



Rural Buyer's Checklist

polktx.com/real-estate/rural-checklist/



PREPARED FOR _____

PROPERTY
ADDRESS _____

SHARED BY _____

BROKERAGE _____

First, check where the property sits

Inside the city limits of Livingston, Corrigan, Onalaska or Goodrich, building permits go to that City Hall, and Livingston and Corrigan City Halls also issue 911 addresses. Within 2,000 feet of Lake Livingston, septic permits go to the Trinity River Authority, not the county.

Water / private well

- ☐ Ask whether the property is on a private well, a water supply corporation or a city system, and who the provider is.
- ☐ Get the well's driller report. Wells drilled since 2003: TWDB Groundwater Data Viewer. Older wells: TCEQ Water Well Report Viewer.
- ☐ Have the water tested by a lab before closing, at least for bacteria and nitrates.
- ☐ Ask the age of the pump, pressure tank and any filters or treatment equipment.

WHO TO CALL

- Lower Trinity Groundwater Conservation District (new wells): (936) 327-9531

LOOK IT UP

- TWDB Groundwater Data Viewer (www3.twdb.texas.gov/apps/WaterDataInteractive/GroundwaterDataViewer)
- TCEQ Water Well Report Viewer (tceq.texas.gov/gis/waterwellview.html)
- PUC water service area map (puc.texas.gov/faucetfacts/ccns)

READ MORE

- Buying property with a private well (polktx.com/real-estate/rural/water-wells)

Septic (OSSF)

- ☐ Request the septic permit file. The county has no online lookup; call or email the Permit Department with the address.
- ☐ Within 2,000 ft of Lake Livingston, request the file from the Trinity River Authority instead.
- ☐ Ask for the maintenance contract and recent service reports. Aerobic systems need an ongoing maintenance contract.
- ☐ Planning to add a bedroom or building? Ask whether the current system is permitted for it.

WHO TO CALL

- Polk County Permit Department: (936) 327-6820 ext. 1 · permits@co.polk.tx.us
- Trinity River Authority, Lake Livingston Project (lake properties): (936) 365-2292

READ MORE

- Buying a home with a septic system (polktx.com/real-estate/rural/septic-systems)

Foundation and building

- ☐ On pier-and-beam homes, ask about past leveling work and whether any warranty transfers.
- ☐ Ask whether additions, barns and shops were permitted (City Hall inside city limits, county outside).
- ☐ Check outbuildings, slabs and driveways for cracks or settling.

WHO TO CALL

- Polk County Permit Department: (936) 327-6820 ext. 1
- Inside city limits: Livingston (936) 327-4311 · Corrigan (936) 398-4126 · Onalaska (936) 646-5000 · Goodrich (936) 365-2228

READ MORE

- Foundation questions when buying (polktx.com/real-estate/rural/foundations)

Survey, access and the deed

- ☐ Get a current survey showing boundaries, easements and encroachments.
- ☐ Confirm legal road access, and whether the road is county-maintained or private.
- ☐ Ask the title company about pipeline, utility and access easements.
- ☐ Ask whether mineral or timber rights convey.
- ☐ Check for deed restrictions or an HOA, especially in lake subdivisions.
- ☐ Confirm the property has a 911 address (outside Livingston and Corrigan, the county issues them).

WHO TO CALL

- Polk County Clerk, Research Department: (936) 327-6804
- Polk County Permit Department: (936) 327-6820 ext. 1

READ MORE

- Buying land with a shop, barn or slab (polktx.com/real-estate/rural/shops-slabs-and-driveways)

Flood zone

- ☐ Look up the flood zone and get flood insurance quotes before making an offer.
- ☐ Ask the seller for an elevation certificate if one exists.
- ☐ Building in a flood zone requires an elevation certificate and a floodplain permit.
- ☐ Ask whether the property has flooded or had a flood insurance claim.

