

# LAND BUYER'S GUIDE

A comprehensive resource for navigating the complex process of purchasing land for residential, agricultural, commercial, or recreational purposes.



## Defining Your Goals

Clarify your land purchasing objectives, whether for a dream home, farming, business development, or recreational retreat.



## Research & Planning

Thoroughly investigate locations, zoning regulations, and market values to find the perfect property that meets your needs.



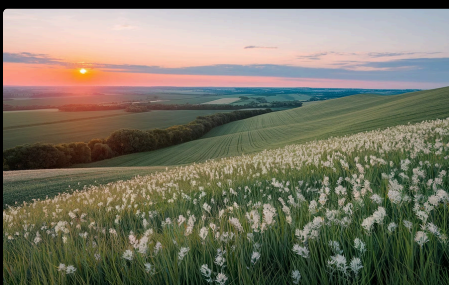
## Expert Guidance

Work with land specialists who understand the unique aspects of undeveloped property transactions and due diligence requirements.



## Successful Acquisition

Navigate the closing process with confidence, armed with the knowledge to make informed decisions throughout your land buying journey.



## Agricultural Potential

Evaluate soil quality, water access, and agricultural zoning to determine a property's farming or ranching viability.



## Recreational Value

Assess land for hunting, fishing, hiking, or other recreational activities that enhance enjoyment and potential resale value.



## Development Considerations

Understand utilities access, building restrictions, and environmental factors that impact development timelines and costs.

# Welcome to Your Land Buying Journey

Purchasing land is a significant investment that requires thoughtful consideration, proper due diligence, and the guidance of an experienced land real estate specialist. Whether you're buying land for recreation, development, agriculture, or investment, this guide is designed to help you navigate each step with confidence.



## Investment Opportunity

Land ownership represents one of the most enduring forms of investment opportunity



## Professional Guidance

Working with qualified land specialists ensures a successful acquisition



## Various Purposes

Different land types serve unique needs from recreation to development

Land ownership represents one of the most enduring forms of investment, offering opportunities for wealth creation, legacy building, and the fulfillment of personal or business aspirations. Unlike developed properties, raw land presents unique challenges and considerations that demand specialized knowledge and a methodical approach to evaluation.

In this guide, we'll walk you through the essential steps of the land buying process, highlighting critical factors to consider and potential pitfalls to avoid. We'll explore strategies for identifying suitable properties, conducting thorough due diligence, securing financing, and successfully closing your transaction.

By following these guidelines and working with qualified professionals, you'll be better equipped to make a land purchase that aligns with your goals and offers the potential for long-term satisfaction and value appreciation. Whether this is your first land acquisition or you're an experienced buyer, the principles outlined here will help ensure a successful outcome.

Notes:



# Step 1: Define Your Goals

Before beginning your search for land, it's crucial to clearly define what you hope to achieve with your purchase. Your intended use, budget constraints, investment timeline, and location preferences will fundamentally shape your search criteria and evaluation process. Taking time to crystallize these goals will save you considerable time and resources during your search.

## Questions to Ask:



### What is the intended use of the land?

Different purposes (Residential, Agricultural, Commercial, Recreational, etc.) require different property characteristics. For residential development, you'll need to consider proximity to schools, amenities, and utilities. Agricultural land requires assessment of soil quality, water access, and climate suitability. Commercial properties demand attention to traffic patterns, visibility, and market demographics.



### What is your budget?

Establish not just the purchase price you can afford, but also funds for improvements, ongoing maintenance, property taxes, and potential development costs. Remember that financing raw land typically requires larger down payments than residential mortgages.



### Are you seeking short-term or long-term investment?

Short-term investors might focus on properties with immediate development potential or resale value, while long-term investors may prioritize location trends, growth corridors, or natural resource potential.



### What is your ideal location?

Consider climate preferences, proximity to family or work, accessibility, and future development patterns in the area. Research local economic conditions and growth projections to understand how they might impact property values over time.

