URBAN PLANNING PROS | ENHANCED ILLUSTRATED EDITION

BEFORE THE LAND DEAL GETS EXPENSIVE

The practical feasibility playbook for uncovering zoning, access, utility, drainage, approval, and exit risk before major capital is committed.

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PLAN PROPER. EXIT STRONG.

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The Land Decision Path

Use the toolkit at the end of the book to screen a live property and direct the next specialist scope.

A Note From Jeremy

Most land mistakes are made before anyone calls them mistakes.

They begin as assumptions. The listing says the property is commercial, so the buyer assumes the intended use will be allowed. A utility line appears near the road, so the team assumes capacity is available. The parcel contains twenty acres, so the concept is built around twenty usable acres. A preliminary conversation sounds positive, so everyone starts spending as though approval is only a formality.

Then the real questions arrive.

The access point does not meet the road standard. Sewer is nearby but cannot serve the site without an extension. The zoning label allows the use only through a public process. A drainage feature cuts through the area that was supposed to create the revenue. The fire marshal needs circulation that changes the layout. A survey, environmental review, or engineering study identifies a constraint after the price, timeline, and investor story have already hardened.

I built Urban Planning Pros around a simple operating belief: the cheapest time to find an expensive land problem is before the project becomes emotionally, financially, and technically committed.

This book is not designed to turn you into a planner, surveyor, engineer, attorney, environmental professional, or contractor. It is designed to help you ask better questions, spend in the right order, and keep every technical answer tied to an owner decision.

The goal is not to prove that every property works. The goal is to understand what the land can support, what the jurisdiction may require, what the next specialist must answer, and which exit path still makes sense.

Plan proper. Exit strong.

Jeremy Wenger

Founder, Urban Planning Pros

> **KEY IDEA**
>
> **The deliverable of good feasibility is not a thicker report. It is a better next decision.**

How to Use This Playbook

This playbook follows the four-part Urban Planning Pros framework:

1. **Evaluate.** Review the property, documents, jurisdiction, constraints, and highest-risk unknowns.
2. **Plan.** Turn the owner goal into options that account for approvals, site realities, capital pressure, and exit strategy.
3. **Coordinate.** Align surveyors, engineers, environmental professionals, contractors, staff, lenders, and investors around the next decision.
4. **Exit.** Protect the ability to buy, hold, sell, entitle, build, phase, refinance, partner, renegotiate, or walk.

Read the book once from beginning to end if you are new to land development. If you are reviewing a live property, start with Chapter 14 and the worksheets. Use the early chapters to investigate every item that receives a yellow or red score.

This is a national framework, not a substitute for local code or licensed work. Every state, county, municipality, utility, road authority, and review agency can apply different standards and terminology. Verify material conclusions with the authority having jurisdiction and the properly qualified professional.

The Five Questions Behind Every Chapter

For every issue, ask:

- What fact do we actually know?
- What assumption are we treating like a fact?
- Who has the authority or expertise to answer the open question?
- What owner decision will change when the answer arrives?
- What should we avoid spending until the answer is known?

The One-Sentence Feasibility Test

Do not stop at: "Can I build this here?"

Ask instead:

KEY IDEA

Under what approval path, on how much usable land, with what access and infrastructure, within what time and capital range, and with which defensible exit options can this project move forward?

That question forces the site, approvals, infrastructure, economics, and business goal into the same conversation.

Quick Start: The Six Gates

Before a property earns deeper spending, it should pass six gates.

Gate 1 - Legal and Policy Fit

Is the intended use allowed by right, conditionally allowed, or dependent on a rezoning, variance, special exception, conditional use, plan amendment, annexation, or another discretionary action?

Gate 2 - Legal and Functional Access

Does the property have documented legal access, adequate frontage, a viable driveway or curb-cut path, sufficient emergency access, and circulation that fits the intended use?

Gate 3 - Utilities and Wastewater

Are water, sewer, power, gas, communications, and fire flow available with enough capacity? If public sewer is unavailable, can the intended density and use work with an approvable onsite wastewater solution?

Gate 4 - Land and Water Constraints

How do flood risk, drainage, wetlands or other aquatic resources, topography, soils, rock, environmental history, easements, and buffers affect the usable footprint?

Gate 5 - Capacity and Approval Path

After setbacks, roads, stormwater, fire access, parking, open space, buffers, utility areas, and constrained land are accounted for, does enough usable area remain? Can the required approvals fit the deal timeline?

Gate 6 - Economics and Exit

Does the realistic yield support the land basis, infrastructure, professional fees, carrying costs, contingencies, and required return? If the preferred plan fails, is there a second use, phase, buyer, partner, or negotiated exit?

DECISION RULE

A property does not pass because most gates are green. One unresolved gate can control the entire deal.

PART I

EVALUATE

Separate evidence from enthusiasm.

Evaluation separates evidence from enthusiasm. The first job is not to defend the idea. It is to identify the fact most likely to change the deal.