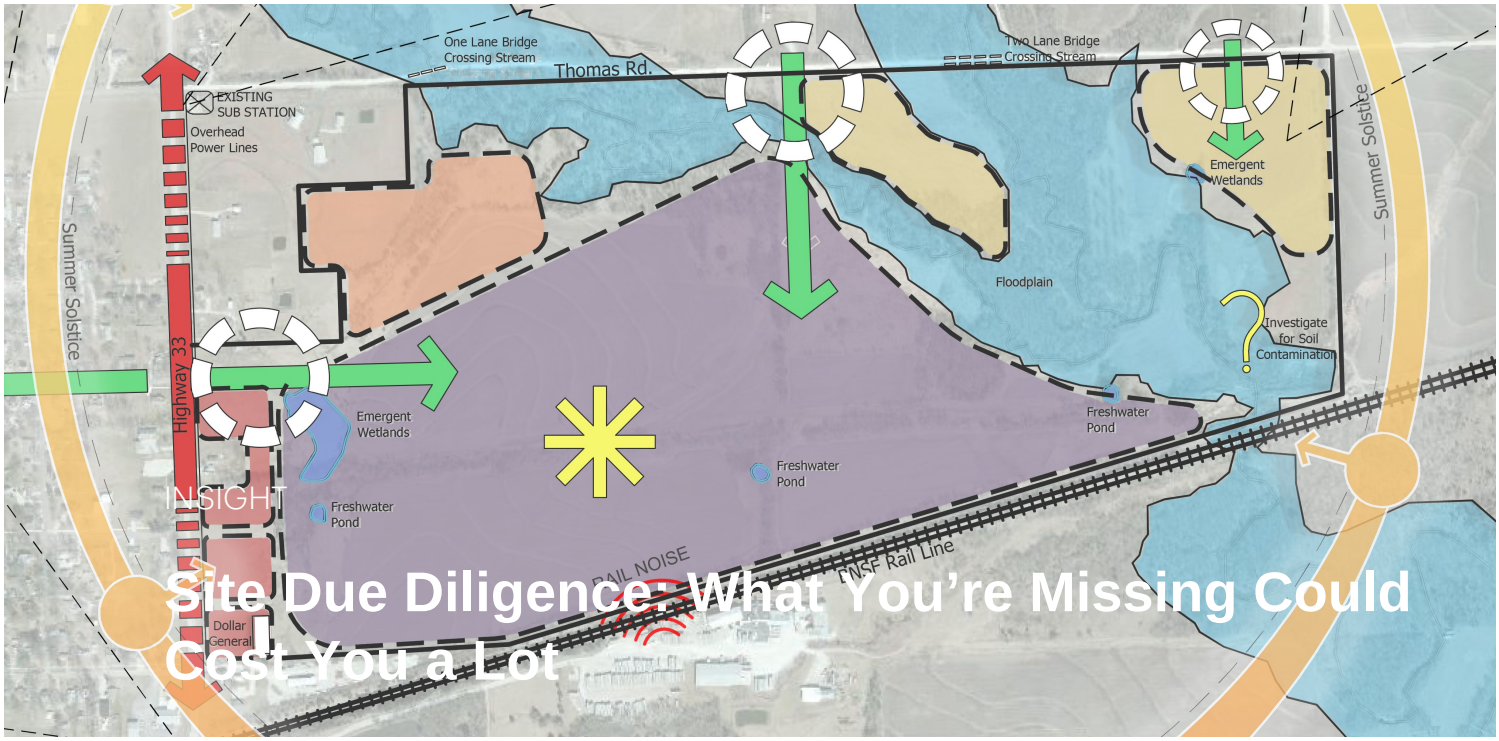


You have selected your site and envisioned what you will build there, but a not-so-quiet voice persists in the back of your mind. *What am I missing?* The answer to that question could cost you a lot.

Fortunately, site due diligence during the early planning stages of your development will:

1. Ensure your preferred site *really is* ideal for your needs.
2. Avoid costly delays during development due to unforeseen surprises.
3. Improve efficiencies throughout the life of your development project.

Partnering with an expert removes a lot of the guesswork from your project, but there are a few key considerations you should keep in mind along the way.

Understand the code

Code violations are no way to start a project. Some codes can be quite obscure, but upfront homework can help identify any necessary adjustments to your plan early in the process. For example, developments along a busy intersection may be subject to buffer zones to avoid impeding traffic flow. This may restrict the usability of the lot, forcing developers to look elsewhere. Unfortunately, this was a real scenario faced by a Bartlett & West client. However, thanks to Bartlett & West's site due diligence study, it was possible for the client to adjust course before it was too late.

“The client ultimately moved to a different location,” said Bartlett & West’s Darron Ammann, Senior Project Manager and Landscape Architect. “They were very grateful for our thorough investigation of the planning code and how it impacted their potential property before they committed to a long-term lease.”

Know the land

While a site may be aesthetically pleasing on the surface, what lies beneath may not be suitable for development. Before you commit to a lease or purchase, it’s worthwhile to investigate fully for any surprises. For instance, in one case we’ve seen, an educational facility purchased a lot with plenty of trees and beautiful views. If they had commissioned a due diligence study before purchasing, they would have learned the site was a former landfill with decades worth of refuse buried under the soil. Soil remediation costs numbered in the multi-millions, so the client instead decided to build their facility on Geopiers. This solution was also expensive, but more affordable than soil remediation. A due diligence study would have helped this client achieve the most cost-effective outcome – selecting a different site altogether.

Make a plan

What are all the steps required in the municipal approval process? Will you need additional studies – for instance, traffic impact studies, lighting levels, or sanitary sewer capacity? How costly are the fees for things like new utilities connections? A good plan based on thorough research will answer all these questions and more, carrying you from your first site visit through to groundbreaking.

“It is important to understand the entirety of any process, because each step can cost money and take time,” Ammann said.

Essentially, site due diligence is risk mitigation, because a little upfront investment can help avoid major headaches down the road. Due diligence allows you to quiet that worried little voice in your head, restore your peace of mind and move forward with your development smoothly and efficiently.