



**Greenville
County**

A Guide for Buying Land & Building a House in Greenville County, SC

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ARE YOU PLANNING TO BUILD A HOME?

Are you planning to:

- ➔ buy a 'teardown' and build on that parcel,
- ➔ build a home on the perfect plot of land, or
- ➔ buy an empty lot in a housing development?

If so, you'll need to prepare for a process that differs from purchasing an existing house.

If you are starting from scratch, the first thing you need to do is buy land, which can be a simple process or can be fraught with hassles if you fail to do your due diligence. People buy a tract of land because it looks nice or has good views, but they fail to check on the time and cost associated with several factors; such as easements, utilities, stormwater management, and road encroachments/access.

In addition, there is an extra list of concerns with sites that have or are anywhere near water including, floodplains, streams, and buffers. This also applies if your property is adjacent to a property with a floodplain.



Easements

An easement gives a person or entity the legal right to access property that's owned by someone else for a limited and specific purpose.

A title search will help unearth easements that may be on your land. In addition you can research the area, check all the layers on the online Greenville County Geographic Information System (GIS) for your land (gcgis.org), and ask questions to find out about easements before you buy.

Utilities

Undeveloped, vacant land, or an older house may need additional work to enable it to reach utilities. If utilities are not available, or old plumbing needs to be updated, this will add to the cost to develop the land. Costs may include extra tap fees, soil tests for septic systems, or well construction.

Zoning

Zoning for the property location may keep a house from being constructed on the land. It is important to check since zoning and other regulations may have changed on parcels with existing buildings. Building setbacks are required whether it is zoned or not.



Stormwater Management

Review the slope of your land to ensure that runoff from rain or melting snow will not flood your house. Do not site your house in a gully that catches water from surrounding lands. Even subtle land development permanently alters the way in which stormwater flows across a site due to grading, compaction and the installation of impervious cover like a driveway.

Stormwater management is intended to reduce the impacts of development on the receiving water bodies during and after construction is complete. Contact the Land Development Division to determine requirements for stormwater management practices.

Road Encroachment

Driveways should align to existing grades and not greatly alter the physical and visual character of a hillside. Natural drainage courses and existing drainage pipes should be preserved as close as possible to their original location and appearance. Permits are needed to build new driveways and should be obtained from the entity (city, county or SCDOT) that maintains the road the driveway will tie into. Each entity has their own specific guidelines that must be followed.



LOTS WITH WATER OR NEAR WATER

Floodplain

Floodplain Management is an effort to prevent or reduce the risk of homes flooding. If floodplain exists on the parcel of land it must be determined if it is a buildable lot.

A list of items that may be required:

- A Floodplain Development Permit Application
- Wetlands Delineation
- Endangered Species Certification
- Foundation Certification
- Detailed Site Plan
- Permanent Flood Openings
- Elevation Certificate
- No-Rise Certification
- As-Built Certification
- Recorded Non-Conversion Form

Additionally

- An engineer may be required to certify the septic install or determine the location of the Floodway
- The lowest finished floor and all utilities must be four (4) feet above the Base Flood Elevation

Some of these requirements are applicable even when building outside, but adjacent to, the floodplain. No encroachments or development is allowed in the floodway. Existing homes located in the floodplain/floodway must be reviewed prior to any rehab, repair or improvements. Some homes are limited on the amount of work allowed. Prior to purchasing, dividing or combining parcels that are near a body of water, you should contact Greenville County Floodplain Management.

Streams

By SC State law, the individual property owner is responsible for keeping streamflow running if blocked. This extends to stabilizing streambanks against erosion as well. Streambank stabilization may require permits from the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Greenville County Floodplain Manager. Failure to procure these permits can result in large fines.

