

100 U.S. Counties to Research for Land Under \$5,000

A Beginner-Friendly Land Flipping Watchlist

TOP 20 Detailed market profiles	100 COUNTIES Four research-priority tiers	3 ACTION TOOLS Turn research into a starting plan
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Market Research Snapshot: September 2026

Find promising low-cost land markets. Learn what to verify. Narrow the list to three counties before you ever think about buying a parcel.

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to answer one question: Where should I spend my research time first? It does not tell you what property to buy.

Research, not recommendations. Inclusion does not mean land under \$5,000 is currently available, buildable or profitable. Markets and listings change. Verify every conclusion at the town, subdivision and parcel level.

The Simple Income Opportunity Score

100 points: market liquidity/sales activity 25; affordable acquisition potential 25; buyer demand 15; competition 10; access/buildability 10; growth/recreation drivers 10; carrying costs 5.

Use both sides of the market

Compare active listings with completed sales. Distinguish asking price, cash price, down payment and monthly financing. A cheap listing is evidence of supply; a completed comparable sale is evidence of buyer behavior.

The beginner rule

Do not research all 100 counties. Start with three Top-20 markets, learn what normal looks like, score them, then choose one for deeper research.

TIER 1

The Top 20 Research Markets

These are the strongest markets in this edition for further beginner research under the guide's approximately \$5,000 acquisition lens.

#	County	ST	Score	Best-Fit Strategy
1	Mohave	AZ	88	Desert/rural acreage
2	Costilla	CO	87	Multi-acre/off-grid
3	Sharp	AR	84	Cherokee Village lots
4	Apache	AZ	83	Off-grid acreage
5	Izard	AR	82	Horseshoe Bend lots
6	Cochise	AZ	82	Desert acreage
7	Cumberland	TN	81	Recreation/residential
8	Socorro	NM	80	Rural acreage
9	Fulton	AR	80	Cherokee Village lots
10	Van Buren	AR	80	Fairfield Bay lots
11	Putnam	FL	79	Florida residential lots
12	Valencia	NM	79	Metro-orbit rural land
13	Navajo	AZ	79	Arizona acreage
14	Modoc	CA	78	California recreation
15	Baxter	AR	78	Ozarks recreation
16	Luna	NM	77	Desert acreage
17	Clay	NC	77	Appalachian recreation
18	Torrance	NM	76	Rural/off-grid
19	Carroll	AR	76	Holiday Island
20	Benton	TN	75	Lake/river recreation

A high score means **research priority**, not a probability of profit.

#1 Mohave County, AZ

88/100
Opportunity Score

Desert/rural acreage
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Affordable acreage + deep Arizona buyer reach.

Research red flag - Access, water, zoning and flood conditions.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#2 Costilla County, CO

87/100
Opportunity Score

Multi-acre/off-grid
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Repeated very-low-dollar completed acreage sales.

Research red flag - Remote parcels can sit; access matters.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#3 Sharp County, AR

84/100
Opportunity Score

Cherokee Village lots
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Repeated low-dollar Cherokee Village lot sales.

Research red flag - Oversupply and long DOM on some lots.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#4 Apache County, AZ

83/100
Opportunity Score

Off-grid acreage
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Affordable rural acreage with established land-buyer audience.

Research red flag - Legal versus physical access.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#5 Izard County, AR

82/100
Opportunity Score

Horseshoe Bend lots
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Deep low-cost Horseshoe Bend inventory.

Research red flag - Oversupply/competition.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#6 Cochise County, AZ

82/100
Opportunity Score

Desert acreage
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Recent low-dollar sold acreage plus active inventory.

Research red flag - Road, water and utilities.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#7 Cumberland County, TN

81/100
Opportunity Score

Recreation/residential
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Crossville recreation/residential demand.

Research red flag - HOA/POA, assessments and buildability.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#8 Socorro County, NM

80/100
Opportunity Score

Rural acreage
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Low-cost acreage plus completed-sale evidence.

Research red flag - Remote access.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#9 Fulton County, AR

80/100
Opportunity Score

Cherokee Village lots
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Cheap Cherokee Village transactions.

Research red flag - Subdivision oversupply.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#10 Van Buren County, AR

80/100
Opportunity Score

Fairfield Bay lots
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Fairfield Bay recreation identity + cheap transactions.

