

HOME BUYERS GUIDE



ACREAGE LIVING

What to Know Before Building Your Country Home



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Quiet country roads, solitude and privacy, sprawling green landscapes and no shortage of space - it's no wonder many of us dream about packing up and moving to the country. Leaving city life behind for the pastoral nature of acreage living has its fair share of benefits. But, building a home where the buffalo roam is quite a departure from building within city limits. If you've decided it's time to 'get out of dodge', this guide has some helpful tips you'll want to consider.

ROADS

In the city, homeowners generally have to hire someone to pave a driveway for them. On an acreage, you will likely need to hire someone to build an entire road for you. Some of the things to consider regarding roads are:

- Is there an existing approach or turnoff onto the property? Or, is it your responsibility to build it and add in a culvert?
- When choosing your house location, consider how long the road will be. A longer road will be more costly to build and require more maintenance (think snow removal and grading).
- If you are buying within an acreage development, you may want to ask the developer if the main roads in the development will be paved or coated in the future and when that will occur.

STRUCTURAL DESIGN

Soil conditions and water tables vary based on where your new home will be located. We recommend asking the developer for a geo-technical report on the area. This will provide insight into soil conditions and water tables. If there isn't one available, there are a couple of options:

- Pay for one yourself.
- Talk to existing residents in the area—or ask your builder—to obtain more information on the soil conditions.

We always recommend having an engineer design the foundation for acreage homes. They use the information they gather on the ground conditions and design the foundation accordingly. You don't want to cut corners on the foundation. Lexis coordinates the engineering along with the development of the construction drawings.

SUBDIVISION FEES

If you are purchasing property within an acreage development, ask the developer or the local rural municipality (RM) if there are any subdivision fees that still need to be paid on the lot. In some RMs, this may amount to \$5000 or more in costs to the homeowner.

WATER SERVICES

1. **City Water:** Some acreage developments have invested in bringing city water lines to the development. This is a convenient resource as you will have a consistent supply of clean, safe water. The majority of acreages around Saskatoon use a “low-pressure drip system” for city water. This means the water entering the home isn’t pressurized as it is in the city. It is a low-flow system.

Here's how it works...

A water tank is placed in the basement for water storage. City water is directed to the storage tank and a pump is used to distribute pressurized water within the home. Most homeowners tend to purchase one or two tanks providing 600-1000 gallons of storage. If you go too small, you could potentially run out of water before the drip system catches up. If you go too large, your water may become somewhat stagnant or stale from sitting too long between uses. However, once your tanks are installed, you can always adjust the fill levels to get the best amount for your needs.

Alternatively, some acreage developments do have high-pressure city water. In this case, the developer has invested in infrastructure onsite and you won’t require a holding tank and pump. It operates similarly to the water system in the city.

One additional item to check with city water: Has the connection/curb stop already been put in place for the lot? This is almost always the case in an acreage development, but if you are purchasing a piece of land on your own (outside of a formal development), there will be additional fees to connect to nearby water lines.

2. **Well Water:** If the property isn’t connected to a city water system, digging a well is an option worth considering. The required depth and cost will vary depending on the location of the acreage and the location of the water table. Some acreage residents opt to install a well as an additional water supply—a good idea for watering gardens and washing vehicles.
3. **Water delivery:** This option is similar to a low-pressure drip system in that you will require a holding tank (often called a cistern) and pump to store and distribute the water. The difference is that instead of the water automatically filling the tank, you will need to monitor the water levels and schedule a water delivery truck to fill the tanks when required. In this situation, you may want to invest in larger tanks to minimize the number of deliveries needed.

WASTE WATER AND SEPTIC SERVICES

You will likely need to install your own system for handling wastewater. The systems have three main components: a tank, distribution system and a leaching/filtering bed. You'll need to obtain a permit from the Saskatoon Health Region to set up a private wastewater system on an acreage. Approval of the system you choose will depend on the size of your lot and the soil properties of the land.

Things to Know:

- There are more wastewater system options available for acreages comprised of 10 acres or more.
- For acreages that are less than 10 acres, the majority of the homes will use a mound system for the leaching bed.



ELECTRICAL SERVICES

Electrical services are fairly straightforward in new acreage developments. The land developer runs a metered electrical service to each lot to prepare the area for new homes. It is the homeowner's responsibility to connect the electrical service from the meter to the home. An electrician must be hired to perform this work as your new home is being built.

If you are building on a new acreage that is not part of a formal acreage development, you will need to bring power in from the nearest power source. This will require working with SaskPower to determine your options and the associated costs.

NATURAL GAS SERVICES

If the acreage is located within a development, this service is often already provided onsite by the land developer. Once again, the homeowner is responsible for the cost to bring the service to the home. This is often coordinated by the home builder.

If you do not have natural gas service on site, there are a couple of options:

1. You can review your options for bringing natural gas to your building site from the nearest source. This is coordinated through SaskEnergy.
2. Consider alternative sources of energy for the home, such as geothermal or propane systems.

Alternative Energy Sources

1. Geothermal

- Geothermal systems harness underground thermal energy to provide heating and cooling in the home. It's a clean, sustainable and environmentally friendly option.
- Geothermal energy works by installing pipes underground and allowing heat transfer to occur between the ground and the ethanol in the pipes. This results in a "free energy" that can be used within the home.
- The systems can be set up to use forced-air for distributing the heating and cooling in the home, or it can be distributed via a radiant in-floor system.

2. Propane

- Another alternative to natural gas is to use a propane furnace, coupled with a propane storage tank on the home's exterior. A propane system works similarly to a natural gas furnace, except the homeowner needs to monitor propane levels and have the tank refilled when needed.

