When do I need a Land Surveyor?

When you purchase a home: A home is usually the biggest investment of your life, and only a Professional Land Surveyor can determine the boundaries of the property and make sure you are getting all the land you believe you will own. By having your property surveyed before you buy, you will know where all the property lines are, what you are buying, and whether any natural or man-made features near the property lines are on that property.

When a lender requires a property to have flood insurance: The elevation of the nearest floodplain in relation to your property can be determined by the Land Surveyor. Having your property analyzed by a Land Surveyor can be the difference in a homeowner paying for expensive flood insurance or completing a FEMA Elevation Certificate to confirm your property is in the clear.

When you install a fence, do landscaping, or make other improvements to your property: By having a survey done first, you can plan your project and make sure it is within the boundaries of your land. Fences that encroach onto a neighbor's property have the potential to turn good neighbors into bad neighbors.

When you build an addition to your home, a new garage, or other structures: When a homeowner builds an addition or new building, the Land Surveyor can locate all the features of the property that help determine the building setback and the size of addition or new structure allowed.

When in need of a professional service, you should know exactly what you are getting. A Professional Land Surveyor will take the time to understand your survey needs.

Surveyors who are members of their local, state, and national professional organizations are showing that they are concerned with changes in laws and technology. They are given the most opportunity for continuing education and changes affecting the land surveying profession. Always consider using a member of your local or state professional land surveying organization.

This information is supplied by the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS) and distributed by:

A Homeowner's Guide to Boundary Surveys

Should You Hire a Land Surveyor?

Protecting your investment with the services of a licensed Land Surveyor.

Professional Land Surveyors are the only people trained and licensed to make property line determinations.

Many people assume telephone poles, fences, or cracks in the sidewalk are the property corners when in reality they most likely are not.

Dividing one land parcel into two or more parcels can be a lengthy process, and every municipality has its own guidelines, size requirements and process for dividing land.

Contact a local Professional Land Surveyor to help you through what process is needed and what time constraints you may have. The process could be lengthy even for something as simple as wanting to split off one small piece of the farm for your child to build on.

What should I expect from my Surveyor?

- Your Land Surveyor and crew should treat you and your neighbors with respect.
- Your Land Surveyor should be licensed in the state of your project site.
- You should receive a map showing the results of the work that was performed.
- All the boundaries of your property should be clearly marked.

How does a survey work?

1 Your Surveyor will most likely start the work on your survey before you see them at the site. They first must do any necessary research to determine your parcel and the adjoiners' parcels to verify that there are no overlaps or gaps in the properties. This will help them set up information for the field work to be conducted on the project.

2 Next the Surveyor will do the field survey, and if all goes well, they may set any missing corner irons or other mark – such as drill holes, a disk, a concrete monument – on their first trip out. If things are not exactly where they are expecting, they may have to return to the office and do some calculations before returning to set any missing corners.

3 The Land Surveyor's last step is drawing the final map and presenting it to you.

! With road construction, development, and earth working activities occurring over time, property corners may be disturbed or removed, making the job of the Surveyor more difficult, time consuming, and costly for the homeowner.

How do I hire a Surveyor?

- Ask for references from family and friends
- Check with local and state Professional Land Surveyors organizations; many of them have a public list of their members.
- Ask at the office of your local municipality. Many have lists of Professional Land Surveyors that work in their area.
- When you call a Land Surveyor, it will expedite the process to have information on your property ready, including any previous surveys, tax bill information, owner's name, and the address of the property.
- The Land Surveyor needs to know the purpose for the survey before any work is begun. If you want special features shown on the final map, you should discuss this with the Land Surveyor. If you are in a dispute with a neighbor over the location of a property line, the Land Surveyor will be aware that they may need to take a little time to talk with a neighbor to explain what is being done as part of the survey. In many states, Surveyors do not have a "right of entry" and may need the time to introduce themselves to neighbors. And, some "right of entry" laws may require that the Surveyor send letters to neighbors and law enforcement agencies ahead of time.
- If you want a map drawn of all the features of your property, make the Land Surveyor aware of that before he or she goes into the field. In many areas, it may not be required to show buildings and improvements as part of a basic survey.