Research red flag - Distressed sales are not normal retail comps.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#11 Putnam County, FL

79/100
Opportunity Score

Florida residential lots
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Repeated low-dollar Florida lot sales.

Research red flag - Wetlands, flood, septic and financing ads.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#12 Valencia County, NM

79/100
Opportunity Score

Metro-orbit rural land
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Los Lunas/Belen orbit + low-dollar sales.

Research red flag - Heavy inexpensive supply.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#13 Navajo County, AZ

79/100
Opportunity Score

Arizona acreage
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Current cheap inventory + recent low-dollar sales.

Research red flag - Long marketing histories on some parcels.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#14 Modoc County, CA

78/100
Opportunity Score

California recreation
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Unusually cheap Northern California examples.

Research red flag - POA, wildfire, winter access, slower resale.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#15 Baxter County, AR

78/100
Opportunity Score

Ozarks recreation
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Ozarks recreation and inexpensive lots.

Research red flag - Thinner sold validation at cheapest end.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#16 Luna County, NM

77/100
Opportunity Score

Desert acreage
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Substantial inexpensive Deming-area acreage.

Research red flag - Competition makes price discipline critical.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#17 Clay County, NC

77/100
Opportunity Score

Appalachian recreation
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Affordable Appalachian pockets + lifestyle appeal.

Research red flag - Slope, septic and access.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#18 Torrance County, NM

76/100
Opportunity Score

Rural/off-grid
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Repeated affordable current inventory.

Research red flag - Thinner direct cheap-sale validation.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#19 Carroll County, AR

76/100
Opportunity Score

Holiday Island
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Holiday Island recreation/residential story.

Research red flag - Fees, assessments and buildability.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

#20 Benton County, TN

75/100
Opportunity Score

Lake/river recreation
Best-fit strategy

Why investigate - Low-dollar sales + Kentucky Lake/Tennessee River story.

Research red flag - Liquidity and road access vary.

Verify before buying: access; taxes/title; zoning/buildability; utilities/water/septic where relevant; HOA/POA; flood/wetlands/terrain; active competition; and completed comparable sales.

WATCHLIST

Tier 2 - Strong Secondary Markets

#	County	ST	Type	Why Watch	Main Red Flag
21	Hudspeth	TX	Desert acreage	Very inexpensive acreage	Financing-ad confusion
22	Culberson	TX	Desert acreage	Low price/acre	Remote access
23	Campbell	TN	Recreation/rural	Good broader turnover	Few true \$5K parcels
24	Highlands	FL	Residential/recreation	Active Florida buyer market	Thin true sub-\$5K cash inventory
25	Polk	FL	Growth/residential	Deep Tampa-Orlando demand	Usually above budget
26	Macon	NC	Mountain recreation	Strong Appalachian demand	Higher entry price
27	Burke	NC	Foothills	Population + recreation story	Few true sub-\$5K parcels
28	Texas	MO	Rural acreage	Affordable per acre	Total parcel prices higher
29	Jackson	AL	Hunting/recreation	Affordable rural character	Needs stronger cheap sold evidence
30	Trumbull	OH	Rural/residential	Good broader turnover	Parcel totals often > \$5K
31	Coshocton	OH	Hunting	Recreation demand	Little sub-\$5K inventory
32	Elbert	GA	Rural	Good broader metrics	Weak ultra-low inventory
33	Toombs	GA	Rural	Affordable broader market	Few sub-\$5K opportunities
34	Telfair	GA	Timber/hunting	Low price/acre	Slower resale
35	White	TN	Recreation	Strong demand	Prices above target
36	Fentress	TN	Recreation	Outdoor demand	Small lots often > \$5K
37	Cherokee	NC	Mountain	Occasional cheap lots	Slope/access/buildability
38	Morgan	TN	Rural/recreation	Meaningful activity	Slow small-lot resale
39	Graham	AZ	Rural/desert	Arizona alternative	Less inventory/depth
40	Levy	FL	Rural Florida	Recreation/rural story	Sub-\$5K inconsistent

