

LAND BUYER'S GUIDE

**How to Own Your
Ideal Property**

Ideal Property

How to Own Your

LAND BUYER'S GUIDE





Joining the “land owner” club is one of the greatest achievements in life

INTRODUCTION

Buying and owning land is a lot of fun. Some of life’s most memorable moments are made in the privacy of your property! You get to choose which parcel to own and what to do with the land once you own it. People primarily choose land for residential, recreational, or agricultural purposes, or others also look at land as an investment, as a way to diversify their financial portfolio.

As we all know, land is a tangible asset and always has an intrinsic wholesome value. Trees, crops, wildlife all grow on land, and houses need a plot of land to call home. No less than wars have been fought, lives have been sacrificed, and revolutions have been waged for control of almighty land!

Now, choosing the “right” piece of land can be a tricky enterprise. We’ve all heard of things like zoning, regulations and the like. But how do we know about these sometimes baffling topics? We really don’t! Unless we take the time to learn about them, or hire experts with experiences in buying and owning land. This guide is designed to help you gather that general understanding so you can ask the right questions and begin the process with some confidence.

“I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever own.”

Andy Warhol

Home | Search Land for Sale | Properties | Land (Like) | Advertise Land | Advertise Your Business | Register | Help | Sign In

LandAndFarm  **BMW CHOOSES CASTROL EDGE OUR STRONGEST OIL**  **Castrol EDGE DRIVENBYSTRONGER** [SEE WHY >](#)

United States | **Massachusetts** | All Property Types

Top Massachusetts Land For Sale

NEW! 25 Acres- 1 hr to Boston- Only \$94,900 Listed By: Pranam Lipinski
 MA - \$94,900 25 Acres www.mountainstreamland.com

Search All Massachusetts Land for Sale

Price: No Min | No Max | Acres: No Min | No Max | State, County or City

Massachusetts Spotlight Broker

 **Pranam Lipinski**
 Mountain Stream
[View My Website](#)
 Pranam Lipinski Owner,
 Mountain Stream Land.
 The #1 trusted source for
 country acreage in MA.

21 acres- Equine business opportunity 2 state view
 \$1,600,000 21 Acres - Williamstown, MA

NEW! 25 Acres- 1 hr to Boston- Only \$94,900
 \$94,900 25 Acres - Worcester County, MA

