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CONTENTS

EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY IN UZBEKISTAN	10
Urolova Sevara Bekhzod qizi	
INTEGRAL MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR IMPROVING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY SYSTEM IN AGRICULTURE	16
Nazirova Zulfina Salimovna	
IMPROVING THE FINANCING MECHANISM OF LOCALIZATION IN THE METRO INDUSTRY AND ITS SCENARIO-BASED ASSESSMENT	21
Mansurov Khamrokul Ilkhomovich	
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TEACHING METHODS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.....	28
Berdiyeva Nilufar Axatovna	
INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ROAD SECTOR FINANCING AND ROAD ASSET MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN.....	34
Feruz Shokirov	
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH SERVICE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT.....	42
Saparov Murod Irgashovich	
DIGITAL-INTEGRATION MODEL OF GREEN LENDING: INSTITUTIONAL GROUNDING IN COMMERCIAL BANK PRACTICE	46
Melikuzieva Dilrabo Mukhitdinovna	
CURRENT STATE OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN THE NAMANGAN REGION: LESSONS FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE.....	52
Sattarov Ravshan Alimovich	
MODERN LEVELS OF INNOVATIVE DIGITAL BANKING SERVICES IN COMMERCIAL BANKS.....	60
D. M. Kallibekov	
EFFECTIVENESS OF USING AUTOMATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN RESOURCE CAPACITY MANAGEMENT IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES.....	64
Makhammadieva Izhobat Abdiganieva	
TEXTILE INDUSTRY PRODUCTION CAPACITY GROWTH FORECAST	75
Joraqulov Javakhir Asomiddin's Son	
FORECASTING THE MECHANISM FOR ASSESSING INVESTMENTS ATTRACTED TO SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES IN THE ANDIJAN REGION THROUGH 2030	80
Jo'rayeva Moxinur Axmadjon qizi	
IMPROVEMENT OF PERSONAL MANAGEMENT IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES BASED ON CHOICE OF ORGANIZATION MODELS.....	88
Djumaniyazova Jamila Davronovna	
THE ROLE OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM IN RISK MANAGEMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISES.....	93
Umarov Azizjon	

SPATIAL ECONOMETRIC MODELING IN THE MASS APPRAISAL OF REAL ESTATE: A GEOGRAPHICALLY WEIGHTED REGRESSION APPROACH (THE CASE OF TERMEZ CITY)	102
Khushvaktov Jasur Shukhrat ugli	
НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ РЫНКА ЭЛЕКТРОТЕХНИЧЕСКОГО ОБОРУДОВАНИЯ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ	110
Джураев Муротжон Сотиволдиевич	
SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ASSESSING AND IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT IN COMMERCIAL BANKS	120
Yuldashev Xurshidbek Mamirjonovich	
ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES IN BEEKEEPING AND FORECAST INDICATORS FOR 2026–2030	130
Farmanov Jonibek Ziyadullaevich	
ENSURING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE SECTORAL STRUCTURE OF FIXED CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN A REGION (THE CASE OF KHOREZM REGION)	137
Sultanova Aziza Bahtiyor qizi	
PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ENTITIES PRODUCING FOOD PRODUCTS IN TASHKENT REGION	146
Abdulxamidova Nodira Abdura	
DYNAMIC PERFORMANCE OPTIMIZATION AND WEAR REDUCTION OF THE CAM SYSTEM IN CARDAN COUPLINGS FOR METRO ROLLING STOCK TRACTION DRIVES	153
Asamitdin Fayzullaev	
Ziyevutdin Fayzullaev	
RECOGNISED BUT NOT MEASURED: THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OF UZBEKISTAN'S STRATEGY-2030 (PRESIDENTIAL DECREE UP-21 OF 2026)	160
Salakhutdinova Yulduz Golibovna	
ANALYSIS OF PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY IN CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES: EVIDENCE FROM ANDIJAN REGION	168
Toshpulatov Asronbek Mutalibovich	
THE IMPACT OF FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS ON UZBEKISTAN'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY: A PANEL DATA ANALYSIS, 2017–2023	176
Jurabek Toshbekov	
Navik Istikomah	
A.B. Bobojonov	
HUMAN-AI SYNERGY IN STRATEGIC DECISIONMAKING OF ENTERPRISES IN UZBEKISTAN	182
Abdullaeva Odinakhon	
ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY IN UZBEKISTAN'S TOURISM SECTOR	186
Yuldashev Bekzodjon Sherzodjon ugli	
A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	190
Turmanqulov Norpo'lat Sa'dullayevich	
DESIGNING A THREE-LEVEL KPI FRAMEWORK FOR RANKING-ORIENTED UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: INTEGRATING DIGITAL MONITORING AND RESOURCE OPTIMIZATION	197
Mukhlisa Mamajonova	
ВЛИЯНИЕ IFRS 18 НА ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ КОНСОЛИДИРОВАННОЙ ФИНАНСОВОЙ ОТЧЁТНОСТИ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ С IAS 1	208
Шамсиева Нозима Шермат кизи	

INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS FOR IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AT ENTERPRISES.....	218
Uralova Sojida Anvar qizi	
IMPROVEMENT OF ECONOMIC MECHANISMS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES.....	225
Rajaboyev Shahboz Shodi o'g'li	
IMPROVEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE IN COMMUNICATION ENTERPRISES INVENTORY AUDIT BASED ON HAS 240 AND HAS 315 REQUIREMENTS.....	233
Jamilov Jushqin Jonon ugli	
IMPROVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION MECHANISMS IN THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF MODERN PAYMENT SYSTEMS.....	239
Iskandarov Xurshid Iskandarovich	
INNOVATIVE DETERMINANTS OF POVERTY: AN ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS BASED ON REGIONAL PANEL DATA	246
Amrullayev Dadaxon	
ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR STIMULATING ENTERPRISES' DEMAND FOR TECHNOLOGY UNDER INDUSTRY 4.0 CONDITIONS.....	251
Erkayev Akrom Normukhammadovich	
IMPROVING THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISM OF FAMILY BUSINESS MANAGEMENT THROUGH INNOVATIVE APPROACHES: THE CASE OF ANDIJAN REGION.....	258
Sultonov Bobirmirzo Mavlonjon o'g'li	
THE EFFICIENCY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN LIGHT INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES IN 2023–2025: EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXTILE SECTOR OF THE BUKHARA REGION.....	266
Mukhsinov Bekzod Tokhirovich	
ENSURING TRANSPARENCY IN FOREIGN TRADE: ADVANTAGES OF PUBLICLY DISCLOSING THE PRICES OF FOREIGN TRADE-RELATED SERVICES IN THE “SINGLE WINDOW” CUSTOMS INFORMATION SYSTEM.....	279
Muzafarov Azimjon Ashraf ugli	
THE SELF-EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN AND ITS ROLE IN POVERTY REDUCTION	282
Zakirov Mir Timur Zokir ugli	
PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT MECHANISMS FOR ACADEMIC STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....	289
Sultonboyeva Munira Bahodirovna	
Sultanova Kamila Mukhtorali kizi	
ECONOMETRIC ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT PER CAPITA IN UZBEKISTAN	298
Fayziyeva Nargiza Rabimovna	
IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY OF FINANCIAL ANALYSIS BASED ON THE INDICATORS OF THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION OF BUSINESS ENTITIES	305
Berdieva Marjona Shavkat kizi	
BUDGETING IN SANATORIUM AND HEALTH RESORT ORGANIZATIONS: FINANCIAL PLANNING AND COST MANAGEMENT	312
Tilabov Shohrukh Bahriddin o'g'li	
PRINCIPLES AND ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN SERVICES IN UZBEKISTAN	318
Y.M.Khalikov	
ANALYSIS OF SECTOR EFFICIENCY BASED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF VEGETABLE CROP SEED PRODUCTION	325
Faxriddinov Abdulhakim Ziyaiddinovich	

