

The Land Buyer's Checklist



King, Pierce & Snohomish Counties

Land is the one purchase where what you can't see matters most. Work through this list during your feasibility period, before you're locked in. Jot what you find on the notes lines and bring it to every showing.

THE #1 DEAL-KILLER I SEE

Wetlands.

A pretty, flat, affordable parcel can turn out to have almost nowhere you're allowed to build. Wetland and stream buffers can swallow most of a lot. Check this first.



1 Wetlands & streams

- ☐ Look the parcel up on the **county map** for mapped wetlands, streams and their buffers.
King County iMap · Snohomish County PDS Map Portal · Pierce County PublicGIS
NOTES _____
- ☐ **Walk it in winter or after a good rain.** Standing water, cattails, skunk cabbage and soggy ground are red flags. Maps miss things.
NOTES _____
- ☐ Ask the seller for any **wetland delineation, critical area study** or recorded Critical Area Site Plan.
NOTES _____
- ☐ Anything look wet? Hire a **wetland biologist** for a delineation before your feasibility deadline.
NOTES _____
- ☐ Sketch where the **house, driveway, septic and well** could really go once buffers are drawn in.
NOTES _____

2 Septic

No approved septic, no house. This one sinks deals almost as often as wetlands.

- ☐ Pull any **existing septic records** (as-builts) for the parcel.

King: kingcounty.gov/SepticRecords · Snohomish: snohd.org, As-Built Records · Pierce: Tacoma-Pierce County Health Dept. records (edocs.tpchd.org)

NOTES _____

- ☐ No system yet? Have a licensed designer do a **soil log / site evaluation** (the "perc test").

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- ☐ Ask **what type of system** the soil allows. Some types cost a lot more than others.

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- ☐ Confirm the drain field fits **outside wetland buffers**, well setbacks and property lines.

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3 Water

- ☐ Existing well? Get the **well log**, a flow test and a water quality test.

Well logs: Washington Department of Ecology well reports (search by address or parcel)

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- ☐ Public water nearby? Ask the water district for a **water availability letter**.

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- ☐ New well? Ask local drillers about **typical depth and cost** in the area.

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4 Access

- ☐ Confirm **legal access**: a recorded easement or frontage on a public road. A gravel road on the ground isn't an easement on paper.

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- ☐ Shared road? Ask for the **road maintenance agreement**.

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- ☐ Check whether you'll need a **driveway or road approach permit**.

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5 Zoning & buildable area

- ☐ Confirm **zoning and minimum lot size** with the county planning department.

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- ☐ Check the county map for **steep slopes, landslide or flood areas**.

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- ☐ Note **setbacks** from property lines, roads and water.

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6 Utilities

- ☐ How far is the nearest power pole? Get a **quote to bring power in**.

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- ☐ Check **internet and cell signal** standing on the land, not just on a map.

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7 Survey & title

- ☐ Is there a recent **boundary survey**? Are the corners marked?

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- ☐ Read the **title report** for easements, CC&Rs and encroachments.

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- ☐ Ask about **mineral and timber rights**. Merchantable trees can be part of the value.

NOTES _____

8 Costs beyond the price

Rough numbers are fine. Add them up before you compare parcels.

Clearing & grading	\$ _____
Driveway	\$ _____
Septic design & install	\$ _____
Well drilling or water hookup	\$ _____
Power hookup	\$ _____
Permits & impact fees	\$ _____
Total on top of the price	\$ _____

Where to look it up

	KING	SNOHOMISH	PIERCE
Permits & zoning	Dept. of Local Services, Permitting	Planning & Development Services (PDS)	Planning & Public Works
Wetland & critical area maps	King County iMap	PDS Map Portal	Pierce County PublicGIS
Septic records	kingcounty.gov/SepticRecords	snohd.org, As-Built Records	edocs.tpchd.org
Well logs	Washington Department of Ecology well reports, all three counties		

MY BEST TIP

Write your offer with a **feasibility contingency** long enough to get these answers. How many days makes sense depends on the parcel, so ask me before you write.



*Got your eye on a piece of land?
I'm happy to take a look with you. No pressure.*

425-221-1670

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This checklist is a general guide, not legal, engineering or environmental advice. County rules and websites change, so confirm everything with the county and qualified professionals. Current as of October 2026.