

Finding a Home Building Site in Unincorporated Sangamon County

SPRINGFIELD-SANGAMON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION INFORMATION SERIES

You've made the big decision to build a new house in Sangamon County and now have to decide where to build. Most people have a general idea of the part of the county in which they wish to live. This decision may be based on a desire to be near family and friends, preference for a certain school district, or convenience of travel to work. However, many other factors also need to be considered in choosing a building site.

Land Parcel

Your house should be located on its own piece of land without another house on it. Generally if a parcel of land has its own tax identification number it is a separate piece of land. This includes subdivision lots, tracts created by tract surveys, and existing parcels of land. It is always a good idea to have a survey of the property done if one is not available. Otherwise, it is difficult to know for sure where the property lines are.

Beware of "purchasing" land that is in the process of being divided. Before you pay for the land, you need to verify that the parcel has its own tax identification number, has an approved and recorded final plat of subdivision, or has an approved and recorded tract survey. The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) staff is available to help. The County Recorder of Deeds and the Supervisor of Assessments are also sources of information.

Zoning

The parcel of land must be in the correct zoning district and meet that district's bulk and setback regulations before it can be built on. A single family residence can be located in the following County zoning districts: A (Agricultural), R-1 (Single-Family Residence), R-2 (Single-Family and Two-Family Residence), R-3 (General Residence), RM-4 (Mobile Home), and O (Office and College). A mobile home may be placed in the A (Agricultural) or RM-4 (Mobile Home) districts.

In the A (Agricultural) district, any parcel of land that existed on May 8, 2001, or has been legally created since that time, and meets zoning requirements can be built upon. The parcel must be at least 1 acre in size, be 150 feet across at the building area, and must have frontage on a public road. The required setbacks are: front yard, 30 feet; rear yard, 30 feet; side yards, 10 feet each.

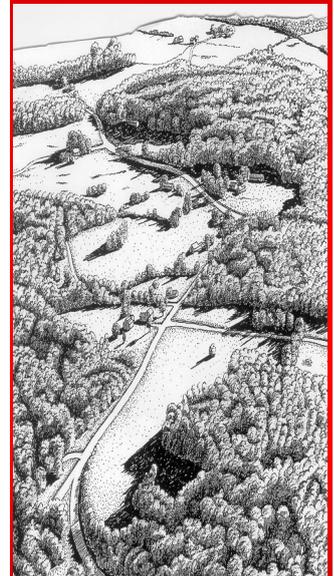
Your house cannot be located in these required setbacks. Contact the Sangamon County Department of Zoning and Building Safety for information concerning allowable locations for other buildings.

In the R-1 (Single Family Residential) district, since May 8, 2001, any new parcel created in Sangamon County less than 40 acres in size must be zoned residential (or the appropriate district). A parcel in the R-1 district can be as small as 10,000 sq. ft. if it is served by both public sewer and public water. If the parcel will have a private sewage system, it must be at least 1 acre in size and above the 100-year floodplain. The parcel must have 80 feet of lot width and have frontage on a public road. The required setbacks are: front yard, 30 feet; rear yard, 20 feet; side yards, 10 feet each. Your house cannot be located in these required setbacks. Again, contact the zoning department for allowable locations of other buildings.

All zoning districts have regulations similar to these that must be met. The County zoning department and SSCRPC staff are available to help interpret the regulations and to determine if any other regulations apply. You may also want to check with the zoning department on the zoning classifications of adjacent parcels and their allowable uses, and with the SSCRPC about any development plans or road improvements in the area.

Advising
Planning
Evaluating
Leading

Page 1



200 South 9th Street, Room 212
Springfield, Illinois 62701

Phone: 217-535-3110

Fax: 217-535-3111

E-mail:

sscrpc@co.sangamon.il.us

Finding a Home Building Site in Unincorporated Sangamon County

SPRINGFIELD-SANGAMON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION INFORMATION SERIES

Floodplain Regulations

Many areas along Sangamon County rivers and creeks flood. While technically you may be able to build a house in the floodplain, the permits, engineering, cost of elevating the structure, and cost of flood insurance usually make it financially infeasible to do so. Also, it is difficult to get a mortgage on a house in the floodplain. Any filling or construction in a floodplain requires a flood development permit from the SSCRPC.

If you are purchasing a recently approved subdivision lot or tract survey parcel, the survey will state whether or not any part of the parcel is within a "special flood hazard area" (100-year floodplain). You can also have the SSCRPC check on any parcel in the County to see if it is in an identified floodplain. However, not every 100-year floodplain in the County has been identified. If you have a waterway through your property, you can have an engineer determine the flood elevation. However, this can be costly. If you have doubts, build on the high ground, avoid walk-out basements, or find another property.