USING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PLATFORM ECONOMY TO DEVELOP THE ACTIVITIES OF SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS.....	332
Tursunxo'jayeva Gulnoza Jamoliddin qizi	
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF DIGITAL SERVICES FOR BUSINESS ENTITIES.....	340
Yusupova Dilbar Mirabidovna	
DIGITALIZATION IN THE RETAIL BANKING SYSTEM: CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND THE LEVEL OF FINANCIAL PRODUCT USAGE IN THE ASIAN REGION.....	345
Maxsadaliyeva Maftuna Toxir qizi	
DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEDICAL SERVICES MARKET.....	350
Urokov Firdavs Ortikniyoz ugli	
THE U.S. PRIVATE EQUITY MARKET MODEL: KEY DRIVERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UZBEKISTAN.....	356
Fayziyev Umurqul Shuxratovich	
Tulaganova Rukhshona Farrukh qizi	
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS IN NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.....	366
Kholikova Durdona Bunyodjon kizi	
ANALYSIS OF TAX REVENUE LOSSES DUE TO THE SHADOW ECONOMY: THE CASE OF UZBEKISTAN AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES.....	375
Abdullayev Shavkat Nasriddinovich	
DIRECTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE INTERNAL CONTROL AND AUDIT SYSTEM IN AN ENTERPRISE.....	381
Karamatova Noiba Husnitdinovna	
MATHEMATICAL MODELLING OF DATA ANALYSIS IN COMBATING THE SHADOW ECONOMY.....	389
Bobojonov Azimjon Akmal ugli	
THE ECONOMIC ESSENCE, CONTENT, AND CLASSIFICATION OF RETAIL TRADE AND MARKETING STRATEGIES.....	395
Ahmedov Shohjahon	
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT AND FORECASTING OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	400
Yormonqulova Nargiza	
ECONOMETRIC MODELS FOR EVALUATING INVESTMENT PROJECTS AND ENSURING THE DEBT SUSTAINABILITY OF RAILWAY TRANSPORT ENTERPRISES.....	408
Samandarov Doniyorbek Odilbekovich	
МЕТОДИЧЕСКИЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ФОРМИРОВАНИЮ ТЕХНИЧЕСКОГО ЗАДАНИЯ В СИСТЕМЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ ЗАКУПОК: ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ ПРЕДОТВРАЩЕНИЯ ПРАКТИК, ОГРАНИЧИВАЮЩИХ КОНКУРЕНЦИЮ.....	414
Ризакулов Шерзод Шермуратович	
TPOLOGY AND STANDARDIZATION OF GREEN CLAIMS IN UZBEKISTAN'S RETAIL MARKET: ADDRESSING CONSUMER TERMINOLOGY CONFUSION.....	421
Tokhir Abdirakhmonovich Akramov	
Zilola G'ulomovna Davronova	
IMPROVING THE INTERNAL AUDIT OF FINANCIAL ERRORS AND IRREGULARITIES IN BUDGET ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH A RISK-BASED APPROACH.....	428
Mulayev Farkhod Alisherovich	

DIGITAL AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF LAND MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE: MECHANISMS FOR ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY	434
Ubaydov Mirshod Ismailovich	

DIGITAL AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF LAND MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE: MECHANISMS FOR ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY

Ubaydov Mirshod Ismailovich
Independent Researcher
Tashkent State University of Economics

Abstract. The article examines the digital and institutional transformation of land market infrastructure in Uzbekistan. It analyzes real estate market activity, digital platforms, electronic auctions, cadastral services, and new payment mechanisms. Based on the findings, practical recommendations are proposed to improve transparency, data integration, and market efficiency.

Keywords: land market, digital transformation, land administration, cadastral system, electronic auction, transparency, market efficiency.

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается цифровая и институциональная трансформация инфраструктуры земельного рынка Узбекистана. Проанализированы активность рынка недвижимости, цифровые платформы, электронные аукционы, кадастровые услуги и новые платёжные механизмы. На основе полученных результатов предложены практические рекомендации по повышению прозрачности, интеграции данных и эффективности рынка.

Ключевые слова: земельный рынок, цифровая трансформация, управление земельными ресурсами, кадастровая система, электронный аукцион, прозрачность, эффективность рынка.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Uzbekistan has carried out large-scale reforms aimed at developing land relations based on market principles. In particular, Presidential Decree No. PF-6243 [4] of June 8, 2021, "On Measures to Ensure Equality and Transparency in Land Relations, Reliably Protect Land Rights and Transform Them into Market Assets," the Law "On the Privatization of Non-Agricultural Land Plots," and Resolution No. 71¹ of the Cabinet of Ministers dated February 14, 2022, established the legal framework for land privatization and the sale of land plots through electronic online auctions.

Within the implementation of these legal acts, the following key elements of land market infrastructure have been developed:

- The "Yerxususiyashtirish" automated information system electronically processes land privatization applications, coordinates them between relevant government agencies, and issues state privatization orders;
- The "Yerelektron" automated information system digitizes the identification of vacant land plots, preparation of land selection documents, and coordination with authorized organizations;
- The "E-auksion" electronic trading platform enables land plots and lease rights to be sold through open electronic auctions;
- The Unified Billing System automates the recording and distribution of payments;
- The Integrated Cadastre and Registration Information System ensures the state registration of land rights.