WHO TO CALL

- Polk County Floodplain Administrator, through the Permit Department: (936) 327-6820 ext. 1

LOOK IT UP

- FEMA Flood Map Service Center (msc.fema.gov/portal/home)

READ MORE

- Drainage and flood zones (polktx.com/real-estate/rural/drainage-and-flood-zones)

Value, exemptions and taxes

- ☐ Look up acreage, improvements, exemptions and taxing units on the appraisal district site.
- ☐ Don't budget from the seller's tax bill; homestead and over-65 exemptions end when the property sells.
- ☐ If the land has an agricultural or timber valuation, ask what's required to keep it and what happens if the use changes.
- ☐ Check that taxes are paid up to date.

WHO TO CALL

- Polk Central Appraisal District: (936) 327-2174
- Polk County Tax Assessor-Collector: (936) 327-6801

LOOK IT UP

- Polk Central Appraisal District (polkcad.org)
- Polk County Tax Office (polk-tax.com)

READ MORE

- Property Tax Explainer (polktx.com/real-estate/property-taxes)

Lake Livingston properties

- ☐ Ask whether docks, piers and bulkheads have Trinity River Authority permits, and get copies.
- ☐ Ask the bulkhead's age and condition.
- ☐ Compare the property's elevation with the lake's normal pool of 131 ft above sea level, and check the flood zone.
- ☐ Confirm whether the septic system is permitted through TRA.

WHO TO CALL

- Trinity River Authority, Lake Livingston Project: (936) 365-2292

LOOK IT UP

- TRA online permits and licenses (trinityra.org/lake_information/water_storage/lake_livingston/online_permits_and_licenses.php)

READ MORE

- Buying lakefront: bulkheads, docks and TRA permits (polktx.com/real-estate/rural/lakefront-and-bulkheads)
- Lake Livingston Buyer Guide (polktx.com/real-estate/lake-livingston)

Power and internet

- ☐ Ask which electric provider serves the property and the cost to run service to a new building site.
- ☐ Check internet options at the exact address.
- ☐ Ask the seller for a year of electric bills, especially with well pumps or aerobic septic.

LOOK IT UP

- FCC National Broadband Map (broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home)

Questions to ask the seller or listing agent

- ☐ Is the property on a private well? When was it drilled, and has the water been tested?
- ☐ Is the septic conventional or aerobic? When was it last pumped or serviced, and is there a maintenance contract?
- ☐ Has the property ever flooded, and is there an elevation certificate?
- ☐ Have there been foundation repairs or leveling? Is there a transferable warranty?
- ☐ Were all additions, shops and outbuildings permitted?
- ☐ Do mineral or timber rights convey? Are there pipeline or utility easements?
- ☐ Does the property have an agricultural or timber valuation?
- ☐ For lakefront: are the dock, pier and bulkhead permitted by TRA?

Office directory

- **Polk County Permit Department** · (936) 327-6820 ext. 1 · permits@co.polk.tx.us · 602 E. Church St., Suite 141, Livingston, TX 77351 · Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.
- **Trinity River Authority, Lake Livingston Project** · (936) 365-2292 · 5170 S. FM 1988, Livingston, TX 77351
- **Polk Central Appraisal District** · (936) 327-2174 · support@polkcad.org · 114 Matthews St., Livingston, TX 77351
- **Polk County Tax Assessor-Collector** · (936) 327-6801 · 416 N. Washington Ave., Livingston, TX 77351
- **Polk County Clerk, Research Department** (deeds and recorded documents) · (936) 327-6804 · 410 E. Church St., Suite A, Livingston, TX 77351
- **Lower Trinity Groundwater Conservation District** (new wells) · (936) 327-9531
- **City Halls** · Livingston (936) 327-4311 · Corrigan (936) 398-4126 · Onalaska (936) 646-5000 · Goodrich (936) 365-2228

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Sources for this page:

- Polk County Permits page (polktx.gov/325/Permits)
- Texas Comptroller county directory: Polk County (comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/county-directory/polk.php)
- Trinity River Authority: Lake Livingston permits (trinityra.org/lake_information/water_storage/lake_livingston/online_permits_and_licenses.php)
- Texas Water Development Board: Groundwater Data Viewer (www3.twdb.texas.gov/apps/WaterDataInteractive/GroundwaterDataViewer)
- TCEQ Water Well Report Viewer (tceq.texas.gov/gis/waterwellview.html)
- FEMA Flood Map Service Center (msc.fema.gov/portal/home)
- FCC National Broadband Map (broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home)

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