



DENNIS FLETCHER DESIGN STUDIO
Custom Home Design

BEFORE YOU START

If you're holding this packet and wondering,
"Am I supposed to have all of this figured out already?"

The answer is no.

This packet is meant to be used right before buying land. This sheet should be used to help you decide on the property you will build on.

How to Use This Checklist

This checklist is designed to be your primary evaluation tool as you scout potential properties for your custom home. To get the most out of this resource, follow these steps:

- **Print One Per Property:** Do not use one list for multiple locations. Having a dedicated checklist for each property allows you to maintain organized records for side-by-side comparison later.
- **Conduct On-Site Testing:** Several sections require you to be physically present on the land. For example, stand in the middle of the property to check cell reception and walk the boundaries to evaluate the view and terrain.
- **Research Beyond the Visible:** While many items are visual, some require external research. Contact local municipalities or utility companies to verify zoning, perc test results, and the availability of natural gas or high-speed internet.
- **Evaluate Infrastructure Access:** Pay close attention to how you will access the land. Note if you will require a shared driveway or a legal easement to reach your build site.
- **Score Your Preferences:** Use the checkbox markers to rank the location's suitability. Determine if the lot is your "Ideal Location" or simply "Works, but not ideal" to help narrow down your final choices.

Our goal is to provide you with the facts necessary to remove stress from the process and help you find the right property for your family.

Property "Red Flag" Guide

This guide will help you quickly identify potential "deal-breakers" or high-cost issues found while completing your checklist. These are the items that might require a larger budget or more legal work than originally planned.

When reviewing your completed checklist, look for these specific indicators that a property may be difficult or expensive to build on:

▶ Infrastructure & Utility Warnings

- **Missing Electric Access:** If you are required to bring electric to the property, the cost for poles or underground lines can be thousands of dollars depending on the distance from the main road.
- **Well & Septic Needs:** If city water or sewer is unavailable, you must account for the cost of drilling a well and installing a septic system.
- **Failed Perc Test:** If a perc test has not been done or fails, it may be impossible to build the specific bedroom-size home you desire.
- **No Natural Gas:** Requiring propane or oil means ongoing delivery costs and the need for an on-site storage tank.

▶ Legal & Accessibility Warnings

- **Large Utility Easements:** An easement that runs through the middle of the property or takes up a large area can make the lot unbuildable.
- **Shared or Restricted Access:** Requiring an easement or a shared driveway to reach your land can lead to legal disputes or maintenance disagreements with neighbors.
- **Incorrect Zoning:** If the land is not residential zoned, you may face a lengthy and uncertain legal process to get it changed before you can build.

▶ Environment & Quality of Life Warnings

- **High Clearing Costs:** A heavily wooded lot may provide privacy, but clearing enough land to build your custom home adds significant upfront costs.
- **Poor Connectivity:** In rural areas, if cell reception is poor or internet/cable availability is "severely lessened", working from home or modern smart-home features may not be possible.
- **Noise and Traffic:** A lot on a main road that is noisy or near heavy highway access can negatively impact your long-term quality of life.

Land Acquisition: Timeline of Next Steps

This timeline outlines the logical order for performing your land acquisition checks, moving from simple visual observations to complex legal and utility verifications.

Phase 1: The Initial Site Visit

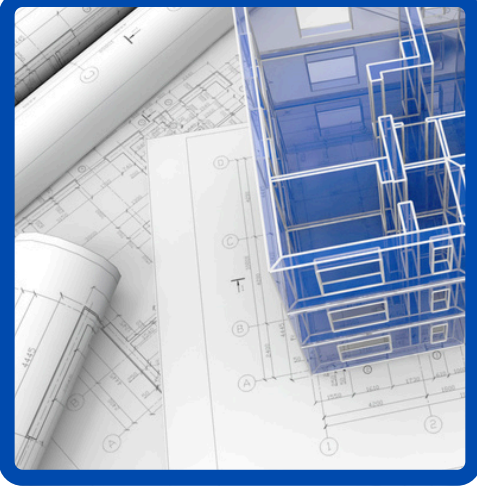
- **Evaluate Location & Amenities:** Determine if the lot is in an urban, suburban, or rural setting and check proximity to schools, parks, and shopping.
- **Assess Road Access:** Check if the property is on a dirt road, backroad, or a noisy main road.
- **Test Connectivity:** While standing in the middle of the property, check your phone for cell reception and look for areas where the signal might drop.
- **Visual Characteristic Check:** Identify if the lot is heavily wooded, has a view you enjoy, or is surrounded by unbuildable areas like wetlands or protected land.