At the same time, the analysis of land privatization practices and electronic auction results shows that further development of certain elements of land market infrastructure offers significant opportunities to strengthen the role of land as a market asset and increase budget revenues in line with projected targets.

¹ <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-5858015>

LITERATURE REVIEW

The digital transformation of land market infrastructure does not simply mean converting paper-based information into electronic form. It also involves the comprehensive reorganization of the legal, institutional, and economic mechanisms used to manage land relations.

K. Deininger argues that clearly defined and protected land rights encourage investment, improve access to credit, and allow land to be transferred to more efficient users [7]. According to the author, an effective land market requires a registration system that is affordable, transparent, and accessible to all groups. Otherwise, complex procedures and limited access to information may preserve informal practices and reduce the efficiency of land use.

I. Williamson, S. Enemark, J. Wallace, and A. Rajabifard describe land administration as an integrated system that combines the functions of land tenure, land valuation, land use, and territorial development [12]. According to their approach, a modern cadastre should not only record parcel boundaries and rights holders but should also provide information required for valuation, taxation, spatial planning, and the real estate market. Therefore, the effectiveness of a digital cadastre depends not only on the existence of a database but also on its interoperability with other government information systems and its use in decision-making.

R. Bennett, A. Rajabifard, M. Kalantari, J. Wallace, and I. Williamson examined future cadastral systems and emphasized that they should be updated in real time, user-oriented, multipurpose, and integrated with other information systems [6]. The researchers explain that the future role of cadastres should not be limited to recording property rights. It should also include monitoring the land market, supporting territorial development planning, and providing reliable data for public policy. This approach confirms the importance of regularly updating land data and obtaining it directly from primary sources.

In the Land Governance Assessment Framework proposed by K. Deininger, H. Selod, and T. Burns, the legal and institutional environment, land-use planning, management of public land, openness of land information, and dispute-resolution mechanisms are identified as key assessment criteria [8]. This approach shows that digitalization alone cannot fully solve the problems of the land market. If the responsibilities of public authorities are not clearly divided, accountability for updating information is not established, and effective oversight mechanisms are absent, modern technologies may simply reproduce inefficient processes in electronic form. Institutional transformation is therefore an essential part of digital reform.

The “fit-for-purpose land administration” concept developed by S. Enemark, K.C. Bell, C. Lemmen, and R. McLaren states that land administration systems should not be unnecessarily complex. Instead, they should be suited to a country’s needs, economic capacity, and institutional resources [9]. This concept requires consistency among spatial, legal, and institutional components. The authors recommend first developing a simple system that covers all land parcels and associated rights, and then gradually improving its accuracy and functionality. This approach helps maintain a reasonable balance between costs and technological capabilities during digital transformation.

The FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests establish the principles of recognizing land rights, protecting rights holders, ensuring equal access to information, promoting transparent decisions, and resolving disputes fairly [10]. These principles indicate that the interests of all social groups should be considered when digital services are introduced. Maintaining alternative service channels for people who lack digital skills or internet access is important for ensuring institutional fairness.

A joint study published by FAO, UNECE, and FIG in 2022 reports that the digital transformation of land administration can improve land market efficiency, government revenues, service quality, accountability, and transparency [11]. The study identifies the digitization of paper documents, establishment of a unified electronic registry, introduction of online public services, integration of geospatial data, and development of electronic cooperation between government agencies as the main stages of transformation. At the same time, data security, personal data protection, the digital divide, and sustainable system financing are identified as major risks.

P.D. Ameyaw and W.T. de Vries studied the influence of blockchain technology on the transparency of land administration from institutional, organizational, technical, and social perspectives [5]. Their study shows that blockchain can improve data integrity and the traceability of transactions. However, the technology alone cannot resolve problems related to inaccurate source data, unclear land rights, or inefficient institutions. Therefore, blockchain and other advanced technologies can produce the expected results only when reliable primary cadastral data, a clear legal framework, and capable institutions are already in place.