WATCHLIST

Tier 3 - Emerging Markets #41-#60

#	County	ST	Type	Why Watch	Main Red Flag
41	Surry	NC	Foothills	Transaction activity	Prices often > \$5K
42	Transylvania	NC	Mountain	Outdoor demand	High entry prices
43	Hickman	TN	Rural	Regional spillover	Longer marketing
44	Weakley	TN	Rural	Affordable character	Smaller buyer pool
45	Warren	GA	Hunting	Low price/acre history	Small sample
46	Talbot	GA	Timber	Low-cost potential	Thin market
47	Meriwether	GA	Rural	Atlanta influence	Sub-\$5K uncommon
48	Dodge	GA	Timber	Affordable rural economics	Limited cheap inventory
49	Johnson	GA	Hunting	Low price/acre history	Very small sample
50	Jenkins	GA	Agricultural	Affordable niches	Limited depth
51	Tuscarawas	OH	Hunting	Strong transaction depth	Prices > \$5K
52	Harrison	OH	Recreation	Relatively affordable	Few true cheap parcels
53	Carroll	OH	Hunting	Wooded-land demand	Small parcels costly
54	Holmes	OH	Agricultural	Strong local demand	High farmland values
55	Knox	MO	Hunting	Historical sell-through	Small sample
56	Dade	MO	Ozarks	Recreation + affordability	Limited depth
57	Shannon	MO	Ozarks	River/wilderness appeal	Remote buyer pool
58	Oregon	MO	Recreation	Ozarks story	Totals often > \$5K
59	Ripley	MO	Rural	Affordable character	Thin resale
60	Carter	MO	Hunting	Forest proximity	Specialized demand

WATCHLIST

Tier 3 - Emerging Markets #61-#80

#	County	ST	Type	Why Watch	Main Red Flag
61	Catron	NM	Off-grid	Low-density acreage	Extremely remote
62	Otero	NM	Desert	Alamogordo-region story	Better parcels cost more
63	Cibola	NM	Off-grid	Affordable pockets	Access/liquidity
64	McKinley	NM	Rural	Low-cost pockets	Title/access complexity
65	San Miguel	NM	Recreation	Mountain/high-desert appeal	Pricing varies
66	Yavapai	AZ	Recreation	Huge buyer appeal	Much higher prices
67	Graham	AZ	Rural	Affordable alternative	Less depth
68	Greenlee	AZ	Mountain	Niche supply	Very small market
69	Elko	NV	Off-grid	Western acreage appeal	Remote/larger tickets
70	Nye	NV	Desert	Nevada rural demand	Water/access/competition
71	Jackson	TN	Recreation	Plateau/lake demand	Cheap parcels inconsistent
72	Scott	TN	Recreation	Outdoor appeal	Limited buyer depth
73	Pickett	TN	Lake	Dale Hollow story	Tiny market
74	Wayne	TN	Hunting	Affordable rural character	Slower resale
75	Marion	AR	Ozarks	Bull Shoals region	Better lots > \$5K
76	Stone	AR	Ozarks	Mountain View demand	Limited ultra-cheap supply
77	Boone	AR	Residential	Harrison population base	Higher pricing
78	Randolph	AR	Rural	Affordable	Thin cheap sold evidence
79	Fulton	KY	Agricultural	Low-cost rural potential	Small buyer pool
80	McCreary	KY	Appalachian	Forest/outdoor appeal	Terrain/access

WATCHLIST

Tier 4 - Specialty & Opportunistic #81-#100

#	County	ST	Type	Why Watch	Main Red Flag
81	Siskiyou	CA	Mountain	Deep low-cost CA inventory	Remote/subdivision risk
82	Kern	CA	Desert	Mojave low-cost parcels	Oversupply history
83	San Bernardino	CA	Desert/mountain	Multiple buyer niches	Extreme micro-market variation
84	Lake	OR	Off-grid	Christmas Valley cheap lots	Thin resale
85	Taos	NM	Mountain/off-grid	Recognizable lifestyle	Access/utilities
86	Taney	MO	Branson recreation	Cheap subdivision lots	Fees/buildability
87	Camden	MO	Lake	Lake of the Ozarks story	HOA/competition
88	Trigg	KY	Lake	Lake Barkley/Cadiz	Small-lot liquidity
89	Pulaski	KY	Lake	Lake Cumberland pockets	Restrictions/access
90	Meade	KY	Residential	Occasional cheap lots	Thin inventory
91	Grant	KY	Subdivision	Low-price anomalies	Thin supply
92	Crittenden	AR	Infill	True low-dollar lots	Different valuation model
93	Pulaski	AR	Urban infill	Cheap metro-edge lots	Not rural strategy
94	Boone	AR	Lake/Ozarks	Diamond City niche	Small-lot competition
95	Barry	MO	Lake	Table Rock niche	Sparse supply
96	Saint Francois	MO	Subdivision	Terre Du Lac niche	Association/buildability
97	Franklin	MO	Residential	Cheap anomalies	Limited repeatability
98	Tehama	CA	Recreation	Occasional cheap acreage	Thin inventory
99	Tillamook	OR	Coastal	Rare low-price anomalies	Unusual deals
100	Klamath	OR	Off-grid	Cheap parcels surface	Financing confusion/slow resale

TOOL 1

Which County Should I Research First?