3. Solar

- Although solar energy alone **may** not be sufficient to provide all your home energy needs, it's a green option for providing supplementary power to your home. This is a clean and sustainable source of energy.
- One benefit of acreage living is that there are more options and space for the mounting of solar panels to make the most of the sun's rays. For example, since space is more abundant, the panels can often be mounted on the ground instead of the roof. This is an advantage, as it means you can design your home however you choose, without pausing to consider how to incorporate solar panels on the roof.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTROLS

Acreage developments often have architectural controls and design standards in place, which regulate what you can build on your property. Similar to architectural regulations in Saskatoon's new neighbourhoods, the land developer does this to provide some consistency throughout the community, and protect property values.

Ask the developer for a copy of their architectural design standards so you can review it with your builder before buying.

Some of the controls you may find, include:

- Minimum and/or maximum house size
- Minimum and/or maximum garage size
- Requirements for exterior building materials
- Allowable sizes for secondary buildings
- Number of allowable secondary buildings
- Approved uses for storage in the yard
- Location of septic and water tanks
- Landscaping regulations (some developments regulate this to control erosion and manage drainage)

Questions to ask the developer:

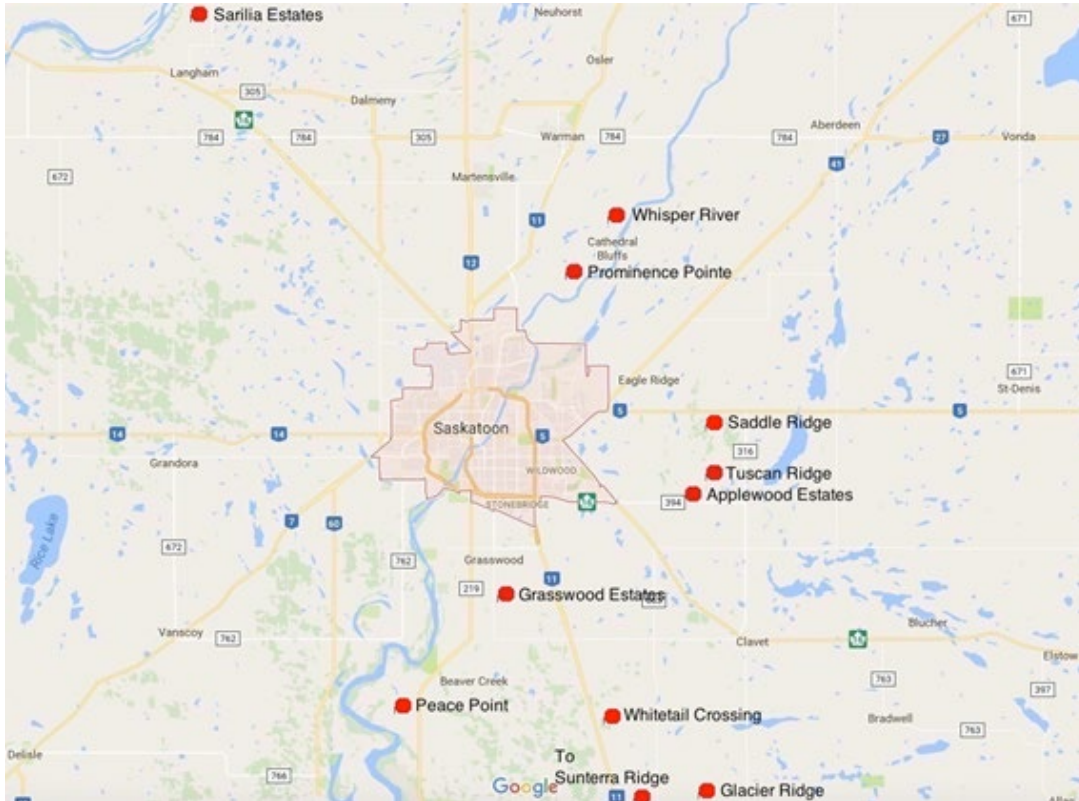
Some elements will vary among acreage developments. Before you make an offer on a property, here are additional questions you may want to ask:

- How is garbage and recycling managed?
- Are there community association fees? (Typically, the answer is no, but it's worth asking).
- Once I purchase the land, is there a requirement to finish building the home within a specific period of time?
- Who maintains the public roads within the development?
- What are my options for internet service?



ACREAGE DEVELOPMENTS AROUND SASKATOON

There are a number of diverse acreage developments within a 30 minute drive from Saskatoon. Below, we've compiled a list of the developments we are familiar with, to give you a better understanding of their locations and services. Each of the developments listed offer natural gas and power onsite.



Applewood Estates

www.applewoodestates.ca

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system

Grasswood Estates

<http://www.grasswoodestates.ca>

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system

Prominence Pointe

<https://northridgeland.ca/community/r-m-of-corman-park/>

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system

Sarilia Country Estates

<http://www.sarilia.com>

Water system: Well or water delivery service

Whisper River

<https://www.northprairiehomes.com/>

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system

Glacier Ridge Estates

www.glacier-ridge.com

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system

Peace Point

(no website available)

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system

Saddle Ridge Estates

<http://www.saddleridgesask.ca>

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system

Tuscan Ridge

<http://www.tuscanridge.ca>

Water system: City of Saskatoon, high pressure (no storage tank required)

Whitetail Crossing

No website available (ask Lexis for details)

Water system: City of Saskatoon water, low-pressure drip system



MORE INFORMATION

Ready for those country roads to take you home? This guide is a good start, but remember that Lexis is always here to help. We've built a variety of beautiful rural and acreage homes and we're happy to guide you through the building process, step by step. Greener pastures await!

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