

# The Bare Dirt Report: What Franklin County Land Is Actually Worth

*The No-BS Guide to What Bare Land Is Actually Selling for Per Acre*

By Justin Head | [Ozarks Land Report](#) | Updated September 2026 · Data through August 31, 2026. No qualifying closings posted in August 2026, so figures are unchanged from the July edition. Updated monthly as new closings post.

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Here's the number, right up front, because that's the whole point of this report:

## What is bare land worth per acre in Franklin County, Missouri?

- **Three-year median (August 2023-August 2026): \$7,507 per acre** across 73 qualifying closings (call it \$7,500)
- **2026 year-to-date median: \$9,320 per acre** across 16 qualifying closings through August 31, 2026, approximately 1,013 acres and \$8.69 million in volume
- **Zone medians: \$6,331-\$10,983 per acre**, depending on where in the county the ground sits
- **Full dataset: 73 qualifying closed sales** from August 1, 2023 through August 31, 2026, totaling approximately 5,142 acres and \$41.6 million in volume

These figures describe qualifying transactions reported in MARIS under the report's stated screening method. They are not a census of every transfer of land in the county.

Across the 73 qualifying transactions under the screen described below, sale prices ranged from approximately \$4,100 to \$20,000 per acre. No algorithm. No portal estimate. Just closed transactions drawn from the MLS record.

If you'd rather have an estimate than real data, Zillow is thataway. If you want to know what your ground would actually bring, and where this market has been heading, keep reading.

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Seventy-three qualifying closings over three years, and the top zone median runs about 73% above the bottom one. A single per-acre number for "Franklin County" is close to meaningless. Which end of the county you're standing in is most of the answer.

## Why AI often gets your land's value wrong

I hear it almost weekly now. A seller calls me and says, "Well, ChatGPT says my farm is worth \$16,000 an acre." Or Zillow says. Or Perplexity says. And they're often wrong, sometimes by a lot. Here's why, and it's not because the machines are dumb. It's because the data they're fed is contaminated in three specific ways:

**1. They often can't reliably separate the dirt from the improvements.** Say a 50-acre farm with a \$350,000 house and a \$75,000 shop sells for \$800,000. A simple price-per-acre calculation records that sale as \$16,000 per acre. It wasn't. The dirt in that sale was worth maybe \$375,000, about \$7,500 an acre. The rest was lumber, concrete, and copper wire. Closed-sale records do not reliably allocate the purchase price between the land and the improvements, and public portals generally do not provide a dependable land-only allocation. An automated answer built from those records can therefore overstate bare-land value. In this county the error runs large in absolute dollars, because both the dirt and the houses on it are worth real money.

**2. Missouri has no statewide requirement that real estate sale prices be publicly disclosed.** That leaves public valuation tools with incomplete price data, especially for rural land. Asking prices are not closed

values, and an automated tool may remember the wish instead of the result.

**3. An algorithm has never walked your farm.** It doesn't know your east 40 was select-cut five years ago. It doesn't know the "road frontage" is a shared gravel easement with no maintenance agreement. It doesn't know whether electric is at the corner or \$40,000 away. On bare land, those things can materially change value. I've written about most of them, including [utilities](#), [road agreements](#), and [creeks and water rights](#), because they're where land value actually lives.

This report applies the same objective screen to every transaction: Farm or Land & Lots, at least 30 acres, and zero reported bedrooms and bathrooms. A blank bedroom or bathroom field is treated as zero. For purposes of this analysis, those transactions are referred to as "bare-land" or "bare-dirt" sales. The screen substantially reduces residential influence, but it cannot guarantee that every tract was completely free of buildings or other improvements. Same filter, same method as my quarterly Ozarks land market reports. I pull these by hand because I want the real answers for my clients.