Pick a property style, then choose two or three markets. Do not start by researching all 100.

I want...	Start with	Compare	Watch for
Low-cost acreage	Costilla, CO	Mohave / Apache / Cochise / Socorro	Remote access + water
Small residential lots	Sharp, AR	Cumberland / Fulton / Putnam	Oversupply + fees
Lake/recreation	Van Buren, AR	Izard / Baxter / Carroll / Benton	Subdivision obligations
Florida land	Putnam, FL	Highlands / Levy	Wetlands + septic
Mountain land	Clay, NC	Macon / Burke / Cherokee	Slope + access
California land	Modoc, CA	Siskiyou / Kern / San Bernardino	Wildfire + oversupply

Beginner default: Mohave, AZ + Sharp, AR + Putnam, FL. These expose you to acreage, subdivision lots and Florida residential/recreation land.

The 9 Simple Income Rules

1	Cheap land isn't the opportunity. Cheap land with buyers is the opportunity.
2	Verify the advertised price. Cash price, down payment and monthly payment are not the same thing.
3	Don't confuse lots for sale with lots that sell. Heavy inventory can mean opportunity or oversupply.
4	Verify both sides of the market. Study active supply and completed sales.
5	A good market may not fit your budget. Judge the market against your strategy.
6	Know what you're buying besides the dirt. Fees, access, restrictions and utilities can change the deal.
7	One cheap sale isn't a market. Look for a pattern of comparable transactions.
8	Counties contain micro-markets. Town, subdivision and neighborhood matter.
9	The farther down the watchlist, the more the parcel must prove itself. Specialty markets need an obvious buyer reason.

The \$5K Land Research Method

Use this process to decide whether a county earns deeper research. The objective is not to rush into a purchase.

1. Choose three counties

Select three Top-20 markets.

2. Search active land

Record price, acreage, location, subdivision, road, utilities, financing terms and days listed.

3. Remove fake cheap prices

Separate purchase price from down payment or monthly-payment advertising.

4. Study completed sales

Find 5-10 relevant sold transactions when reliable records are available.

5. Measure competition

Count similar active parcels and compare their prices.

6. Identify the buyer

Write one sentence describing the likely buyer.

7. Find the micro-market

Move from county to town, subdivision and neighborhood.

8. Run the red-flag check

Access, zoning, title/taxes, fees, utilities, water/septic, flood/wetlands, terrain and restrictions.

9. Estimate realistic resale

Use conservative, likely and optimistic ranges based on sold evidence.

10. Decide whether it earns more time

Score the market, then choose one county for deeper research.

BEGINNER SCORECARD

Score the Market Before You Chase a Deal

Category	Points
Affordable properties available	/5
Completed sales available	/5
Buyer easy to identify	/5
Competition manageable	/5
Properties understandable	/5
Due diligence manageable	/5
TOTAL	/30

25-30: strong candidate **20-24:** promising **15-19:** proceed cautiously **<15:** research another market

Your 7-Day Research Challenge

Day 1: choose three counties. Day 2: save 10 active listings from County #1. Day 3: find completed sales. Day 4: repeat for County #2. Day 5: repeat for County #3. Day 6: score all three. Day 7: choose one county for deeper research.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

You Found a Market. Now You Need a System.

The free guide helps you decide **where to research**. The next challenge is execution: finding motivated owners, calculating offers, evaluating individual parcels, completing due diligence, finding buyers, closing and repeating the process.

LAND FLIPPING BLUEPRINT

\$197 | Simple Income Tools

FIND -> ANALYZE -> OFFER -> VERIFY -> BUY -> MARKET -> SELL -> REPEAT

Designed as the step-by-step execution system that begins where this county research guide ends.

Inside the Blueprint: county selection | owner sourcing | offer pricing | due diligence | closing | resale | buyer outreach | deal tracking | scaling resources

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