Landandfarm.com is an excellent source for land listings

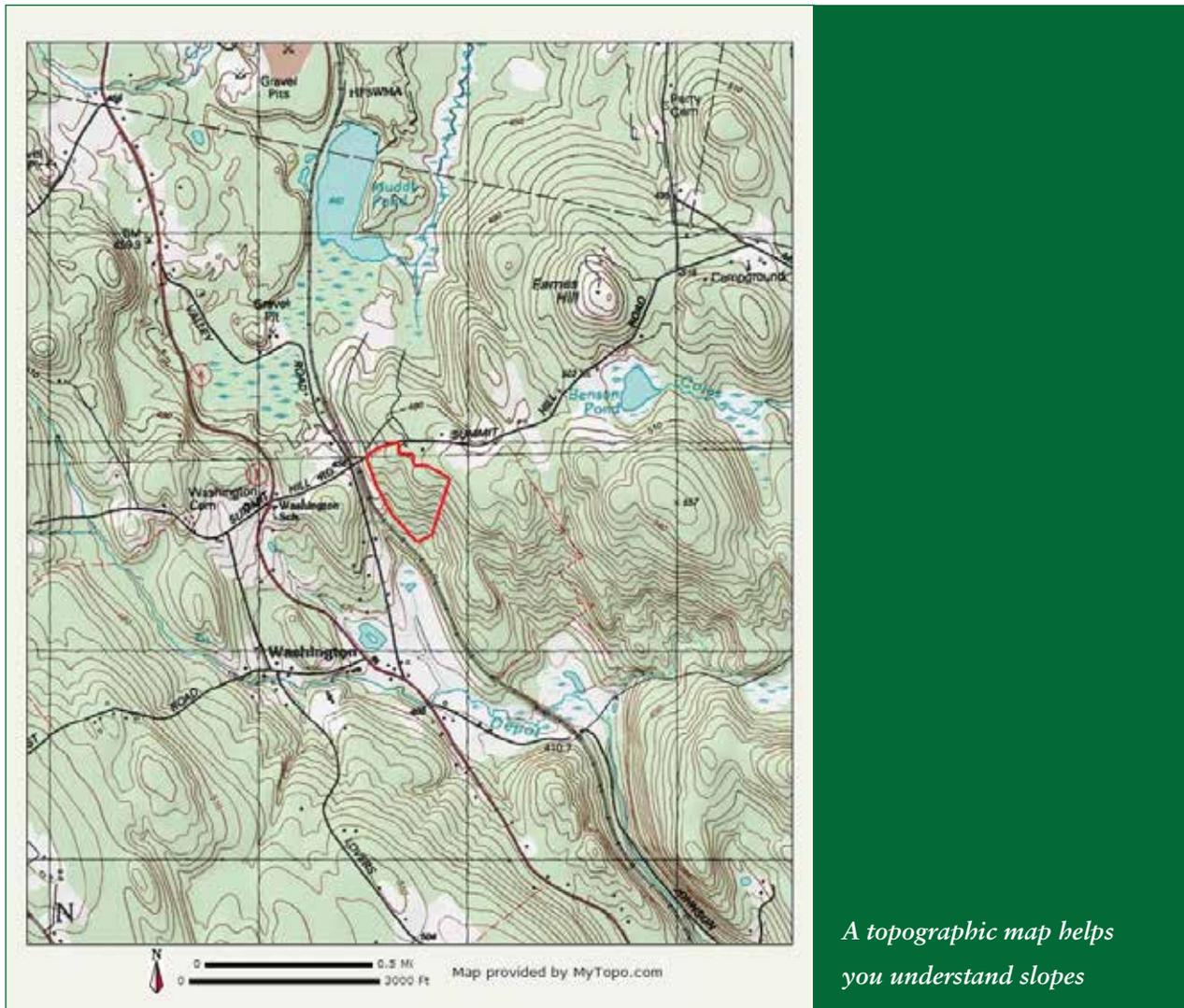
BUYING LAND

Like all things tied to the concept of “buying”, before you begin you should have a budget in mind and a purpose for owning the land. For instance do you want to own a large recreational property of 100+ acres for camping, hunting or fishing, or for privacy to share your own piece of nature with your loved ones? Or do you want a residential plot to build your new home? What prices are being charged for the type of land you want and in the location you want? Are you a \$20,000 buyer or a \$200,000 one? Do you have the cash or will you need financing are also important questions to address. Surfing the web can yield a great amount of information quickly and you can compare different properties for sale on various websites like Zillow, Trulia, or Craigslist, or go to major websites like Landwatch.com, Landandfarm.com, and Realtor.com. Classifieds in newspapers and fliers from real estate brokers and their Multiple Listing Service (MLS) are still other options. There

are also different companies that just specialize in land, and for the most part, have already done a ton of the necessary due diligence that any land buyer would need to do. Mountain Stream is one of those companies.

“Land is the only thing in this world that amounts to anything. It’s the only thing in the world that lasts.”

Gone with the Wind





Any natural water body is a wonderful feature to have

The “Due Diligence” Part of Buying Land

Once you’ve figured out your budget, more or less, and your location for the most part, and the main reasons for owning land, you are now ready to do some important homework. Again, like anything done right, a little bit of studying up, of preparation, can go a long way to making a smart buying decision. The companies and experts that specialize in real estate and land can certainly help, but if you are ready and eager to examine and evaluate on your own, you will need to know about the following topics.

The Natural Features of the Land You Want

These include the soils, slope topography, wetlands, streams, openness, fields, woods, pasture, ponds, springs, trails, timber, southern exposure, quietness, access, road frontage, views, neighbors, cleanliness, prime hunting areas, and the list could go on and on. For each person, some of these features and their benefits are more important than others.

“The best part of the land is the landscape.”

Henry David Thoreau

A great place to start your examination is to view the property you have in mind on the Web Soil Survey. This is published by the Federal Government on the NRCS (Natural Resources and Conservation Service) website. It is loaded with good information, some of it technical, which can help you look at your property from a bird’s eye perspective, as well as from the ground viewpoint. You will need to learn how to use the Web Soil Survey, but once you’ve learned it, you’ll soon be able to examine some of the most important aspects of your property, like slope, soils, type, openness, wetlands, springs, streams, etc.