Uzbekistan is gradually establishing a consistent legal framework for the institutional and digital transformation of its land market. Presidential Decree No. PF-6243 of June 8, 2021, “On Measures to Ensure Equality and Transparency in Land Relations, Reliably Protect Land Rights and Transform Them into Market Assets,” sets out measures to ensure equality and transparency in land relations, protect land rights, and convert these rights into marketable assets [4]. The document has supported the allocation of land plots through

open electronic auctions and the use of digital systems in land-related decisions made by public authorities.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. O'RQ-803 of November 28, 2022, "On State Registration of Rights to Immovable Property," establishes the principles of legality, priority, and openness of information in the state registration process [3]. The Law provides a unified legal procedure for registering the creation, transfer, restriction, and termination of rights to immovable property. The legal validity of information contained in the state registry reduces risks in the land market and increases the reliability of transactions.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. O'RQ-728 of November 15, 2021, "On the Privatization of Non-Agricultural Land Plots," defines the objects, participants, forms, and procedures of privatization [2]. Applications may be submitted through Public Service Centers or the Unified Interactive Public Services Portal, while vacant land plots may be sold through electronic online auctions. These mechanisms are intended to reduce unnecessary human involvement and improve the transparency of the privatization process.

The World Bank's Modernization of Real Property Registration and Cadastre Project in Uzbekistan focuses on developing a unified electronic registry, improving access to real property registration and cadastral services, and increasing the openness of land information [13]. The conceptual importance of the project lies in developing the cadastre as an integral part of electronic government services.

The new geospatial data project for 2025–2030 provides for the modernization of the UzKAD system, establishment of a national address registry, completion of cadastral maps, and improvement of data exchange between government agencies and the private sector [14]. These measures are expected to move digital land market infrastructure to a new stage and expand the use of land and real estate information in investment, urban planning, and business decisions.

The reviewed sources show that digital technologies can accelerate access to land information, reduce service delivery times, limit unnecessary human involvement, and improve the traceability of transactions. However, the success of digital transformation depends on clear legal rules, coordinated institutional responsibilities, reliable data, employees' digital skills, and effective information security.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study applies systematic, comparative, institutional, and descriptive statistical analysis. It examines relevant laws, international research, and official data from the Central Bank, Ministry of Justice, and National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan for the first quarter of 2026. The collected data are used to assess land and real estate market activity, identify existing institutional issues, and develop practical proposals for improving transparency and efficiency.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Real estate purchase and sale transactions are an important indicator of land and property market activity. The regional data for January–March 2026 make it possible to compare transaction volumes and identify differences in market activity across Uzbekistan (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Real Estate Purchase and Sale Transactions

Regions	January–March 2026	March 2026	Change, January–March	Change, March
Tashkent City	32,790	13,854	64%	118%
Tashkent Region	9,971	4,490	49%	118%
Syrdarya	2,825	1,309	67%	144%
Jizzakh	3,330	1,502	41%	122%
Samarkand	8,219	3,425	50%	105%
Fergana	8,529	3,871	39%	101%
Namangan	5,889	2,601	49%	138%
Andijan	7,125	3,124	56%	131%
Kashkadarya	5,894	2,350	42%	92%
Surkhandarya	4,583	2,001	39%	100%
Bukhara	5,601	2,418	35%	125%
Navoi	5,282	2,165	52%	116%
Khorezm	5,277	2,219	17%	77%
Republic of Karakalpakstan	4,736	1,984	30%	81%
Total	110,051	47,313	48.4%	112%

Source: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

During January–March 2026, a total of 110,051 real estate purchase and sale transactions were recorded in Uzbekistan, including 47,313 transactions in March. Tashkent City had the highest transaction volume, with 32,790 transactions during the three-month period and 13,854 in March. It was followed by Tashkent Region, Fergana, and Samarkand.

The highest change for January–March was recorded in Syrdarya at 67%, followed by Tashkent City at 64% and Andijan at 56%. In March, Syrdarya also showed the highest indicator at 144%, while Namangan and Andijan recorded 138% and 131%, respectively. By contrast, Khorezm had the lowest change for January–March at 17%, and its March indicator stood at 77%. Overall, the figures show that real estate market activity increased across most regions, although the pace of change differed considerably. This highlights the need to improve digital services, access to market information, and transaction procedures, particularly in regions with relatively low market activity.

The development of the real estate and land market depends on transaction activity, mortgage financing, housing supply, price movements, and the quality of institutional mechanisms. The main indicators for the first quarter of 2026 provide a clear picture of current market conditions and ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan (Table 2).