Drainage

There may be important drainage ways on the property you are considering. If you are buying a subdivision lot, any important drainage ways will be within a drainage easement. No structures, septic systems, or filling are allowed in a drainage easement.

If the parcel is not a subdivision lot, look for streambeds (wet or dry), signs of erosion, or grass waterways to help identify drainage ways, or seek professional advice. Obviously, you do not want to mistakenly build in a drainage way, and you cannot block a drainage way. It must continue to be able to drain adjoining properties.

Underground drainage tiles are located on many farm properties. If you cut a drainage tile during construction, it must be repaired and re-routed to continue providing drainage.

Water

Public water supplies are available in many parts of the County. All public water supplies are regulated by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. If there is public water available to the property, contact the water district to find out what is required and the cost to get a water tap.

In areas without public water supplies, people depend upon individual wells. Many areas of Sangamon County are not suitable for wells because of the quantity or quality of the water. Hauling water (at considerable expense and inconvenience to the home owner) is an option if well water dries up. Water conservation practices may become a way of life for homeowners relying on wells. A test well can be drilled before you purchase the property. This will provide some indication of whether water is available and also provide a water sample for testing. Some water may not be suitable for people with immune system problems or for children under 12-years of age because of high nitrate levels. A well permit must be issued by the Sangamon County Department of Public Health (SCDPH) before a well can be installed.

Water Table

Much of Sangamon County has a high water table. If having a basement or a crawl-space is important, don't buy property with a high water table. You will have water in the basement unless specially designed subsurface drainage and sump pumps are built in, and this does not guarantee a dry basement. Conventional septic systems, which are the least expensive, cannot be located on sites with a high water table. The best way to determine the height of the water table is through a soils analysis conducted by an Illinois Registered Soil Classifier. This analysis is required for septic systems, so do it in the beginning and accomplish two tasks at once. Platted lots in newer subdivisions will have had a soils analysis performed, and the subdivider or SCDPH should be able to provide a copy.

Advising
Planning
Evaluating
Leading

Page 2

Finding a Home Building Site in Unincorporated Sangamon County

SPRINGFIELD-SANGAMON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION INFORMATION SERIES

Sewage Disposal

Public sewers are not as widespread as public water and are generally located in, or adjacent to, cities and villages. If a public sewer is available, you should contact the system operator (city, village, or Springfield Metro Sanitary District) to determine requirements and costs for hooking onto the sewer.

Most rural homes have individual private sewage disposal systems. Platted lots in newer subdivisions may specify the type of system required, its location, and the location for a reserve septic field. Almost all systems in Sangamon County are either conventional septic systems with septic filter fields or aeration systems. Soils analysis must be submitted to the SCDPH to help determine the location and type of system. Percolation tests are no longer valid. The SCDPH approves and issues permits for all systems in the County and is a good source of information about comparative costs, maintenance requirements, and the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

If a conventional septic system best suits the property, another factor to consider when determining the location of your future home on a lot is the life expectancy of a private sewage system. Typically a private sewage system lasts 15-25 years. They do not operate indefinitely and must be carefully maintained. An area for a septic field and a reserve field should be identified before determining home placement.

Many areas of Sangamon County are difficult to serve with traditional systems because of the high water table (noted previously), slope or other factors. Remember to figure out the type of system you will need and its cost when you begin your building budget. Do not assume that your cost will be the same as your neighbor's, or you may find yourself unable to afford the kitchen cabinets you want because of the expense of flushing your toilet!

If you decide on an aeration system which has a surface discharge, think about where all of the water you and your family will use everyday and where it will go. It cannot go into the roadside ditch, will promote algae growth if discharged into a pond, and will not promote good feelings with your neighbors if you let it run across their yards!

Utilities

Utilities other than sewer and water are usually provided by a private utility company. These types of utilities include telephone, cable TV, gas and electric. You will need to contact the utility company directly to arrange for service. Financial concerns include hook-up fees, special fees for long service extensions if your house is to be set back far from the road, and utility rates.



Fire Protection

The majority of the County is served by fire protection districts (FPD). Some of them provide fire protection automatically, which is paid through property taxes, and others provide the service by subscription, the property owner must sign up and pay. In areas not in a FPD, one can request to be assigned to a district. This district must provide fire protection to you — for which you pay — for two years. After that the district can drop protection of the property.

If fire protection is important to you, make sure you are located in a fire protection district. Do not assume an area is in a fire protection district because there are other houses or fire hydrants in the area. The SSCRPC staff can tell you the fire protection district status of a property you are considering. The distance of your property from a fire station and the location of fire hydrants (if any) with adequate water pressure are important considerations in the quality of fire protection and the setting of homeowners' insurance rates.