Buffers

A buffer zone is a wide strip of native grasses, plants, and trees along a river that protects water quality and provides important wildlife habitat. These areas are the last lines of defense against unwanted pollutants like pet waste, fertilizer, and other chemicals that travel with stormwater. These buffers do more than just slow water down and filter out pollution – they help reduce flooding and fight against erosion by holding soil in place. Buffers are required through county ordinance, so make sure to check requirements before clearing near waterways.

Dams Upstream

Even if your land is not in a FEMA floodplain, it could flood if there is a dam failure upstream. A dam breach is a different kind of flood than those that FEMA oversees. Anticipated flooding from dam breaches can be found at <https://gis.dhec.sc.gov/scdams/>.



SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION CONSIDERATIONS

The simplest way to build a new home without hassles is to seek a builder who has created a subdivision development in the area you wish to live and purchase a home built to your specifications.

With a vacant plot of land you must receive proper approval from Greenville County, including land disturbance permits to build.

- Single lots, not in a development, with less than 1 acre of land clearing, only need to obtain a building permit.
- Single lots, not in a development, that clear more than one acre of land must hire an engineer and obtain a building permit, land disturbance permit, and SCDHEC Notice of Intent (NOI) coverage.
- Lots created by summary plat (after January 1, 2003) and lots created for family members must obtain a land disturbance permit, but may use the Green Infrastructure for Single Family Residence program. This method eliminates the need to hire a civil engineer. Building permits are released upon approval of the Residential Low Impact Development (LID) permit.
- Some developments were designed to only allow a specific amount of clearing, grading and/or impervious surface. Buyers who want to build bigger houses, with more hardscaping than allowed, will also need to obtain a land disturbance permit, possibly with the assistance of a licensed engineer or landscape architect.

It's important to check the chosen lot's recorded plat to determine if there are restrictions or special permit requirements prior to committing to buying the lot.

PROPERTY CHECKLIST

- Zoning Checked?** Check with Greenville County Zoning Administration
- Easements Checked?** Title Search Plat Review and County GIS
- Road Encroachment Checked?** Road owner - Municipality, Greenville County Engineering, SCDOT

Utilities Available?

- Electric
- Gas
- Water
- Sewer
- Cable
- Internet



- Upgrades Needed?** Check with Greenville County Code Compliance.
Electrical
Plumbing (water or wastewater)
- Septic Soil Quality Check Needed?** Check with SCDHEC
- Stormwater Management Plan Needed?** Check with Greenville County Land Development Division

Water Considerations

(Lots with water or next to lots with water)

- Floodplain Checked?** Contact Greenville County Floodplain Management for more information
- Stream Considerations?** Check with Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District for more information
- Buffer Requirements Met?** Greenville County Ordinance
- Inundation Area Checked?** Check <https://gis.dhec.sc.gov/scdams>

COUNTY DEPARTMENT/AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Greenville County Departments

Title and Plat Search

<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/rod/searchrecords.aspx>

GIS

<https://www.gcgis.org/apps/greenvillejs/>

Zoning

<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/Zoning/Default.aspx>

Land Development

<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/LandDevelopment/>

Roads and Bridges

<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/PublicWorks/Eng.aspx>

Floodplain Management

<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/FloodplainAdministration/>

Soil and Water Conservation District

<http://greenvillesoilandwater.com/>

Greenville County Ordinances

<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/disclaimer/CountyOrdinances.aspx>

Building Permits & Documents

<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/BuildingSafety/Default.aspx>

To assist you, we've listed contact information for entities referenced in this booklet. Please note that this information is correct at time of publication.

Relevant Agencies

SCDOT Permits <https://www.scdot.org/business/permits.aspx>

US Army Corps of Engineers

<https://www.usace.army.mil/missions/civil-works/Regulatory-Program-and-permits/Obtain-a-Permit/>

SCDHEC Septic

<https://scdhec.gov/environment/your-home/septic-tanks/septic-tanks-permits-regulations>

SCDHEC Notice of Intent

<https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/d-2617.pdf>

SCDHEC Dams and Inundations

<https://scdhec.sc.gov/scdams>



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