Maury Carter, president of Maury Carter & Associates in Orlando and a veteran of Central Florida land sales, has fond memories of having 40,000 acres for sale across Central Florida, land available for all sorts of uses, including industrial.

But even when, a few years ago, he sold the Triple E Ranch—a working ranch east of St. Cloud in rural Osceola County—it was for development as a golf-course community called Harmony. The region's growth has steadily depleted his inventory.

These days, Carter said, "We have more buyers than land."

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Wide-open spaces harder to find in Orlando"