Advising
Planning
Evaluating
Leading

Page 3

Finding a Home Building Site in Unincorporated Sangamon County

SPRINGFIELD-SANGAMON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION INFORMATION SERIES

Road Access

Road access is regulated by the township, county or state, who will determine where your driveway can be safely located and the size of any culvert needed. Some platted subdivision lots may require shared driveway access or designate where the driveway must be located. The culvert must be of the proper size so that water continues to flow in the road-side ditch and not be blocked by the new driveway.

During inclement weather some County and township roads may be impassable due to drifting snow or flooding. If your personal situation does not allow for you to be "snow bound" for a day or two, check with other residents, the township highway commissioner, or the Sangamon County Highway Department for a history of road closures in your area.



Covenants and Easements

Some parcels of land have conditions placed on them through easements or covenants that apply to all future owners of land whether they agree or not. These may include such things as access through your property to an adjoining property, sharing driveways to make a "private road", restrictions on re-dividing, provisions for utility lines, or standards associate with house size. Rural tracts of land are more likely to have easements attached to them, while subdivision lots are more likely to have easements and covenants. Covenants may contain surprises such as required house size and materials, mandatory fees, or prohibitions against certain activities. Make sure that you know about all easements and covenants before you make your purchase. Easements on platted subdivision lots will show up on the final plat of a subdivision. Final plats are available at the office of the County Recorder of Deeds or at the SSCRPC. Other easements and covenants are available at the Recorder of Deeds office.

Dividing Land

Often land purchases are made with the intent to divide the land into two or three pieces to sell in order to offset the purchase price. In some cases this is possible, but in other cases it may not be. Many factors influence the ease with which property can be rezoned or divided. Even if it is possible, the costs involved may not make it worthwhile. Do not count on extra money from dividing your property until you have discussed the division with SSCRPC staff. They can tell you what limitations might apply.

Permits Needed to Build

Construction may require multiple permits. These may include:

- Well Permit: Available through the Sangamon County Department of Public Health.
- Septic System Permit: Sangamon County Department of Public Health.
- Building Permit: Sangamon County Department of Zoning and Building Safety.
- Culvert Permit and Access Restrictions: Township, Sangamon County or State of Illinois, depending on the road.
- Erosion Control Permit: Sangamon County Department of Zoning and Building Safety (for single houses).

INFORMATION SOURCES

Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC).

200 South 9th Street, Room 212, Springfield, IL 62701-1629 (217) 535-3110

General information; subdivision plats; tract surveys; determining status of a parcel; fire protection district; floodplain; zoning; school district; library district.

Sangamon County Department of Zoning and Building Safety

200 South 9th Street, Room 213, Springfield, IL 62701 (217) 753-6760

Zoning; building permits; erosion control permits.

Sangamon County Department of Public Health

2510 North Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, IL 62702 (217) 535-3100

General information on wells and septic systems; well permit; septic system permit.

Sangamon County Supervisor of Assessments

200 South 9th Street, Room 210, Springfield, IL 62701 (217) 753-6805

Parcel status; property taxes.

Sangamon County Engineer

3303 Terminal Avenue, Springfield, IL 62707 (217) 535-3070

Drainage questions; culvert permits.

Sangamon County Recorder of Deeds

200 South 9th Street, Springfield, IL 62701 (217) 535-3150

Subdivision plats; covenants; easements.

Township Highway Commissioner

Contact SSCRPC or the County Engineer for names and phone numbers.

Culvert permits for township roads.

Illinois Department of Transportation, District 6

126 East Ash Street, Springfield, IL 62704-4792 (217) 782-7332

Access requirements for state highways; culvert permits for state highways.

SSCRPC *Information Series* documents are intended to provide a brief guide for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon for a thorough understanding of the subject. They are not intended to provide a legal opinion and do not. Those seeking legal guidance concerning matters coming before the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, the Sangamon County Board, or any of their boards, commissions or committees, are encouraged to obtain appropriate legal counsel.

For more detailed information, please refer to the appropriate sections of Sangamon County code. County ordinances change over time, so please refer to the current code of ordinances. Municipal jurisdictions located in Sangamon County have their own regulations, so these local codes should be consulted.

If you are unsure about jurisdiction, or seek additional information, please contact the Planning Commission at 217-535-3110, or e-mail us at sscrpc@co.sangamon.il.us.

Advising
Planning
Evaluating
Leading

Page 5

Updated
April 2009

Please visit us on the web at WWW.SSCRPC.COM