

Who Owns More Land: Bill Gates, McDonald's or The Catholic Church?

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Land is the investment of choice for moguls. **Bill Gates** has invested heavily in [farmland](#). People have said for years that **McDonald's Corp** is actually a real estate company that sells food. You might not have realized that the **Catholic Church** owns lots of real estate. Which of these billion-dollar entities owns more of what might be considered the most precious commodity on earth — land? Benzinga did the research, and the results might surprise you.

The Case for Bill Gates: Microsoft Corp co-founder is largely considered the biggest private owner of farmland in the U.S. with nearly 270,000 acres. This number stems from last year's edition of [The Land Report](#). It's reasonable to assume that the purchases haven't slowed down.

While Gates has said that the purchases are a result of his investment groups, he also recognizes the potential and the importance of farmland. He said in an ask-me-

anything (AMA) session on Reddit that the purchases were linked to seed and biofuel development.

The Land Report reference came out in winter 2021, after which [controversies](#) circulated about Gates' accumulation of American farmland.

Total acreage for Bill Gates: Well over 270,000 acres

The Case For McDonald's: The McDonald's brand is massive and has been around since 1955. Over nearly 70 years, McDonald's currently sits at just over 39,000 locations as of January 2022. Those locations each come with approximately 1.2 acres. The research suggests that McDonald's owns about 70% of the buildings and 45% of the land at its locations worldwide. Once all the math is done, calculations show that McDonald's owns around 47,037 acres of land.

McDonald's only owns and operates about 15% of locations directly. The remainder is run by franchisees.

McDonald's real business is acting as the landlord of its franchisees. It sets the ground rules and provides the layout for success. It's been said that burgers are only sold because it's the easiest way for its tenants to profit and pay it back.

Its intent is to purchase land, and a new McDonald's is opened every 15 hours. As a result, McDonald's income and land ownership continue to grow.

Total acreage for McDonald's: 50,000 acres and growing

The case for the Catholic Church: The Catholic Church owns 177 million acres of land across the globe for its churches and schools as well as owning farmland and forest land.

If this number sounds astonishing to you, you're not alone. The report comes from Yale Climate Connections, and its [story](#) about land ownership by the Catholic Church

explains the importance its decisions can have on the environment.

The report tells the story of Molly Burhans, executive director of Goodlands, who discovered that the Catholic Church lacked a comprehensive inventory of its land ownership. Molly claimed that the Church hadn't had an update to its inventory since the Holy Roman Empire.

After gaining permission from the Vatican, Burhans underwent a comprehensive of bringing the Church into the 21st century. A live [database](#) provides a visual of all its land holdings.

Total for the Catholic Church: 177,000,000 acres



Conclusion: The Catholic Church owns the most land, far more than McDonald's and billionaire Bill Gates. If you are concerned about environmental change, global warming and climate change, this massive player has been flying under the radar.

Regardless if you're an individual operating a 501(c)(3) or a massive corporation, land ownership should remain a priority. If you're unable to take the first steps in owning property of your own, consider the following two paths.

Real estate investment trust (REIT)

ownership: Purchased like a stock, these industry-specific holdings allow you to purchase property in an industry you believe in.

Crowdfunding: [Real estate crowdfunding platforms](#) allow you the opportunity to invest in fractional ownership of specific properties and real estate developments. These long-hold investments can prove to be fruitful over time.

Today's Real Estate Investing News Highlights

- The farmland investment platform **AcreTrader** released the results of its most recent fully-realized investments, which produced total annualized returns ranging from 15.4% to 30.3%.
- The Bezos-backed real estate investment platform **Arrived Homes** launched a new batch of offerings to allow retail investors to purchase shares of single-family rental homes with a minimum investment of \$100. The platform has already funded over 150 properties with a total value of over \$50 million.
- The **CalTier Multi-Family Portfolio Fund** recently completed a new investment in a portfolio of four multi-family properties consisting of 185 units. The CalTier Multi-Family Portfolio Fund is

one of the few non-traded real estate funds available to non-accredited investors and has a minimum investment of \$500. Year to date, the fund has produced an annualized cash-on-cash return of 7.02%.

Find more news and real estate investment offerings on [Benzinga Alternative Investments](#)

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