The Web Soil Survey and the GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping sites sponsored by various state and local and county governments, are undoubtedly the two best websites to explore your property for free! Many states now, like Massachusetts’ “Oliver”, have an abundance of important information already compiled for every single parcel of individual property in the entire state. It’s almost incredible to fathom, but just about all the information you could ever need is waiting for you! Again, you’ll need to learn how to navigate the various sites, but it will be well worth it. On these sites, all sorts of data are included, from tax assessments, ownership, and addresses, recording of deeds, tax maps, topography maps, regulated areas, nearby recreational

facilities, proximity to neighboring buildings, etc. For more help with any of these technical sites you can join an informative Land Coaching program on the Mountain Stream website. This will save you dozens of hours trying to learn it all yourself.

*“It is a comfortable feeling to know that you stand on your own ground.
Land is about the only thing that can’t fly away.”*

Anthony Trollope, renowned author

HIRING THE RIGHT EXPERTS TO ASSIST YOU

Once you’ve got a handle on the “geography” of your property, and you like what you see so far, now you can begin to hire the experts. Some of this work can be done by yourself, but oftentimes, a specialist is necessary. The two most important are your attorney and surveyor.

Some of their work overlaps, like examination of title and deeds, and knowledge of zoning and subdivision regulations, but each also has a primary responsibility to the land buyer: the surveyor needs to establish the boundaries of the parcel – free and clear -- and the lawyer/title company examines the history of the recorded documents to check if a property is free, clear and marketable from a title perspective. When both of these professionals complete their work properly, then you can be assured that your purchase is sound. The surveyors are also extremely well versed in many other important fields, such as soils, wetlands, land use regulations, meeting with local officials, etc. In fact, working with a good, friendly surveyor will eventually help deal with a host of tasks later on when/if development of your land occurs.



Always verify that the property is surveyed

If you are buying your property with the intention to develop it, whether for a getaway retreat, or primary home, you will need to ensure that the land you have in mind is in fact buildable. Most land in urban areas has access to town water and sewer and utilities such as telephone (land lines), electricity (or off the grid solar), cable and natural gas. But, and this is very important, if your land has none of the above then you'll likely need to drill an on-site well (\$5,000–\$45,000), install a septic system and know what type given the soils and state regulations (\$5,000–\$30,000). Additionally, good questions to ask are how far away is the electric availability and what would the cost be to connect? Is cell service reliable and strong in the area? All these concerns are potentially very costly to deal with so you will need to ensure that they won't bust your overall budget. Local contractors can help give you some quotes about these expenses.

One of the most important considerations that you will hear about is the all-important "perc test". This test is actually an evaluation of the soils on site to determine if a septic system can be installed, and how simple or complicated it will be. A basic soils percolation test measures the rate at which



fluids (wastewater) percolate through the soils. Generally speaking, the slower the rate (30 minutes/ inch or more) the more expensive the on-site wastewater treatment system (i.e., septic system) will be. Another important factor to figure out is the depth to the groundwater and limiting factors like ledge or boulders or impervious soils (clay, etc.). The closer all of these are to the surface, the greater the amount of expensive “fill” will be required when constructing the septic system. The specialist who will help you most regarding soils evaluation and approval and design of a septic system is a P.E. (Professional Engineer) and/or a sanitarian. These professionals are licensed and certified to evaluate soils for suitability of on-site wastewater treatment.

Regulations

You can enjoy your property in many ways but it’s important to first check if your intended use matches up with local regulations. If you are just purchasing it to camp out, or hunt, or build, or timber, or put an RV on it, it is still helpful to confirm with the town that you can do so. So knowledge about some of the most important regulations is critical to help decide if the property you want is suitable for your intended purposes.

Zoning – Basically this all-consuming regulation stipulates if you can use your land for a specific purpose, such as for residential, or commercial, or agricultural. Just about each town has their own set of Zoning By-Laws and Subdivision Regulations that impact every property in that particular

town. Stop by at the town hall, or check the Town's website to review the By-Laws, and the Town Zoning Map to see which zone your property is located.

Subdivision Regulations – These are critical to understand if you have any intention of subdividing your land for future sale or to give to your children. Again, these regulations are available at the Town Hall, and specifically in the Planning and Building Department. These laws can be very complicated and sophisticated. Mountain Stream can help you with your zoning questions through their Land Coaching.

