



Single-Family Residential Land Development Checklist





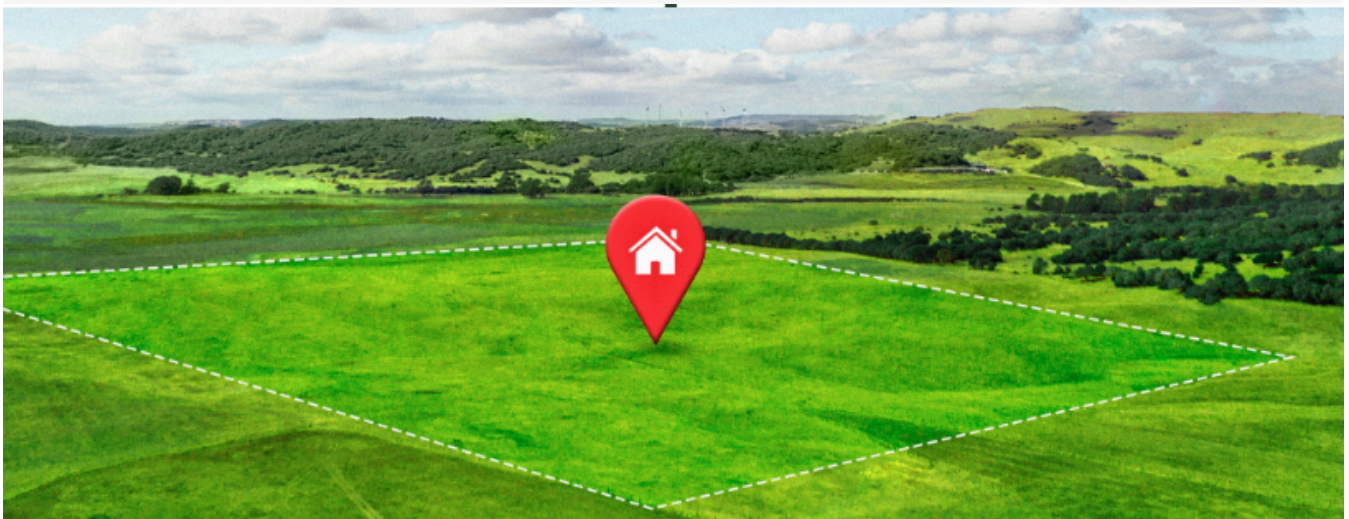
INTRODUCTION

Developing land for a single-family home is an exciting but complex process that requires careful planning and due diligence. This checklist is designed to help individual land buyers navigate the critical steps involved in assessing a property, securing necessary approvals, and preparing for construction. By addressing zoning regulations, site constraints, permitting requirements, utility availability, and financial considerations, this resource ensures that buyers can make informed decisions before breaking ground. Whether you're purchasing land for a custom home or planning long-term development, this guide will help you identify potential risks, hidden costs, and essential steps for a smooth building experience.

1.

INITIAL PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

- Reason for Interest:** What are your objectives for purchasing this land?
- Jurisdictional Authorities:** Identify city, county, and state agencies with oversight.
- Survey Status:** Has a recent survey been completed? Are property pins visible?
- Parcel Size & Buildable Area:** Confirm gross and net acreage.
- Encroachments:** Check for physical encroachments from neighboring properties.
- Zoning & Land Use:** Verify current zoning and any overlays affecting the property.
- Surrounding Land Use:** Are there any incompatible neighboring uses?
- Deed Restrictions & Easements:** Review property title for any restrictions or obligations.
- Road Access:** Confirm legal and physical access to the property.
- Option Agreement:** Is the seller willing to allow due diligence before purchase?



2.

SITE CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

- Topography:** Identify slopes, ridgelines, high/low points, and rock outcroppings.
- Geotechnical Conditions:** Conduct soil testing for compaction, expansive soils, or hazardous materials.
- Floodplain Status:** Check FEMA maps and local floodplain regulations.
- Wetlands:** Determine if wetlands are present and require mitigation.
- Stormwater Management:** Assess jurisdictional requirements for retention and discharge.
- Wildfire Risk:** Determine if the property is in a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and requires fire-resistant measures.
- Ingress & Egress:** Ensure compliance with fire and emergency access standards.
- Seismic & Wind Load:** Assess regional seismic zoning and wind load requirements for structural design.

