

Real Estate Trends

Land of Opportunity

(NAPSA)—Prior to the 1990s, it was a common school of thought that the purchase of real estate was the safest and most lucrative of investments. The '90s brought a different perspective, though. Suddenly “technology” was the buzzword and there were paper millionaires living down the street thanks to dot-com and tech stocks. All that glitters is not gold, however, and a sure thing is never a sure thing. So will we find ourselves looking for land to invest in? It seems that property may very well regain its reputation.

If you are thinking of land as being beyond the budget, think again. There are some parcels that go for as little as \$50 an acre. These \$50 parcels are dry land—dirt—far from development and in quiet rural areas. Not to worry, there are more great buys available. For example, you can purchase your own 17-acre woodland tract in Colorado for \$22,000. More affluent purchasers can buy a 2.5-acre plot in the prestigious Cherry Hills Village in Denver for \$1.08 million.

Where can you find this kind of information?

Ric Hansen of Colorado knew there was plenty of land for sale around the country; he also knew that the average person does not have the time or the resources to search the country for the perfect parcel of land. There had to be an easier, quicker way to get information on vacant land. So Hansen, using his experience as a land developer, started a new Web site by persuading a few real estate agents to advertise vacant residential land listings on his site, ColoradoLots.com.

A smart move on Hansen's part, since the National Association of Realtors says 64 percent of prospective buyers use the Internet to shop properties. The association's survey also says 61 percent of consumers say that shopping for real estate at Web-based property listings saves them time.

It was slow going for Hansen at first. There were only a few hundred listings after the first year and



Those in the market for vacant lots and acreage can now find more listings, all at one online location.

a half at ColoradoLots.com. Then agencies started to smarten up. Fuller & Co. in Colorado jumped on the bandwagon and brought the listings up to 600, expanding the Web site's reach outside of Colorado and thus renaming the company USLots.com. Like the first stage of a rocket booster, the Fuller connection was just the beginning.

Lately, with the addition of United Country and other parties trying to sell vacant residential land, listings from across the country on USLots.com have soared to around 6,000.

“People across the country now have a more detailed—and user-friendly—resource on the Internet to buy or sell vacant residential properties in 32 states,” declares Hansen, president and CEO of USLots.com.

For now, USLots.com is looking to expand into all 50 states and they have already received a few requests from Canada and Costa Rica, which might prompt another name change. Hansen is also working on a project that will make USLots.com a directory for services in the homebuilding industry. For example, builders, appraisers, and engineers will be able to associate themselves with the Web site. Hansen is optimistic that USLots.com will eventually become the premiere U.S. search engine, or MLS, for residential land.

You can check out the progress at www.uslots.com.