



How To Develop Raw Land in Central New York

More people are turning to purchasing raw, undeveloped land in order to build their dreams or secure a valuable investment. But, what do you need to know before developing your raw land?

Find out in this post as we dive into the details of developing raw land into a beautiful oasis for your family (or for profit)!



 (315) 430-0048
 hello@cdpexcavating.com
 <https://cdpexcavating.com>

Introduction

The great writer **Mark Twain** once said, "Buy land, they're not making it anymore." We're pretty sure he wasn't specifically referring to Central New York, but the quote certainly applies to us here. Overall land (and home) values across New York state have been consistently rising for decades, whether its residential or recreational property.

After the global shake-up that occurred a few years ago, more people are looking for larger pieces of land. According to **Sutton Real Estate**, land sales in New York are on the rise as both homeowners and investors look to leverage its stability as an investment. Beyond investment potential, there's also an emotional pull as families seek to enjoy a peaceful pace of life in semi-rural or rural areas.

Of course, this growth in land demand means it has become more difficult and expensive to find. Finding the right parcel of affordable property is causing buyers to consider land that may demand more extensive development work.

When it comes to actually developing a piece of raw land into a beautiful and functional residential or recreational space, how do you do it? What are the considerations and cautions you should know? And which things do you need to look out for?

That's what you'll learn in this blog post! We'll be diving into everything you need to know about developing raw land in Central New York, based on our **17+ years of experience**. Whether you're considering the purchase of land, or already own some, this guide is sure to help!





What Is “Raw Land”?

Raw land, also known as **undeveloped land**, is any piece of land that hasn't been improved with services or buildings. There's no water or power, and often there's a lack of defined roads to access the property. Essentially, it's land without the human touch. Or, if it once had a human touch, any trace has long been erased by nature.

This makes raw land a blank canvas, ready for you to transform it into your dream. Where you'll place a house or cottage, how your yard is shaped, areas for planting lush gardens, all of that has yet to be determined. That's one of the huge benefits of purchasing undeveloped property, you can make it completely your own.

Well, completely your own within the confines of zoning, building, and environmental regulations of course!

The pristine nature and investment potential of raw land does present some challenges, however.

Chief among them is the fact that it's up to you to figure out how to actually develop your piece of paradise. Clearing brush, installing water or power, draining wet areas, grading ground, building access roads, it all needs to be done.

How do you tackle these challenges and overcome common problems with undeveloped raw land?

Let's talk about that...

6 Steps to Take Before Developing Raw Land

Before you can transform a swath of beautiful land into your ultimate dream project, there's a few things you need to do first. A lot of the problems people run into when trying to develop a chunk of raw land simply come from missing key steps in the process.

Charging ahead into buying and developing land without setting the right **groundwork** (*no apologies for that pun*) is like driving across the country without a map. It's definitely possible, but you'll make plenty of wrong-turns.

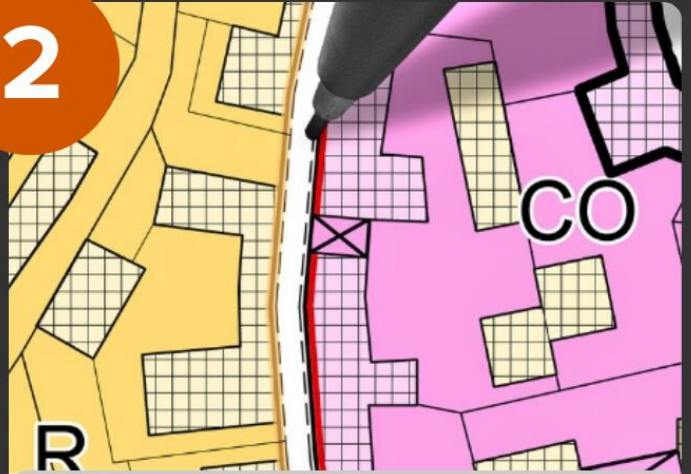
1



Get a Comprehensive Land Survey.

You need to know exactly what land is yours before bringing in the big machines to clear your vision. A land survey defines the dimensions, terrain, features, and limits of your property. Don't **guess** at your property lines or boundaries, that's a sure way to run into future headaches.

2



Get Familiar With Zoning Laws

Even though you may have grand dreams for your land, it's important those align with what's permissible under zoning laws in Central New York. These regulations determine your land use, building types, and other development possibilities. Specific rules vary between regions, so the best way to determine what's allowed on your land is to contact the local zoning office. You can also explore zoning on the **National Zoning Atlas**, but you should always confirm information found online!

