders early about loan-to-value, debt coverage, recourse, and what cap rate their appraisers are using.	
☐	**Capital reserves**	Build a reserve schedule for the major components based on age and condition.	
☐	**Exit buyer requirements**	Before value-engineering a feature out, ask who the likely buyer is and whether they require it.	
☐	**Development budget and contingency**	Get current bids, carry a contingency, and confirm how long quotes are valid.	
☐	**Incentives**	Ask the local economic development office what programs apply and what they require.	
☐	**Permitting timeline**	Ask the jurisdiction for typical review times, and hold a pre-development meeting before closing on land.	

This checklist is general orientation, not legal, tax, engineering, or code advice. Requirements vary by jurisdiction; confirm specifics with the authority or professional responsible for each item.

Additional notes



Buying or selling a small-bay building in Greater Cincinnati?

Grady Collins is a commercial real estate agent with eXp Commercial. He helps owners and investors buy and sell small-bay industrial and contractor garage buildings across Hamilton, Butler and Warren counties.

Grady started in audit at Deloitte and spent years in financial leadership at public and private companies, including financial oversight of a $3.5 billion enterprise with more than 500 legal entities. He holds a BSBA in accounting from Ohio State.

How Grady helps

- **Contractor garage buildings:** buildings of 750–1,500 SF insulated trade bays, bought and sold by owner-users and investors
- **Small-bay industrial:** multi-tenant buildings with 1,000–10,000 SF suites, also called flex space or flex industrial
- **Owner-user & investor representation:** buying, selling, or 1031/721 exchanging into small-bay and contractor garage buildings
- **Sale-leasebacks and selling the business too:** sell your building and lease it back so your business stays put. If you're selling the company as well, Grady can handle that sale through Main Street Exit Partners, his business brokerage for owner-led companies.

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Scan to get in touch

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