Documenting your priorities will help you communicate clearly with real estate professionals and evaluate properties objectively rather than emotionally. Creating a weighted scoring system for your criteria can help when comparing multiple properties.



Notes:



# Step 2: Location Research

Location is perhaps the most critical factor in land value and usability. A thorough investigation of potential locations before viewing specific properties will narrow your search and prevent costly mistakes. This research phase requires examining both macro factors (regional trends, economic outlook) and micro factors (specific property characteristics).



## Key Considerations:

### Proximity to utilities, roads, and essential services

The cost of bringing utilities to remote land can be substantial. Investigate the distance to existing water lines, electrical service, natural gas, internet connectivity, and cellular service. For residential or commercial development, proximity to schools, healthcare, shopping, and emergency services is crucial. Access to main roads and transportation corridors affects both development costs and property value.

### Access and road frontage

Legal and physical access to the property is non-negotiable. Ensure the land has deeded access or adequate road frontage. Seasonal access may be sufficient for recreational property but inadequate for residential use. Consider road maintenance responsibilities, especially for private roads. Properties with multiple access points or significant road frontage typically command higher values and offer more development flexibility.

### Zoning regulations and surrounding land use

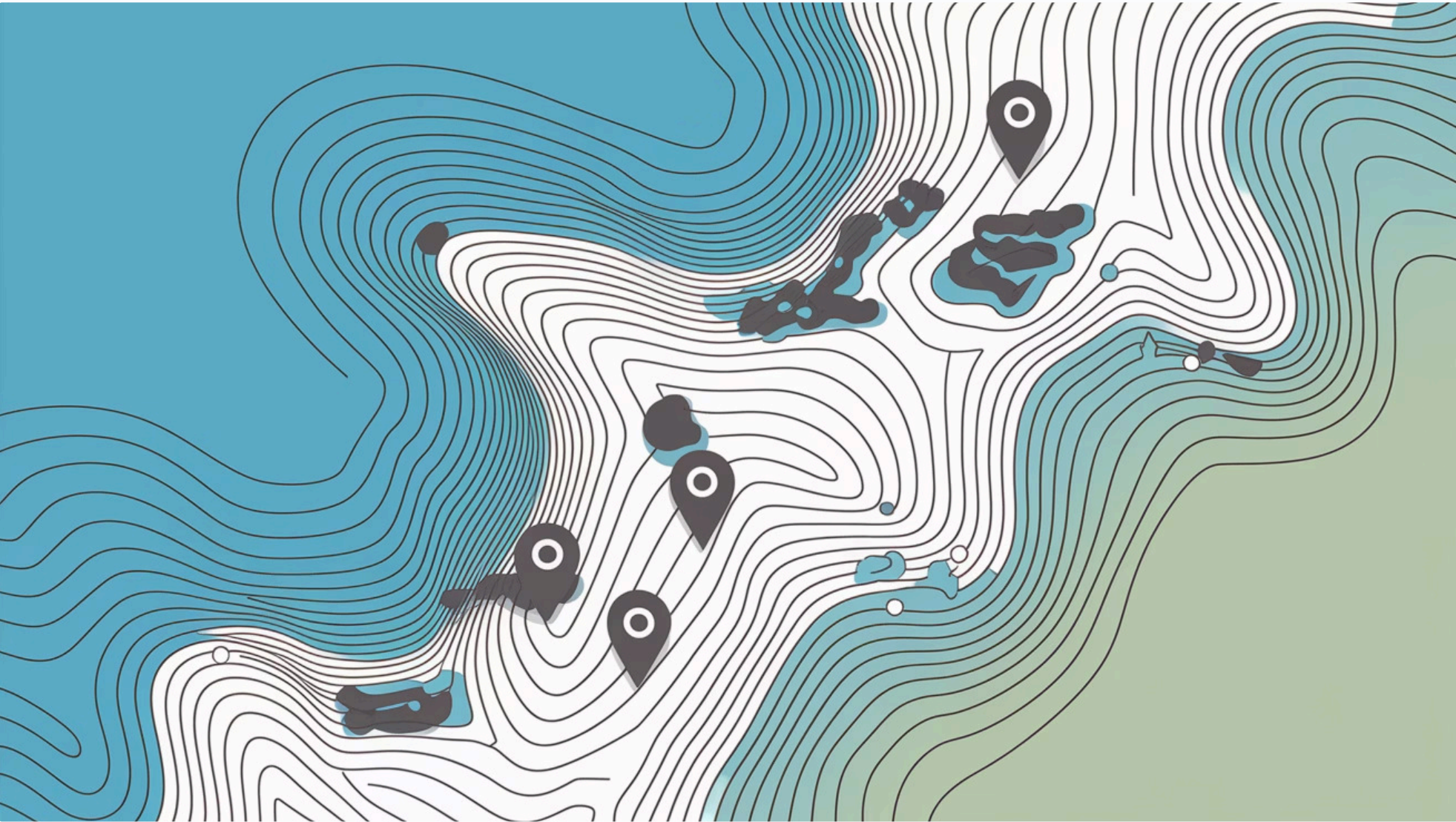
Local zoning ordinances dictate what you can and cannot do with the property. Review comprehensive plans for insights into future development patterns. Investigate surrounding properties' current and potential uses, as these will impact your enjoyment and property value. Be particularly attentive to nearby uses that might create noise, odor, or visual impacts.