3



Acquire Environmental Assessments

Developing land isn't just about what's allowed from a zoning perspective. You need to consider the ecological impact that development will have by conducting an environmental assessment. This will reveal if there's any protected habitats, wetlands, or other environmental issues that could restrict your development. The **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation** is a perfect place to find relevant guidelines.

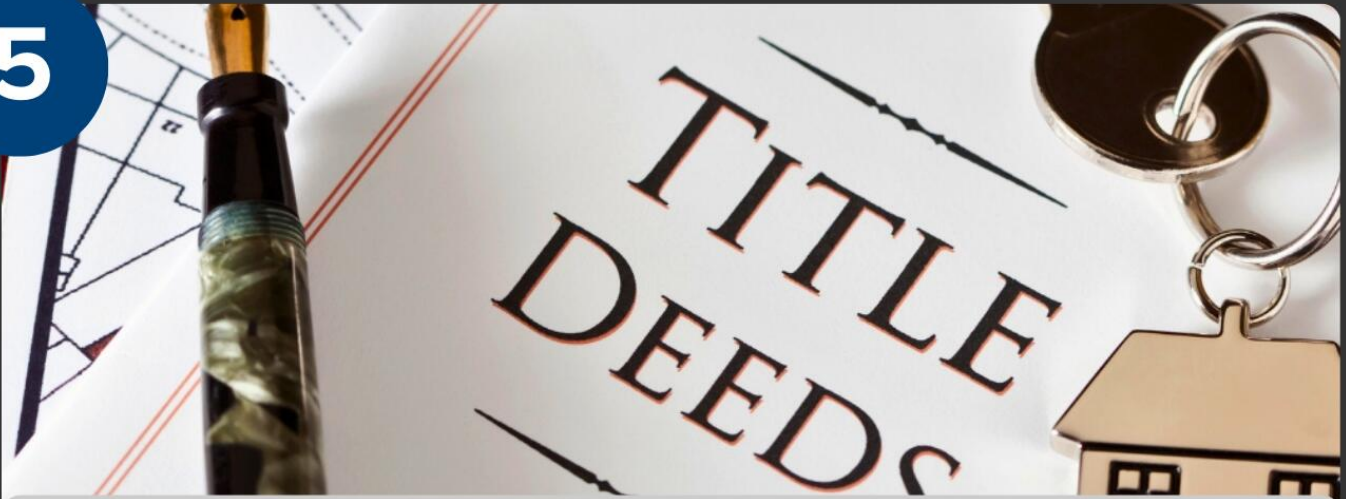
4



Determine Utilities Access

Unless you're planning to go off-grid, you'll need to secure access to utilities like water, power, and sewage. Don't forget about an internet connection, either! Depending on where the land is located you may not have access to municipal services. In that case you'll be looking at installing independent utilities such as wells, septic systems, and even solar power.