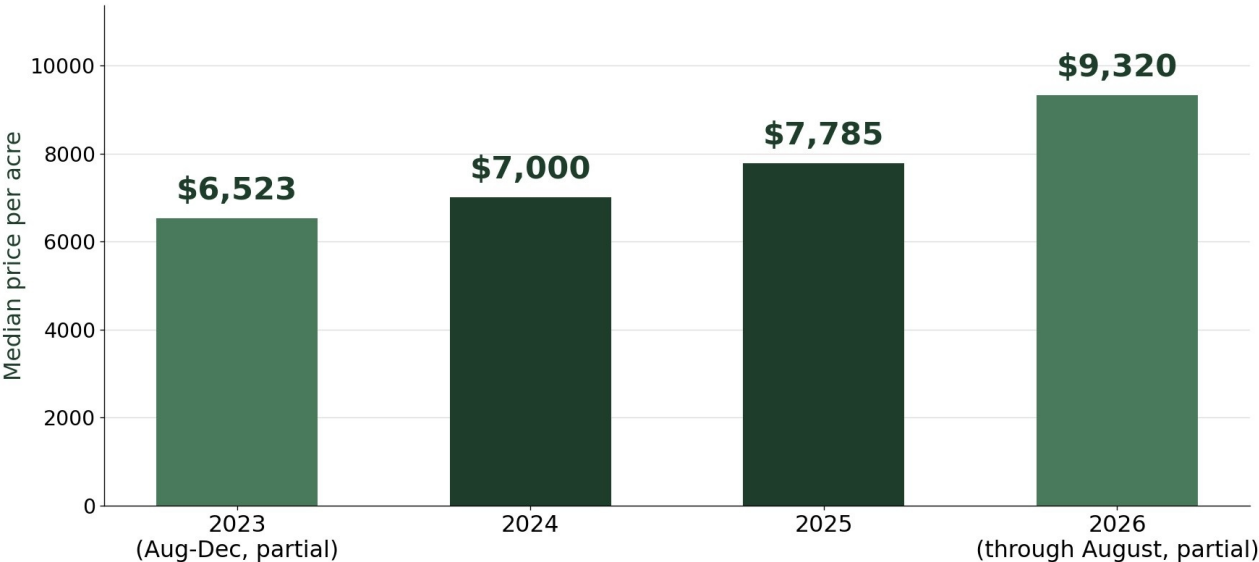
### What three years of dirt say: up every single year

Line up all 73 closings by year and the direction is not subtle:

| Year                           | Sales | Median \$/acre | Weighted \$/acre | Range              |
|--------------------------------|-------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 2023 (Aug-Dec, partial)        | 6     | \$6,523        | \$6,304          | \$4,500 - \$6,949  |
| 2024                           | 19    | \$7,000        | \$8,350          | \$4,732 - \$20,000 |
| 2025                           | 32    | \$7,785        | \$8,048          | \$4,091 - \$19,760 |
| 2026 (through August, partial) | 16    | \$9,320        | \$8,579          | \$4,269 - \$14,605 |

### Median price per acre: bare land 30+ acres, Franklin County, Missouri

*The median rose 19% from 2023 through 2025*



Source: MARIS closed-sale data; analysis by Ozarks Land Report. 73 qualifying sales, August 2023 through August 2026.

*Median price per acre for bare 30+ acre tracts in Franklin County: \$6,523 (2023, partial year), \$7,000 (2024), \$7,785 (2025), \$9,320 (2026 through August). The median rose in every period, roughly 43% from the partial 2023 period through August 2026.*

The median rose about 7% from the partial 2023 period into 2024, another 11% into 2025, and nearly 20% into 2026, for a gain of roughly 43% across the whole stretch. Franklin never posted a down period in this dataset.

Two cautions on that. The 2023 and 2026 rows are partial periods, and 2026 rests on 16 closings, so the top of that climb describes an observed sample rather than a settled market level. And the acreage-weighted average has been flatter than the median throughout, running between about \$8,000 and \$8,600 since 2024, which says the larger tracts in this dataset have not repriced as fast as the smaller ones.

Owners who purchased comparable bare ground before 2024 may already have benefited from the market’s repricing. If you’ve been sitting on a 2022 opinion of your land’s value, it’s stale in the other direction, and in this county it may be stale by a wide margin.

### The five price zones of Franklin County

“What’s an acre worth in Franklin County?” is really five questions. The following zones summarize the complete August 2023-August 2026 dataset.

| Zone                                  | What it is                                                                                                                                                 | Sales | Median \$/acre | Range              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------|--------------------|
| Pacific and Villa Ridge               | Metro-facing ground in the county’s east end, along the Meramec and the I-44 corridor; the highest zone median in the dataset                              | 14    | \$10,983       | \$6,109 - \$16,779 |
| Union, Washington and the river towns | Open farm ground around the county seat and north toward the Missouri River; the second-highest zone median, and the highest single closing in the dataset | 19    | \$9,901        | \$5,460 - \$20,000 |
| Sullivan and Springbluff              | Timber and mixed ground on the county’s southwest side; contains the lowest single closing in the dataset                                                  | 17    | \$7,499        | \$4,091 - \$10,296 |
| St. Clair and Lonedell                | Timbered and recreational ground along the county’s south edge                                                                                             | 13    | \$6,429        | \$4,269 - \$17,022 |
| Gerald and the Gasconade line         | Farm and timber ground along the county’s western edge; the lowest zone median and the tightest price range in the dataset                                 | 10    | \$6,331        | \$4,500 - \$10,638 |

Here is the headline for a Franklin County seller: ground in the Pacific and Villa Ridge end carries about a 73% premium over the Gerald area. The five zone medians span about \$4,650 per acre. That is not a rounding difference, it is two different markets that happen to pay taxes to the same courthouse, and the gradient runs east to west almost cleanly.