NAVIGATING ZONING AND PERMITS

Zoning and permit regulations can be a major roadblock or an opportunity, depending on your approach. Before purchasing a property, thoroughly review zoning designations and future land use plans. Understanding the required approvals early can save months of delays and unexpected costs. A proactive approach with local officials can also help uncover options such as rezoning, variances, or density bonuses that could enhance the value of your investment.



3.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS & PERMITS

- Comprehensive Plan Compliance:**
Does the property align with future land use plans?
- Development Approval Process:**
Identify necessary permits for construction.
- Environmental Regulations:**
Determine if an Environmental assessment is needed.
- Archaeological & Endangered Species Considerations:** Check for required studies.
- Driveway & Right-of-Way Permits:**
Ensure compliance with local access and road improvement requirements.
- Tree Preservation & Landscaping:**
Check if special permits are needed for tree removal or mandatory landscaping plans.



4.

UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Water Source:**
 - City/Municipal: Verify availability, connection fees, and meter requirements.
 - Well: Check feasibility, expected depth, and required pump system.

- Wastewater System:**
 - Sewer: Locate stub or determine if a mainline extension is needed.
 - Septic: Conduct perc testing, obtain design approval, and verify installation costs.

- Power Availability:**
 - Identify closest connection point and potential costs for extending service.
 - Verify transformer placement and trenching needs.

- Natural Gas:** Determine availability and connection requirements.

- Telecommunications & Internet:** Verify service providers and infrastructure readiness.

- Stormwater & Drainage:** Assess site grading and required drainage improvements.

MANAGING SITE DEVELOPMENT COSTS

Many land buyers underestimate the cost of site development, from grading and excavation to utility connections. Conducting a detailed site feasibility study before committing to a purchase can help prevent financial surprises. Compare multiple contractor bids, ask about hidden fees, and build contingencies into your budget for unexpected soil conditions or permitting delays.



5.

UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Property Purchase Price & Transaction Costs:** Confirm closing costs, taxes, and contingencies.
- Pre-Construction Expenses:**
 - Site preparation (grading, clearing, soil remediation)
 - Utility connections and off-site improvements
 - Environmental and permitting fees
- Construction Costs:**
 - Foundation preparation based on geotechnical analysis
 - Driveway construction and site access
 - Structural costs based on design requirements (seismic, wind, fire mitigation, etc.)
- Financing Options:** Research loan-to-value ratios, construction loans, and performance guarantees.
- Long-Term Costs:** Property taxes, HOA fees, maintenance, and insurance considerations.



6.

PRE-CONSTRUCTION PLANNING & APPROVALS

- Architectural Review (If Applicable):** Submit required designs for approval.
- Building Permits:** Obtain all necessary permits before breaking ground.
- Fire Marshal Compliance:**
 - Minimum driveway width and turnarounds
 - Fire hydrant or sprinkler system requirements
- Site Plan Development:**
 - Confirm home positioning and orientation.
 - Evaluate setbacks and lot coverage allowances.
- Construction Timeline & Coordination:** Develop a project schedule including contractor bids, material ordering, and expected completion.



Mitigating Environmental & Safety Risks

Environmental constraints such as flood zones, wetlands, and wildfire risk areas can dramatically impact buildability and cost. Always obtain site-specific reports and consult experts if needed. Addressing these risks early with engineered solutions, fire-resistant materials, or drainage plans ensures a smoother building process and protects long-term property value.



7.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE BREAKING GROUND

- ✔ Confirm all regulatory approvals and permit issuance.
- ✔ Ensure all financing and insurance are secured.
- ✔ Conduct final property walk-through with contractor or builder.
- ✔ Verify access to temporary utilities for construction.
- ✔ Establish an erosion control and stormwater management plan.
- ✔ Begin construction!





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CONCLUSION

Developing land for a single-family home is a rewarding journey that requires patience, research, and strategic planning. By following this checklist, you can navigate potential challenges with confidence, mitigate risks, and make informed decisions that set the foundation for a successful project. Remember, thorough due diligence at every step will save time, money, and frustration in the long run. Stay proactive, seek expert guidance when needed, and embrace the process—your dream home is within reach!

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