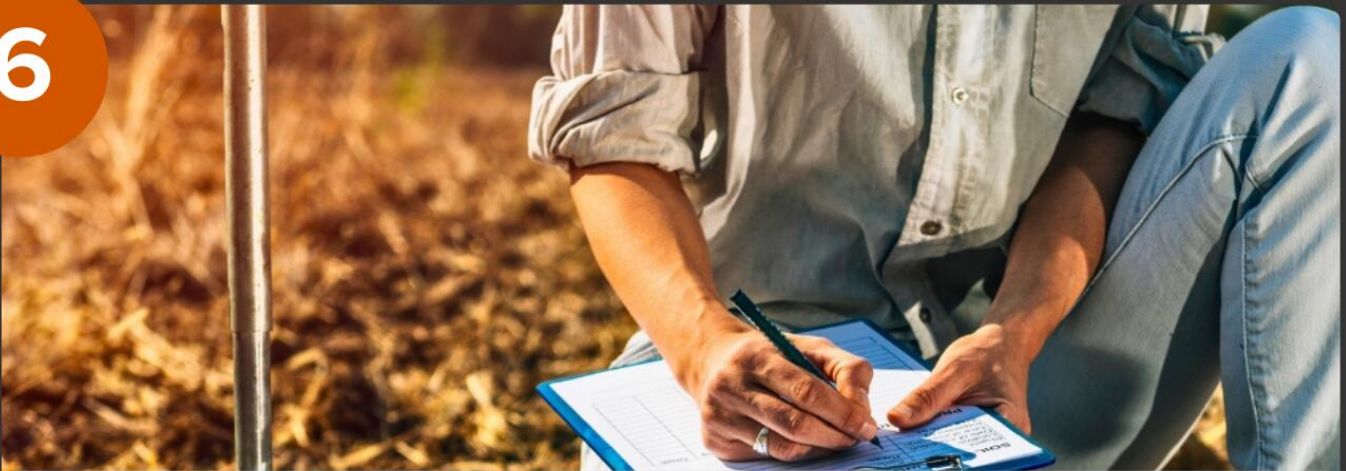
5



Perform a Title Search

A complete and thorough title search prevents you from running troubles with liens or easements in the future. The last thing you'd want is to think you're buying a private plot of quiet escape, only to find a utility company has access to prime areas.

6



Have the Soil Tested

Soil conditions are one of the most important factors that impacts drainage, stability, and how buildings can be constructed. Weak and loose soils that are poorly drained will be more difficult to build on than dense, strong soils for example. Having a quality soil test performed gives you a clearer picture of what's happening underground, allowing you to plan accordingly.

Common Problems With Raw Land (& How to Beat Them)



Developing a piece of raw land is an incredibly rewarding experience, both financially and emotionally. Instead of fitting into someone else's dream for a property, you can create your very own dream across the landscape.

Buuut, you should be aware of some of the common problems that come with developing raw land and how you can overcome them. Because nothing in this world is ever really perfect, and odds are any patch of this beautiful planet will have something to address.

Accurately identifying these issues in advance will save you time, money, and give a clear path to achieving your goals. While we can't cover all the unique challenges that raw land can bring, here's some of the common ones we've seen over the past 17+ years:

POOR DRAINAGE

What's Happening?

If there's areas of the land that are low-lying or have poor soil quality, water drainage can be greatly affected. Standing water, soft ground, and heavy plant growth, can indicate places where the moisture is hanging around longer than it should.

How to Fix?

First, you should have a land and water table assessment performed. This identifies exactly where the problem areas are and helps identify the right solutions. In our experience, saturated areas can typically be fixed by carefully altering the natural landscape to encourage proper drainage. This might involve building ditches, regrading the land, creating retention ponds, or installing manufactured drains.

UNEVEN TERRAIN

What's Happening?

Varied terrain can bring visual interest and beauty to your property, but it can also make it more difficult or expensive to perform construction. Hills, valleys, ledges, or bumpy areas, may need to be dealt with before you can safely and economically build.

How to Fix?

Depending on the type of terrain you're facing, there's a few tactics to overcome it. Small hills or uneven spaces can be graded and levelled, while low areas could receive clean-fill to raise them up. For more significant hills or other terrain features, consider how you can work with them rather than against.

UNMARKED OLD STRUCTURES OR WASTE

What's Happening?

Sometimes, raw land isn't quite as "raw" as it claims to be. It's possible that old structures or even waste exist on the property, hidden by thick vegetation and years of weather. Even if the building itself is gone, you might find crumbling concrete foundations or even buried infrastructure.

How to Fix?

The best way to deal with old structures or waste on your undeveloped land is to have them demolished and removed. Piling-up all the garbage on some out-of-the-way spot might seem like the affordable solution, but it only kicks the can down the road. At some point, you'll need to get that waste off your land and to the dump!

POOR SOIL QUALITY

What's Happening?

Not all dirt is created equal. Soil is a combination of countless complex factors and forces, which sometimes result in ground that's less-than-ideal for building on. If your soil is loose or has a high water content, for example, it could make pouring a concrete foundation costly and difficult.

How to Fix?

First, make sure you get a soil analysis performed to uncover information about its composition, strength, and overall quality. An engineer can then use that soil data to determine what kinds of foundations and building methods would be suitable for the conditions. If you find the soil is loose, wet, or has inferior strength, you may want to consider a foundation solution such as helical piles.

NO UTILITY ACCESS

What's Happening?

Depending on the location of your undeveloped land, you may find there's no way to access municipal utilities such as water or power. While this may be fine for recreational land, the majority of people will need to create their own services on the property.

How to Fix?

Determine which services you'll need to build, as you may not have to do everything from scratch. Power might be available for instance, but not water or sewer. Once you know the utilities you're on your own for, you can plan for them. Drilling wells or installing solar power can be a large investment, but will greatly increase the value of your land.