Wetlands Regulations – Another set of comprehensive regulations involve wetlands protection. Most of these regulations are administered by State and Federal regulators like Departments of Environmental Protection and The Army Corps of Engineers. If you were to ask most people "what is a wetland?" they would consider swamps and the like. But, as far as regulations go, wetlands are any land, as tiny and impermanent as a vernal pool, which may hold water at or near the surface for even a short period of time. Not only is the wetland protected but expansive buffers are also protected, normally 100 feet surrounding a wetland. In some states like Massachusetts, buffers can be increased to 400 feet around water supply areas, and to 200 feet around streams of water that are perennial.

Of course there are a host of other regulations, but the most pervasive are the above three mentioned. As a general rule of thumb, consult with land experts about all of these before buying that special property you're dreaming about. That investigation can often times make the difference between happy land ownership or "more problems than you care to contend with."

"Our settlement of land is, without regard, the best use of land."

Arthur Erickson, acclaimed Canadian architect and urban planner

Making the Deal

So we've covered many important topics about buying land, like the preferred natural features, laws and regulations, hiring the right experts, etc., so now we need to discuss **NEGOTIATING THE DEAL:** in short, how much should you pay to ensure that the value is right?

If you have experiences buying and selling, this can be a very fun part. Every parcel of land is unique so comparing parcels is difficult. Buying land is not readily similar to buying a red Volkswagen, or a maple furniture set, etc. Five thousand red Volkswagens can be X amount of dollars, while a particular piece of land is truly unique and cannot be exactly replicated.

To understand value and what a fair price of a property is it's helpful to check out some factual data. A good place to start is to learn what the current assessed value is. Every town or county has this assessed value that is used to determine the amount of annual property taxes. The tax assessor is the contact person for this information. Another useful tool nowadays are websites like Realtor.com and Zillow. They are great to compile lists of land that have been sold or is currently listed, with details about the properties, including prices. For further help in valuing your land, Mountain Stream Land Coaching will bring all the data together to ensure you don't overpay by thousands.



*Make sure to get a good
value, all things considered*



Experience the four seasons of land ownership in New England and upstate New York

After compiling your list of values of similar properties in your general area you now are ready to negotiate your purchase. If you are a cash buyer and won't need financing, your negotiation will be a lot simpler. But if you need financing you will have to figure out where you can obtain it, because most banks don't offer land financing, or they at least need 40% down as a minimum. If the current land owner is willing to finance your purchase your chances of buying that property are certainly enhanced. You must be aware, that in general, land financing terms are not as generous as traditional home financing. Expect to pay higher interest rates and with lower loan time periods. Generally speaking, if you are buying a larger parcel of 10 acres or more, a good possibility for financing you may want to check out is Farm Credit. Their website and loan officers can give you the specific terms as they apply at a particular date.

“I like owning dirt. To me, owning land means you could sell it at some point and have money.”

George Clooney



Having your own slice of heaven enriches the lives of you and everyone you share it with