### Environmental restrictions or protected areas

Identify any wetlands, endangered species habitats, flood zones, or conservation easements that may limit development. Research historical uses that might have created environmental contamination. Review climate-related risks such as wildfire zones, flooding potential, or erosion issues that could affect insurance costs or buildability.



Conduct initial research online through county assessor websites, GIS mapping systems, and planning department resources. Local historical societies and long-time residents can provide valuable insights about area trends and challenges not apparent in official records. Consider driving through the area at different times of day and in different weather conditions to get a complete picture of what ownership would entail.



Notes:



# Step 3: Engage a Land Specialist

While any real estate agent can technically help you purchase land, the unique complexities of land transactions make working with a specialized land professional invaluable. Land specialists possess specific knowledge about evaluation factors that generalist agents may overlook, potentially saving you from costly mistakes and helping you identify opportunities that others might miss.

## Why It Matters:



### Specialized Knowledge

A knowledgeable land agent understands the nuances of land transactions that differ significantly from residential or commercial property deals. They can interpret soil surveys, topographical maps, and resource assessments that impact land value and usability. Their expertise with land-specific contract provisions helps protect your interests throughout the transaction process.



### Risk Identification

They can identify potential red flags that might not be immediately apparent, such as access issues, environmental constraints, or title complications. Their experience with similar properties provides context for evaluating particular challenges or opportunities with your potential purchase. This risk assessment capability is particularly valuable for first-time land buyers.



### Technical Expertise

They are familiar with zoning, soils, floodplains, and topography considerations that directly impact land value and development potential. Their relationships with surveyors, environmental consultants, and other land specialists facilitate thorough due diligence. Many land specialists have backgrounds in forestry, agriculture, or engineering that enhance their advisory capabilities.



### Negotiation Guidance

They can guide contract negotiations and closing processes specific to land transactions. Their knowledge of comparable land sales provides crucial perspective on fair market value in a market where properties are highly unique. They understand financing options specific to land purchases, which often differ from traditional mortgage products.

**Tip:** Work with a REALTOR® who specializes in land and is a member of the REALTORS® Land Institute (RLI). RLI members have access to specialized education and networking opportunities that enhance their land expertise. Look for professionals who hold the Accredited Land Consultant (ALC) designation, which requires significant transaction experience and specialized training.

Interview several land specialists to find someone who understands your specific goals and has experience with similar properties. Ask about their recent land transactions, their process for property evaluation, and their network of supporting professionals. The right specialist becomes not just a transaction facilitator but a valuable advisor in your land ownership journey.