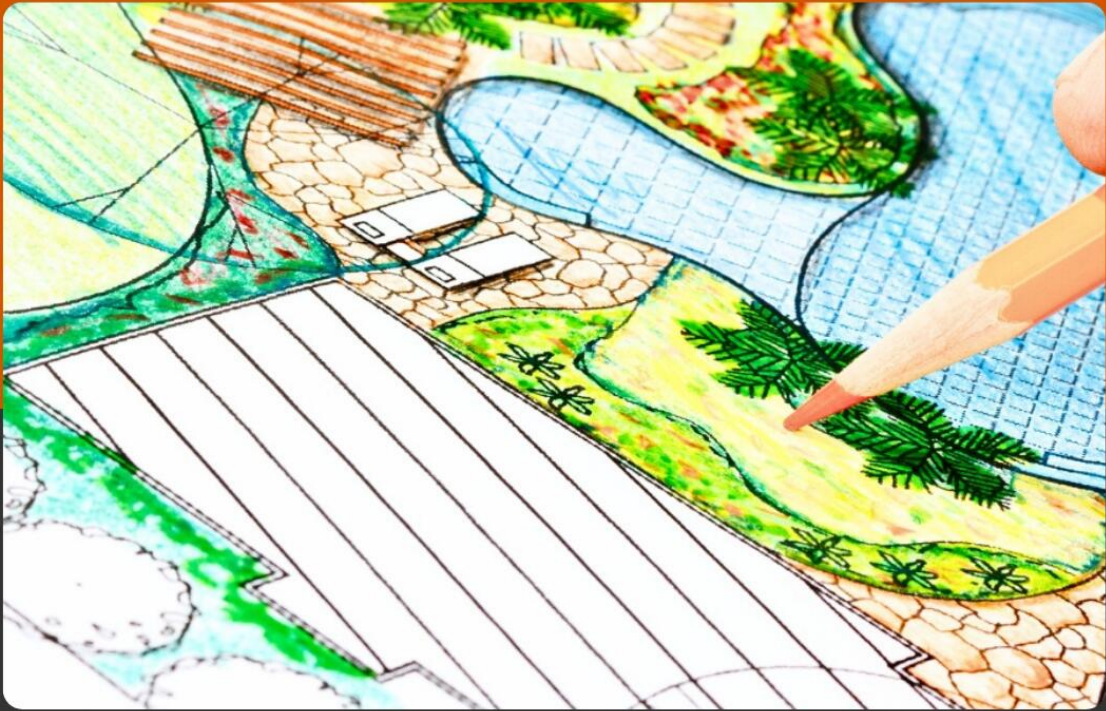
Maximizing the Value of Your Raw, Undeveloped Land



No matter if you're buying land to build your family a cozy home, enjoy a beautiful recreation area, or develop an investment, maximizing value is key. Even if you're planning to stay on the land for years, you never know what opportunities may come down the road. So, you want to do everything possible to boost your land values.

What's great is that as you increase the value of your land, you'll also be enhancing your own enjoyment of the space!

There's a wide range of things you can do to improve land value, but we thought it would be helpful to highlight three of the big ones.



Create a Long-Term Plan

Developing land is often a process that happens in many phases across several years. Because of this, it can be easy to lose-sight of your overall goal or dream for the property. Before diving into the development of any piece of land, you should start by outlining what your goals are.

Someone looking to hold onto land and develop it as a long-term investment will approach it differently than another who wants to build a generational family home. Understanding exactly what you'd like to get out of your investment is key to determining what you do to it.

Set aside an hour to write down everything you want from the land. Buildings you want to construct, features to add, infrastructure to plan, and if (or when) you'd want to sell it. This gives you a better idea of exactly what needs to happen, when you should do it, and how you'll succeed.



Clear the Land (Responsibly)

When a property is packed with dense and overgrown vegetation it can be hard for buyers to picture how they'd use the land. **Clearing brush, weeds, and other unwanted growth** can quickly revive the beauty of your property and make it more attractive.

Of course, you don't want to simply run rough-shod over nature and end up hurting your natural environment. Your property doesn't have to look like a golf course, rather you're looking to remove nuisance greenery impeding responsible development of the site.

