

## Choosing the Rural Life

By ANNA CHANG-YEN | Green Shoot Media

Does development creeping in from every direction keep you on edge? Are you not particularly fond of the idea of your neighbors peeking through your windows from their living room? If city or suburban living leaves you feeling suffocated, a country estate might be for you.

As much as we all might like to spend some time at Walden Pond now and then, it's a decision that should not be taken lightly. From zoning considerations to the slower pace of life in the country, there are myriad lifestyle changes you should consider before literally buying the farm.

### COST

If you're simply looking to put down roots near a few more trees, you may be surprised to find that rural property can come with quite a large price tag. You may plan to grow your own garden to cut down on grocery expenses or use the extra space to start a small business to earn extra money. But rural homes tend to include more land, which quickly increases costs. While city dwellers can be crammed one on top of the other into apartment buildings — or townhomes and condos in the 'burbs — the country way of life tends to be more about spreading one's wings, which requires pricey acreage. Ask yourself if you're willing to pay for this luxury.

### USE RESTRICTIONS/ZONING

Rural land also has the potential to be used in money-making farming ventures, so its value may be elevated. If you intend to fully embrace rural life and start a farm, there's an entirely separate dossier of research you'll need to compile. Is the

land properly zoned for farming? Does it have the appropriate infrastructure, such as fencing, plumbing, electricity, access to water and administrative space? Is there enough land for grazing and agricultural equipment and buildings? Ask the listing agent if the land has previously been used for farming activities to gauge its worthiness for the task.

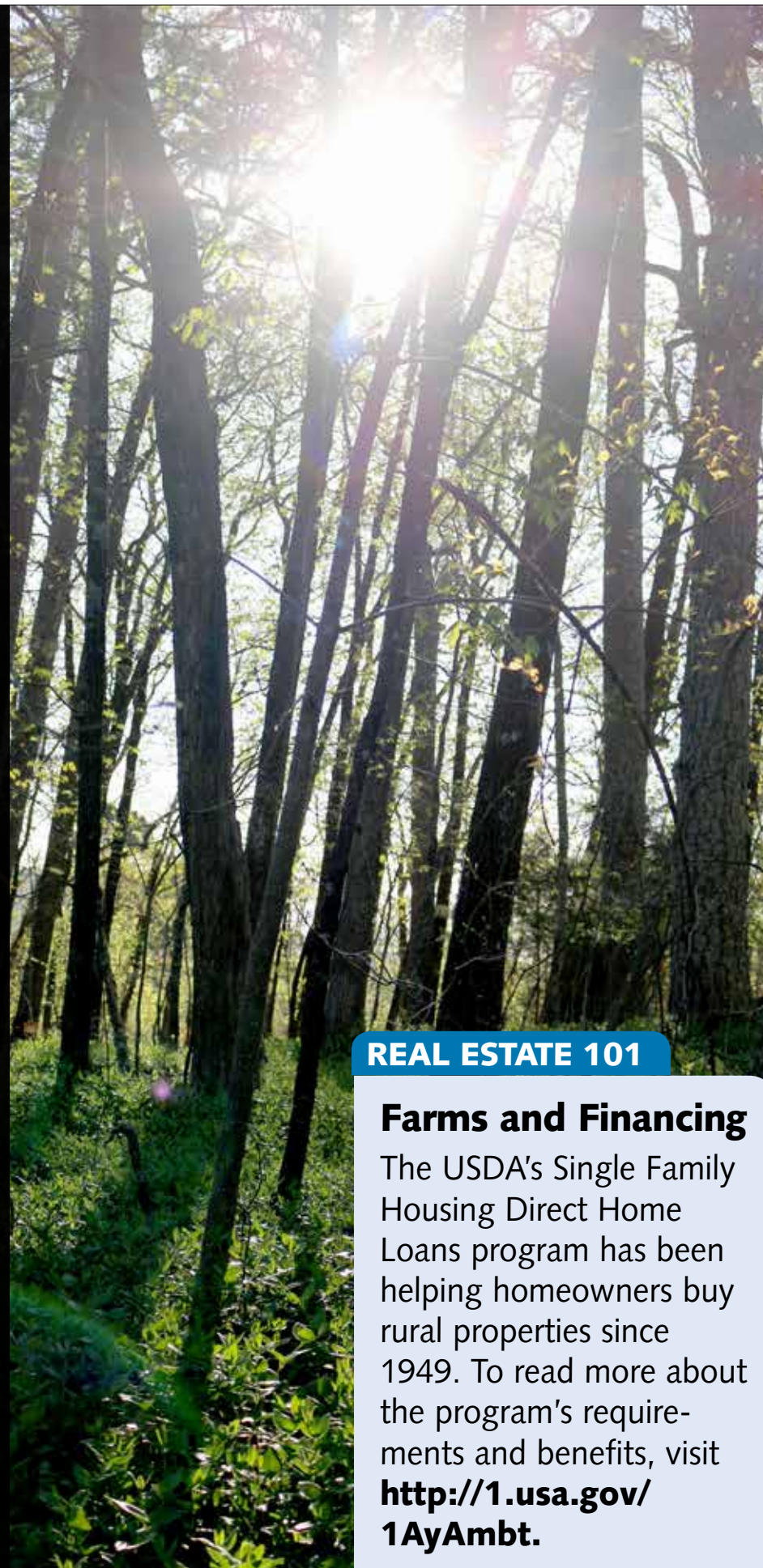
### FINANCING

While United States Department of Agriculture loans may make buying rural land enticing — with lower interest rates, down payments and mortgage insurance requirements — there are some other concerns in the lending arena. Properties that include mobile homes may be difficult to finance because of lender restrictions. The Federal Housing Administration's Title I loan program for mobile homes requires specific documentation about the land where the home will be placed, among other assurances, and limits loan amounts and repayment terms.

### LIFESTYLE

Another important consideration about rural life is the many differences in day-to-day living, as compared to city or suburban life. Will the smell of chicken houses leave you nauseated? Will you feel isolated on your homestead? Are you willing to drive half an hour or more to buy groceries or get a haircut? Are you willing and able to care for a large tract of land? Although Henry David Thoreau certainly gave us all something to think about in his book *Walden*, we may not all be cut out for life off the beaten path.

PHOTO BY ANNA CHANG-YEN



### REAL ESTATE 101

#### Farms and Financing

The USDA's Single Family Housing Direct Home Loans program has been helping homeowners buy rural properties since 1949. To read more about the program's requirements and benefits, visit <http://1.usa.gov/1AyAmbt>.



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### HOMESWISE GLOSSARY

**Blighted structure:** a structure is blighted when it exhibits objectively determinable signs of deterioration sufficient to constitute a threat to human health, safety, and public welfare.

**Brownfield:** abandoned, idled, and underused industrial and commercial facilities where expansion and redevelopment is burdened by real or potential environmental contamination.

**SOURCE:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

# AD SPACE