



# ASHEVILLE PROPERTY SELECTION GUIDE

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A Guide to Selecting the Right Piece  
of Property for Your Dream Home



# 11 THINGS

to consider when  
buying land in

*Asheville*

When it comes to building a home, one of the most important decisions you have to make is where to build it. The location you choose will influence everything from the value of the new home, to its design and even its future appreciation and desirability.

When purchasing a piece of property to build your dream home on, you must keep in mind that almost all limitations in building and design are either due to legal restrictions or geographical features. From local zoning regulations to remote site access, every location has its own set of benefits and challenges to weigh in the decision making process. Here are some things you should consider when buying land in Asheville:

- 1 How far is the property from Asheville or other nearby towns?** Make sure you consider the hassle of driving to get milk when you pour your last glass! Having all of the benefits of Asheville just up the street can't be overstated. It's a world-class food town and there are so many amazing things to do around town.
- 2 How far is the likely building site from the nearest road and utility connections?** Long driveways can get costly and could further complicate your building project. This distance can also raise your utility installation costs.
- 3 Are there mountain views from the building site?** What direction are these views? Are they long range or are they of nearby ridges and knobs? These can have a big impact on the drama of your home design. Taking advantage of these should be a high priority.

**4** **How is the solar exposure** (you may need to imagine the property after some clearing for the house)? This affects daylighting in the future residence, passive heating opportunities, and affects the efficiency of solar panels if you are planning on using them.

**5** **Are there rivers, streams or springs on the property?** If so, you should check the floodplain maps to make sure that the floodplain does not cross into your proposed building site. From a design standpoint, is this water feature something you would want to address or celebrate in the home design. At Vellum we have designed houses that bridge over seasonal streams and planned spaces in ways to capture the sounds of nearby water features.

**6** **How is the access to Utilities?** Is there city water and sewer or will you need a well and septic system? Will there be significant expense running lines to the site from the road?

**7** **If you have to install a Septic System,** keep in mind that in order for it not to get costly, the property will need to pass a perc (Percolation) test. If not, you could be looking at an expensive alternative (or designed) septic system. There are also some limitations for locating the system on a steep slope. I would advise asking for a perc test to be performed if one is not already available.

**8** **Are there any easements on the property that may limit what you are able to do with the design?** Some neighborhoods require driveways or utilities to cut across other properties in order to gain access. This is also the case with some utilities. Make sure you see an updated survey of the property or have one made during your Due Diligence period. This survey will also define your building setbacks or envelope and may provide information about the floodplain as well as Steep Slope and Protected Ridgeline Overlays.

**9** **How limiting are the neighborhood restrictions?** Neighborhood Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) have specific rules setup called Declarations of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). These rules and restrictions are meant to create a consistent level of quality and aesthetic and protect property values. However, they may dictate exterior finish materials, roof slopes, and other elements that could limit your design options. Despite the growing demand for high-end modern homes, some neighborhood restrictions can impede on your dreams of a modern mountain residence.



**10** **Are you in a Protected Ridge Overlay or Steep Slope Overlay** (In Asheville or Buncombe County)? These can have significant impacts on the home you are allowed to build. The restrictions have been developed to protect the look and feel of the local mountains as well as the ecological impact of projects. That said, they can really limit your options for building height, project size, and your ability to open up views from your home to the neighboring mountains. These overlays may also require additional tree screening to be planted.

**11** **Are there any natural features on the site that could impact the design or construction?** These could include rock outcroppings, unique trees or plants, or steep drop-offs. Certain native vegetation adds beauty and texture to the landscape of a house. In the Asheville area, Rhododendron are sought after for their beautiful blossoms and their ability to provide year-round foliage in wooded areas that are otherwise brown. Rock outcroppings can provide unique landscape elements to design the house around.

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Once you have selected the perfect piece of property, it is time to hire an architect and design the home of your dreams! Here are five things that your architect will need before getting started:

■ **PROPERTY SURVEY**

*Including topographic information, tree locations, and building setbacks or established building envelope.*

■ **PROJECT BUDGET**

*It's important to provide the architect with a good understanding of the financial expectations for the project.*

■ **A BUILDING PROGRAM**

*A list of required spaces for your project and any size or functional requirements.*

■ **NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES**

*This should be available through your realtor.*

■ **A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND OPEN MIND!**



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Mark Rudolf** is a licensed architect specializing in luxury resorts and custom residential design, currently located in Asheville, North Carolina.

A Virginia Beach native, he studied architecture at Virginia Tech, and is licensed in Virginia, Colorado, and North Carolina. With twenty-three years of professional experience, he is well known for his work in the realm of hospitality design, some of his properties having won globally recognized awards.

Among them, Castello di Casole in Italy was named the Number 2 hotel in the world by Travel and Leisure magazine, and The Sebastian in Vail, Colorado, was named the Number 2 resort in the continental United States.

Influenced most by his extensive travels, Mark has visited over forty countries on five continents, has lived in Spain and spent a significant amount of time working in Italy. This experience has shaped his work significantly, work that is deeply rooted in 'Place Making': honoring what makes a site truly unique and special, he weaves an architectural language that is both provocative and respectful of its place.

**VELLUM ARCHITECTS** is an International award winning Architecture firm based in North Carolina. Known for thoughtful innovation in architecture and design, Vellum Architects will work with you to design the modern mountain home of your dreams!



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