Besides weeds, brush, and problematic plants, there may also be old structures or junk laying around as well. Even "raw" land often contains items that need to be removed, and it's an easy way to immediately improve the aesthetics. Sometimes, it's about eliminating things to improve value instead of adding them.



Develop Great Infrastructure

Access roads, driveways, wells, **septic systems**, and electricity, are all critical modern infrastructure. And while you'd be building these items anyway in order to comfortably live on a property, consider how a future buyer would feel about them.

Should you go with the cheapest possible septic system, or spend a little more to get better performance? Does your well produce quality water, or does it require a strong filtration system? Will you invest in a **proper driveway** or access road to avoid washouts or potholes?

Yes, going the extra mile can also bring extra costs. That said, being willing to invest in great infrastructure will increase your land value and impress prospective buyers.

FAQ's About Raw Land Development in Central New York



What's the overall process for developing raw land?

The first step in developing raw land is to conduct a land survey to define your property limits, terrain, and features.

Next, get familiar with local zoning laws by contacting your regional zoning office or exploring resources like the National Zoning Atlas. Ensure your development plans align with the law!

Environmental assessments and utility access are next, which involves identifying ecological considerations and planning services like water and electricity. It's also a good idea to perform a title search and soil analysis to avoid future problems.

Finally, creating a long-term development plan that considers all these factors is crucial for success.

What are the biggest challenges when developing raw land, and how can they be overcome?

Here's some of the common problems you may face when developing raw land, and how to overcome them:

1

Poor Drainage

Land that's poorly-drained can run into issues with standing water that damages building foundations, encourages nuisance insects, and hurts aesthetics. Solutions for this can include regrading the land, installing drains, or building retention ponds.

2

Uneven Terrain

Varied terrain looks attractive but can be more challenging to build on or develop. Grading, leveling, and clean-fill, can all help improve uneven places on your land. For more dramatic terrain features like hills, valleys, or ledges, you may want to consider building techniques that suit the conditions (such as helical piles).

3

Unmarked Old Structures/Junk

Just because the land is supposed to be undeveloped, doesn't mean humans have never touched it. There may well be existing structures, equipment, or garbage, to deal with. Thankfully it's easy to find a great demolition contractor who can help you remove unwanted materials!

4

No Utility Access

Remote or less-developed land may not have access to municipal services for water, power, and so on. In these cases, you'll need to investigate alternative options such as water wells, septic systems, and even solar power.

5

Poor Soil Quality

You'll likely want to build structures on your land, but poor quality soil could complicate plans. Having a soil test performed gives you a better idea of what conditions you're facing and the foundation solutions that are most suited to it. Helical piles, for example, are well-known to have high performance in wet and weak soils.



Can I get financing for the purchase of raw land in Central New York?

Raw and undeveloped land does not qualify for a traditional mortgage like you would receive for a home. That's because lenders consider raw land a greater risk to their institution, so fewer are willing to provide financing.

Fortunately, there are lenders who will help with purchasing undeveloped land. However the interest rates will be higher, you'll need to put more money down, and payback terms are shorter. That's not to say you shouldn't finance land, but more to give you an idea of the financial landscape.

Connecting with quality lenders who handle land purchases is a great way to understand your financing options!

Conclusion

Embarking on the exciting journey of developing a piece of raw land is equally thrilling and challenging. It's like standing in front a blank canvas that's ready for you to paint your vision. From creating a space to make family memories to securing a wise investment, that patch of land can become your legacy.

All you need to do is develop it in the right way!

As you continue diving into the world of undeveloped properties, here's the best bit of advice we can offer:

Consulting with professionals will save you enormous headaches and heartaches.

Land surveyors, zoning officials, contractors, environmental experts, and more, can all help you realize your plans. Their expertise allows you to sidestep problems and pitfalls while securing the best results possible. Basically, they can turn a daunting process into one that's clear and streamlined.

With thoughtful planning, attention to detail, and a commitment to finding quality solutions, you'll find the entire experience richly rewarding and satisfying.

And in the spirit of Mark Twain's sage advice, remember that while they might not be making more land... **you can make the most of your land.**





Don't wait to turn your land into the dream property you desire! There's no better time than right now to develop your property for future generations.

Get in touch with a seasoned contractor who will give you honest advice and make your project easy. Our friendly team at **CDP Excavating** has provided a complete range of land development services for **more than 17 years** in Central New York.

 (315) 430-0048

 hello@cdpexcavating.com

 <https://cdpexcavating.com>