Table 2. Key Indicators of Real Estate and Land Market Development in Uzbekistan, Q1 2026

Indicator	Q1 2026	Change	Economic significance
Real estate purchase and sale transactions	110.1 thousand	+48.4%	Indicates a significant increase in market activity
Mortgage loans issued	UZS 5.7 trillion	+29.0%	Supported stable demand in the housing market
Total area of completed housing	3.3 million sq. m	+6.6%	Shows an expansion in housing supply
Individual housing construction	—	+6.8%	Served as the main source of growth in housing construction
Share of construction investment in total investment	10.8%	7.4% in Q1 2025	Reflects the growing role of housing and infrastructure investment
Number of housing sale listings	118 thousand	125 thousand in Q1 2025	Indicates a relatively stable level of market supply
Primary housing prices	—	+8.1% in USD; +1.8% in UZS	Reflects stronger demand and higher market activity
Secondary housing prices	—	+9.4% in USD; +3.0% in UZS	Shows faster price growth than in the primary market
Housing rental prices nationwide	—	+9.5% in USD; +3.1% in UZS	Indicates moderate growth in rental costs
Average price of land in Tashkent City	UZS 301 million per 100 sq. m	–6.4%	The decline was linked to increased land supply in areas farther from the city centre
Escrow settlement mechanism	Introduced on April 1, 2026	New institutional mechanism	Improves payment security, transaction transparency, and the protection of buyers and sellers

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from the Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Justice, and the National Statistics Committee.

The data show a significant increase in real estate market activity during the first quarter of 2026. The number of purchase and sale transactions reached 110.1 thousand, representing an increase of 48.4%. Mortgage lending also rose by 29% to UZS 5.7 trillion, supporting stable demand for housing.

Housing supply continued to expand, although more slowly than transaction activity. The total area of completed housing increased by 6.6% to 3.3 million square metres, mainly due to growth in individual housing construction. In addition, the share of construction investment in total investment rose from 7.4% to 10.8%, showing the growing importance of housing and infrastructure projects.

Higher market activity was also reflected in prices. In US dollar terms, primary housing prices increased by 8.1%, while secondary housing prices rose by 9.4%. Rental prices increased moderately. At the same time, the average price of land in Tashkent City declined by 6.4% to UZS 301 million per 100 square metres. This decrease was mainly associated with a larger supply of land in areas farther from the city centre.

The introduction of the escrow settlement mechanism on April 1, 2026, represents an important institutional reform. It is expected to improve payment security, increase transaction transparency, and provide additional protection for buyers and sellers. Overall, the indicators show that digital services, secure payment mechanisms, and reliable market information are becoming increasingly important for the efficient development of land and real estate market infrastructure.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study shows that Uzbekistan's land and real estate market is becoming more active due to digital services, electronic auctions, mortgage lending, and new payment mechanisms. In the first quarter of 2026, real estate transactions increased by 48.4%, while mortgage lending rose by 29%. However, the sustainable development of the market requires stronger integration between land, cadastre, tax, notary, and auction systems, as well as reliable and accessible land information.

It is recommended to establish a Unified National Land Information Platform, create an open interactive land map, introduce regional land price indices, and expand electronic auctions for underused public land. Legal procedures should also be simplified, while remote sensing and artificial intelligence should be used to monitor land use. These measures will improve transparency, reduce transaction time, strengthen property rights, and increase the overall efficiency of land market infrastructure.

Proposals for Improving Land Market Infrastructure Development Mechanisms:

- Review and systematize the legal and regulatory documents governing the land market. In particular, improve the procedures established by Resolution No. 71 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated February 14, 2022, based on problems identified in practice;

- Accelerate the preparation and approval of master plans and detailed planning projects for settlements. Until these documents are approved, introduce temporary simplified mechanisms for selling land plots with ownership rights;

- Fully digitize the coordinates of areas where land cannot be allocated for business or urban development, including protection zones, conservation areas, and red lines. Publish this information in an open registry and update it regularly;

- Conduct a full inventory of land used by government bodies and land held in reserve. Expand market supply by offering inefficiently used land plots through electronic auctions;

- Establish a Unified National Land Information Platform by fully integrating the "Yerelektron," "Yerxususiyashtirish," "E-auksion," cadastre, tax, and notary systems. Organize all related procedures through a one-stop-shop approach;

- Launch an interactive public map based on the National Geographic Information System. The map should provide information on the legal status of land, existing restrictions, access to infrastructure, and price indicators;

- Introduce a regional land price index based on land market transactions and auction results. Publish the index quarterly through the national open data portal;

- Establish an artificial intelligence-based land-use monitoring system using remote sensing and satellite imagery. This system should help identify land plots that are not being used efficiently.

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