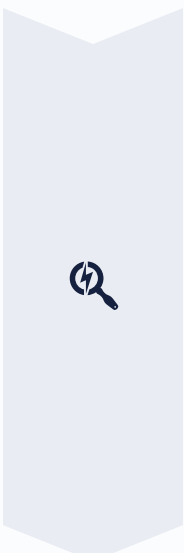
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# Step 4: Conduct Due Diligence

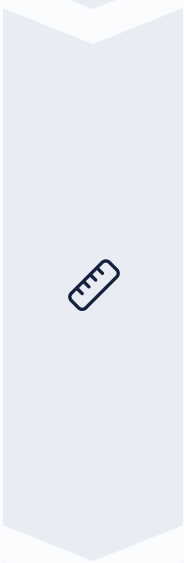
Due diligence is the investigative process that protects you from unexpected issues and confirms that the property meets your needs. This critical phase requires methodical research and often involves multiple specialized professionals. The investment in thorough due diligence can prevent costly surprises after purchase and provide negotiating leverage if issues are discovered.

## Checklist:



### Title Search

Confirm ownership and any liens or easements. A professional title search reveals the chain of ownership, any mortgages, liens, judgments, or unpaid taxes attached to the property. It also identifies easements, rights-of-way, or other encumbrances that might limit your use of the land. Title insurance protects you from undiscovered title defects after purchase.



### Survey

Verify boundary lines and acreage. Professional surveys establish exact property boundaries, identify encroachments, and accurately measure acreage. This is particularly important for large parcels where fences or natural features may not align with legal boundaries. A current survey can prevent boundary disputes with neighbors and ensure you're purchasing exactly what you expect.



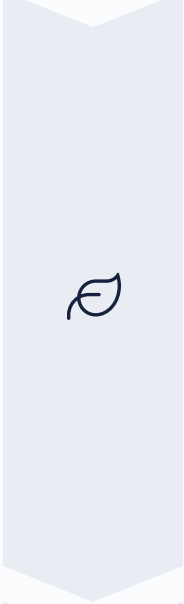
### Zoning & Permitting

Ensure the intended use is permitted. Verify current zoning classifications and review any overlay districts or special use requirements. Investigate the feasibility and costs of obtaining necessary permits for your intended use. For development properties, explore whether utilities can be extended to the site and at what cost. Check for any pending zoning changes that might affect future use.



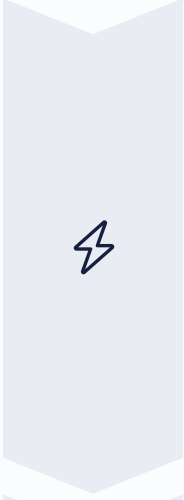
### Soil Testing

Check for septic suitability and foundation support. Soil percolation tests determine if the land can support septic systems. Geotechnical assessments evaluate soil stability for building foundations. For agricultural properties, soil composition analysis provides insights into crop suitability and potential amendments needed.



### Environmental Assessment

Identify wetlands, flood zones, or contamination. Phase I environmental assessments identify potential contamination from previous uses. Wetland delineations and flood zone determinations identify areas with development restrictions. Wildlife habitat assessments may be required if endangered species are present in the region. These evaluations may be required by lenders and are essential for understanding development constraints.



### Utilities

Determine access to water, electricity, and internet. Research whether utilities are already available at the property line or the cost to extend them. For water, investigate well possibilities, water rights, or municipal connection requirements. For rural properties, understand the feasibility and costs of alternative energy systems if grid connection is prohibitively expensive.



### Ingress & Egress

Confirm legal access to the property. Verify that access roads are publicly maintained or that you have deeded easements for private access. Understand seasonal limitations on physical access, particularly in areas with heavy snowfall or flooding risks. Investigate any shared access arrangements and associated maintenance agreements or costs.

Document your findings meticulously and review them with your land specialist. Create a due diligence timeline that aligns with your purchase agreement contingencies. Budget adequately for professional assessments—cutting corners on due diligence often leads to far greater expenses after purchase.

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