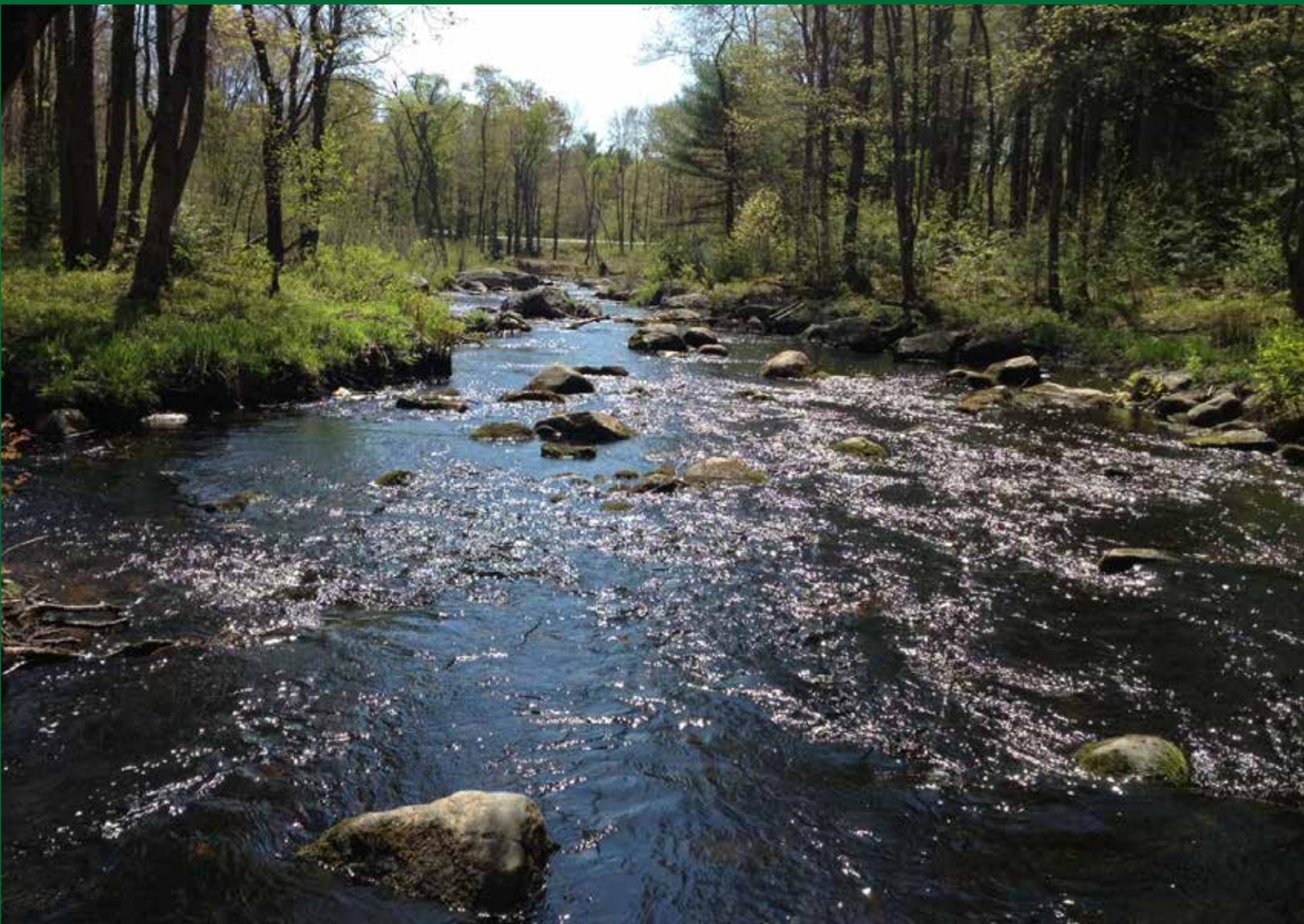
Without sounding too simplistic, the ultimate price you pay to buy the land you want will always be a function of your budget, your research and if the property generally meets your goals. Buying a good value is a key component but it is not the only thing that matters. For instance, if the property you like has all the features and benefits you want, like buildability and privacy, then the price won't be the ultimate deciding factor in your purchase, all things being equal; of most importance in your buying decision is your happiness that will come from owning land, owning your piece of the planet. However, if you search smart enough and long enough, or just use the right specialist, you will be both happy and enjoy a sound value.

THE NEXT STEPS

Now it is time to ask yourself how best to proceed to start and finish the land buying process: with the basic knowledge you just acquired about buying land, do you feel comfortable to "go it alone"

and start working directly with landowners? Or do you prefer to work with other professionals such as realtors, or land specialists? A word of friendly caution about working with a lot of realtors is that the vast majority of them are best at selling residential properties like homes for their clients. Most are not as well versed about the specifics of land, though there are certainly exceptions. The other alternative is to work with a reputable and experienced land specialist like Mountain Stream (either through the parcels they sell or their Land Coaching) who completes all the necessary due diligence. They also offer numerous guarantees to their buyers, like yourself, so that your purchase and ownership are hassle free and protected. Additionally, they can offer owner financing or steer you in the right direction to apply and obtain a loan for your purchase.

Working with Mountain Stream Land will ensure your successful and enjoyable land purchase



Thank you for reading this guide.

*We hope you'll take advantage of our incredibly valuable
Land Ownership Coaching.*

Please e-mail:

jakemtstream@yahoo.com

with any questions.