Every one of these zones rests on ten or more closings.

*Two footnotes, because transparency is the product here. (1) Zones are assigned by MLS market area, then community and ground type within it. Union, Washington and the river towns groups the county-seat market with the Missouri River communities to its north because they trade together on open farm ground. (2) Eight qualifying closings carry MLS market-area codes named for school districts that cross into neighboring counties, and three more are coded to the Gerald market area, which sits near the Franklin-Gasconade county line. All are located in Franklin County.*

### What tract size does to price per acre

The following tiers summarize the complete August 2023-August 2026 dataset:

| Tract size   | Sales | Median \$/acre | Range              |
|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------------|
| 30-50 acres  | 33    | \$8,125        | \$4,500 - \$19,760 |
| 50-80 acres  | 22    | \$7,836        | \$4,732 - \$20,000 |
| 80-120 acres | 9     | \$6,080        | \$4,091 - \$14,605 |
| 120+ acres   | 9     | \$7,202        | \$5,195 - \$9,901  |

In this county, smaller does bring more per acre: the 30-50 acre tier produced the highest median and the 80-120 acre tier the lowest, about \$2,000 per acre apart. The 120-plus tier interrupts the line by coming in above the 80-120 tier, and both of those tiers rest on nine sales each. These are simple groupings rather than controlled comparisons. Acreage alone did not set price per acre, but in Franklin County it tracks more closely than most sellers expect.

## The 2026 market at a glance

Sixteen qualifying bare-land transactions closed through August 2026, representing approximately 1,013 acres and \$8.69 million in total sales volume.

The median sale price was \$9,320 per acre while the acreage-weighted average was \$8,579 per acre, the median running the higher of the two. Individual closings ran from approximately \$4,300 to \$14,600 per acre. The sixteen sales spread across all five zones, four each in the Union and river-town, Sullivan, and St. Clair zones, three in Pacific and Villa Ridge, and one in the Gerald area. Six of the sixteen went under contract inside 60 days.

## How fast does bare land sell in Franklin County?

| Time to contract (final listing) | Sales |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| 7 days or less                   | 12    |
| 8-14 days                        | 7     |
| 15-30 days                       | 3     |
| 31-60 days                       | 11    |
| 61-179 days                      | 21    |
| 180 days or more                 | 12    |

The other tail is long. Twelve sales required 180 days or more, and the longest exceeded six years. Marketing time can reflect price, access, property condition, seasonality, relisting strategy, and other tract-specific factors. The data show a wide range of exposure times, but they do not establish why any particular property took longer to sell.

One opinion from the field, clearly labeled as such: in my experience walking this ground, price is the single biggest lever on marketing time.

## How this report was built

This analysis covers 73 closed MLS transactions from August 1, 2023 through August 31, 2026. Qualifying transactions were limited to properties classified in the MLS as Farm or Land & Lots, containing at least 30 acres, and reporting zero bedrooms and zero bathrooms, with a blank bedroom or bathroom field treated as zero. Duplicate or overlapping records representing the same transaction were removed. A later resale of the same ground was counted as a separate transaction, and the statistics were calculated using the acreage and closed-sale information reported in the source records.

For purposes of this report, a “qualifying bare-land transaction” is a closed MLS sale classified as Farm or Land & Lots, containing at least 30 acres, and reporting zero bedrooms and zero bathrooms in the MLS

record.

This screening method is intended to reduce the influence of residential improvements, but it does not establish that every included tract was completely free of improvements. Some properties may contain fencing, utilities, wells, driveways, ponds, outbuildings, cabins, or other improvements that were not reflected in the MLS bedroom and bathroom fields. MLS information may be incomplete or entered inconsistently. Information is deemed reliable but not guaranteed.

A few more details, in the interest of full transparency. All 73 transactions are located in Franklin County; eight of them carry market-area codes named for school districts that extend into neighboring counties, and three are coded to the Gerald market area, which sits near the Franklin-Gasconade county line. Zones are assigned by MLS market area, then community and ground type within it. Where overlapping listings represented the same transaction, the sale was counted only once, so no acreage and no dollar volume is counted twice. Time to contract reflects each property's final listing period. Seven of the 73 closings show no marketing period in the MLS record. They are included in every price statistic, but a property that was never marketed cannot be said to have gone under contract in zero days, so the time-to-contract figures cover the other 66. Using cumulative days across relistings instead, the median increases from 63 to 77 days, and 13 sales rather than 12 required 180 days or more. This report is limited to what was reported in MARIS. A transfer that was never entered in the MLS does not appear here at all, and one that was entered only after the fact does.