Phase 2: Utility & Infrastructure Research

- **Verify Electric & Gas:** Confirm if electricity and natural gas come to the property or if you must pay to bring them in.
- **Water & Waste Management:** Determine if you can connect to city water and sewer or if you will require a private well and septic system.
- **Confirm Perc Testing:** If a septic system is required, check if a perc test has already been completed or if you need to schedule one for a specific bedroom size.
- **Check High-Speed Access:** Verify if internet and cable are available, especially in rural areas where connectivity might be severely lessened.

Phase 3: Legal & Zoning Verification

- **Confirm Zoning Compliance:** Check that the land is residentially zoned so that you can legally build your home.
- **Identify Easements:** Research the size and location of utility easements to ensure they don't run through the middle of your intended build site.
- **Resolve Access Issues:** Determine if you require a shared driveway or a legal easement through another property to gain access.
- **Order a Professional Survey:** If not already available, require a survey to confirm property boundaries before finalizing the purchase.



LAND ACQUISITION CHECKLIST

Location Type

**City Lot
(Urban)**

**Suburban Lot
(Subdivision)**

**Rural Lot
(Outside of City Limits)**

Where Does This lot Fit?

Ideal Location

Works, Close to Ideal

Works, Not Close to Ideal

**Unlikely Location, Does
Not Work**

Amenities Near Lot

Schools
Name:
Distance:

Parks
Name:
Distance:

Shopping Areas

**Highway, Main Road
Access**

**Neighborhood
Temperament**
Quiet:
Full of Children:
Chaotic/Rundown:

Other Thoughts



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Notes / Questions Regarding Location:

How do you feel about this properties location type?

**Describe the Amenities near and far.
What makes this lot attractive?**

What makes this lot unattractive?



Lot Characteristics

Wooded Lot

Fully Wooded:
Partially Wooded:
Just a few trees/Shrubs:

Area Surrounding Lot

Unbuildable Land, i.e., Parks,
Wetlands, Etc.:
Commercial/Industrial:
Subdivision:

Easy Access

Off Main Road:
Easily Located:
Driveway or Access Point :
Access through Another Property

Cell/Data Reception

No Reception:
Spotty Reception:
Good Reception:
Great Reception:

Views

Houses/Buildings all Around:
Wooded Areas:
Water View:
Mountain View:

Other

Other Characteristics that appeal
to you, or that make it
unappealing:



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Consider the Characteristics

Make notes on things not shown on the list. Make sure to detail things that you both like and dislike.



Utility Considerations

Access to Electric

Existing:
Lines Close:
Access Far Away:
No Access:

Well or Hookup?

Existing Hookup to City:
Existing Well:
New Hookup to City:
New Well:

Sewer or Septic

Existing Hookup to City:
Existing Septic System:
New Hookup to City:
New Septic System Needed:

Natural GAs

Available:
Unavailable:

Propane or Oil

Available:
Unavailable:

Cable/Internet

Available:
Unavailable:

Other Considerations



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Research Utilities

Research the area, check how hard each utility will be to obtain.

If your land requires a septic system, find out if a perc test has been done, how old it is, and what the results were. If no perc test, find out if one will be completed in the near future.



Legal & Zoning Considerations

Survey

Included:
Needs to be updated:
Needs new Survey:

Driveway

Access Location:
Requires Easement:

Zoning

Current Zoning Classification:
Needs Rezoned:
Zoning Unknown:

Utility Easement

Requires Utility Easement:
Unknown:

Property Setbacks

Front Setback:
Rear Setback:
Side Setback:

Flood Information

Require Flood Certification:
Near Wetlands:
Within 100 Year Flood Plan:



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Questions to Address Early:

Research and note any legal issues or considerations here.
Find out what the solution requires, if any.
List out those requirements.



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Support I may Need:

This page is for you to compile all of the know issues you may have to deal with if you choose this property. Don't just compile those issues as a list, find out who you would have to contact to rectify the issues. You may be able to contact those who can help and get costs/timelines so that you know if this property is feasible.