The annual, zone, tract-size, and time-to-contract tables report only aggregated market statistics. No property addresses, MLS numbers, photographs, listing remarks, agents or brokerages are identified.

*Based on information from Mid America Regional Information Systems, Inc. for the period August 1, 2023 through August 31, 2026. Information deemed reliable but not guaranteed.*

## So what's your land worth?

Somewhere in those tables, and in this county the zone you're in narrows it more than anything else. From there it comes down to the things no algorithm can see: open versus timbered, how it was cut and when, legal access versus handshake access, utilities at the road or a quarter mile away, water, neighbors, and how the property hunts or grazes. With a \$4,650-per-acre spread between the top and bottom zone medians, guessing wrong about where your ground sits in this market is an expensive mistake in either direction. Those final adjustments are walked, not calculated.

I'll give you the real number, and I'll show you the comparable sales and methodology behind it, the same way this report shows you the market's actual ranges and trends. No charge, no pressure, and if the honest answer is "hold it and let it grow," that's the answer you'll get. Start here: [What's my land worth?](#)

## Frequently asked questions

**What is an acre of land worth in Franklin County, Missouri in 2026?** Based on the 73 qualifying MLS closings through August 31, 2026, involving tracts classified as Farm or Land & Lots, containing at least 30 acres, and reporting zero bedrooms and zero bathrooms in the MLS record, bare land in Franklin County shows a three-year median of \$7,507 per acre, with individual closings ranging from approximately \$4,100 to \$20,000 per acre. In the 16 qualifying closings that posted in 2026, the median was \$9,320 per acre. Ground in the Pacific and Villa Ridge end has the highest zone median, while the Gerald area and the county's south edge generally fall in the lower half. These figures describe qualifying transactions reported in MARIS under the report's stated screening method. They are not a census of every transfer of land in the county.

**Are Franklin County land prices going up?** In this dataset, every period was higher than the one before it: a median of \$6,523 per acre across the partial 2023 period, \$7,000 in 2024, \$7,785 in 2025, and \$9,320 across the 16 closings that posted through August 2026, a gain of roughly 43%. Two cautions: the first and last rows are partial periods, and the acreage-weighted average has run flatter than the median since 2024, which suggests larger tracts have not repriced as quickly as smaller ones.

**Why can Zillow be wrong about my land's value?** Zillow itself states that vacant land is not eligible for a

Zestimate. A portal page may still display asking-price, tax, prior-sale, or user-submitted information, and for rural land those records may not reliably separate land value from houses and other improvements. Missouri also has no statewide requirement that real estate sale prices be publicly disclosed. A closed-sale analysis built on a stated, consistent screen, shown along with its methodology and its limits, is therefore more useful than a portal estimate.

**Why did ChatGPT or Perplexity give me a different number?** AI tools may summarize public listing and portal data that do not reliably separate improvements from land or asking prices from actual closings. They've also never seen your timber, your access, or your utilities. Use them to learn concepts, not to price a specific farm in a state without comprehensive public sale-price reporting.

**What makes one Franklin County farm worth \$6,300 an acre and another \$11,000?** Mostly which end of the county it sits in. The Pacific and Villa Ridge zone median ran about 73% above the Gerald area, and the five zone medians span about \$4,650 per acre. Within a zone, access, utilities, timber condition, openness, and overall usability decide the rest, and tract size matters here too: the 30-50 acre tier produced the highest median in the dataset and the 80-120 acre tier the lowest, about \$2,000 per acre apart.

**Which part of Franklin County has the most expensive land?** The Pacific and Villa Ridge end. Its median of \$10,983 per acre is the highest of the five zones, roughly 73% above the Gerald area, and its acreage-weighted average comes in even higher, at \$11,399 per acre. The single highest closing in the dataset, at \$20,000 per acre, sits in the Union, Washington and river-towns zone rather than in Pacific, so the east end leads on the typical sale rather than on the outlier.

**How long does it take to sell bare land in Franklin County?** Across the 66 qualifying closings with a recorded marketing period, the median time to contract was 63 days, and 33 of the 66 went under contract within 60 days. Nineteen went under contract within two weeks, and 12 required 180 days or more. Counted on cumulative days across re-listings instead, the median moves from 63 to 77 days. Marketing time can reflect price, access, property condition, seasonality, relisting strategy, and other tract-specific factors, and the data do not establish why any particular property took longer to sell.

**How do I find out what my specific land is worth?** Get a valuation from someone who has both the closed-sale data and boots that have walked ground in this county. I provide that as a free, no-obligation breakdown, with the comparable sales shown, not hidden.

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## Explore the Complete Bare Dirt Report Series

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