

Since a person may require the services of a Professional Land Surveyor only once during their lifetime, they may not be aware of the logical steps to be followed when selecting a Land Surveyor. To help in making such a selection, we have prepared this page with the answers to a few commonly asked questions.

In general, a survey should be made before purchasing real property, when dividing any parcel of land for sale (in conformance with state laws and local ordinances), and prior to the construction of any improvements on property in which you have an interest.

Remember, the services of a Land Surveyor today will cost less in time, worry, and money than the cost of moving improvements or defending a lawsuit later.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A LAND SURVEYOR?

Only a Registered Professional Land Surveyor licensed by the Texas Board of Professional Land Surveying is legally permitted to perform land surveys in the State of Texas. Most active Land Surveyors are listed in the yellow pages of the telephone book, or a listing may be obtained from the Texas Society of Professional Surveyors, a website search or from the Texas Board of Professional Land Surveying. All Registered Professional Land Surveyors are listed on the board's roster at <http://txls.texas.gov/education>.

A Land Surveyor is an integral part of a professional team composed of attorneys, engineers, architects, planners, and landscape architects. Some land surveying companies offer comprehensive services including some, or all of the above.

Choose a reputable Land Surveyor in whose skill and judgement you can put your trust. A Land Surveyor should not be selected by **price** alone. Competency is of first importance. Your selection should be made when you are sure that the professional that you have chosen has all of the facts, and is completely aware of your requirements and/or the requirements of the governmental agency having jurisdiction over the property.

Land Surveyors, like other professionals, vary in knowledge and ability. The experiences expressed by clients have shown that the majority of Land Surveyors provide competent work for a reasonable fee.

HOW MUCH WILL A SURVEY COST?

The cost for most land surveying work is determined, based on the following variables:

1. Type of survey: Cost may increase as the required precision and scope of the survey increases.
2. Record search: This varies by (a) the number of parcels involved; and (b) the number of past transactions. (This necessary step is complicated by the casual manner in which land transactions have been handled in the past, resulting in many vague, incomplete, and often contradictory legal descriptions and land records).
3. Size and shape of the property: An irregularly shaped parcel has more corners to monument than a rectangular parcel containing the same area.

4. Sectionalized Survey Work: (Mainly in west Texas) This could require the survey of the entire section (640 acres +/-) in which the land being surveyed lies, regardless of the area of the parcel. In some cases, a survey of more than one section is required, depending on the location of the parcel in question in relation to the sections shown on the government plat.
 5. Terrain: A level parcel of land is easier to survey than a mountain parcel.
 6. Vegetation: Branches, brush, and small trees must frequently be cleared to afford a line of sight for the Surveyor. Shrubs, flowers and trees on home sites are normally not disturbed, but may require additional field time to perform work around them.
 7. Accessibility: The time to perform the surveying work varies with the distance to, and the difficulty in reaching, the corners on the site.
 8. Amount of existing evidence on the property: Existing evidence such as iron, wood, or stone monuments, old fences and occupation lines, witness trees, etc. aid the Surveyor. Their absence may compound difficulties involved in retracing the original survey.
 9. Local knowledge of property: Someone pointing out accepted occupation lines and monumentation is a considerable aid to the Surveyor.
 10. Abutter Difficulties: When neighbors are cooperative, an otherwise difficult or impossible boundary line location may be established by a boundary line agreement. Cooperative neighbors that allow the Surveyor to access their property to locate additional monuments to aid in determining the boundary of the parcel being surveyed can also be extremely helpful. This may prevent the Surveyor from making an unformed decision or no decision at all pertaining to the boundary of the parcel he or she is surveying.
 11. Time of Year: In summer, foliage may present problems making traversing difficult. In winter, weather may slow travel to and on site, and sometimes conceal field evidence.
 12. Title Company Requirements: Title companies may require considerably more documentation than is normally required by the average land owner.
- Because of these variables, it is difficult to determine the exact fees. However, based on general experience and the requirements for the work, the Surveyor can furnish an approximate estimate of the costs. Land surveyors familiar with an area or locale are usually more efficient than those who are not.

WHAT WILL A LAND SURVEYOR DO FOR ME?

Question: Will a Land Surveyor tell me what I own?

Answer: No. It is your responsibility to furnish the Surveyor with a legal description, current title report, or policy concerning the parcel that you want surveyed. He/she will then locate the property on the ground, marking the corners with physical monuments, and provide you with a survey map showing the results of the survey. He/she will also disclose the areas that are in conflict so that the title company and/or attorney can resolve any problems.

Question: Will I be shown if there are any encroachments on the property?

Answer: Yes, if you instruct the Land Surveyor to show encroachments in the area of concern to you.

Question: Will I be shown if there are any easements on my property?

Answer: Yes, if you instruct the Surveyor to do so, and provide a current title report or title policy to use for this purpose. He/she may supply a map, plat, or exhibit showing this

information. *Keep in mind that if the title report or title policy is delivered to the Surveyor after a signed and sealed plat of survey is delivered, there may be an additional charge to address the title report.*

Question: How will I be shown what has been surveyed?

Answer: Corners of the property will be marked with stakes, pipes, or other such monuments with the Registered Professional Land Surveyors registration number or associated employer indicated thereon. The corners on the parcel will be pointed out to you, if requested. A plat of survey will usually be given to you when these monuments are set, indicating dimensions of property lines, monuments, and other relative data as required by the Texas Board of Professional Land Surveying, the client, or others. *You should not accept a plat of survey unless all the missing corners have been set and marked in a way that references the Surveyor or Survey Company of record if called for on the plat of survey. Any Surveyor that releases a plat of survey calling to set corner monuments that have not been set and marked in a way that references the Surveyor or Survey Company of record is in violation of the rules set forth by the Texas Board of Professional Land Surveying.*

Question: Should I explain why I want a survey?

Answer: Yes. If the Surveyor knows why you want a survey, he/she can recommend the type of survey you need, and how much detail should be shown on the map, plat, or exhibit.

Question: Why are there conflicting boundary and easement lines?

Answer: It is often true that boundary/easement line disputes, gaps, and overlaps are a result of legal descriptions which were originally written and recorded without the benefit of the services of a competent Land Surveyor. It is important to have these lines properly described and surveyed, if necessary, when property or easement lines are created or changed. Any newly created or adjusted boundary line requires processing through the local governmental agency as required by local ordinance and/or Chapter 212 of the Local Govt. Code.

METHODS OF SURVEYING

Most Surveyors use electronic distance and angle measurement equipment and GPS. Modern computer systems aid in efficiently gathering measurements and in evaluating all collected evidence required to perform the survey. The Land Surveyor takes pride in being able to use these instruments and computers to perform land surveys efficiently, accurately, and cost effectively.

TYPES OF LAND SURVEYS

A.L.T.A. Survey or Extended Title Insurance Coverage Survey:

A survey made for the purpose of supplying a title company and lender with survey and location data necessary for issuing American Land Title Association or Extended Coverage Title Insurance.

Boundary Survey:

A survey for the express purpose of establishing or re-establishing the corners and boundary lines of a given parcel of land. A boundary survey may be an original survey or a retracement

survey. An original survey is a subdivision of land into smaller tracts, such as the original grant surveys for subdividing the lands of the Republic or State of Texas. Any subdivision of an existing tract of land is also an original survey and the performance of such a survey is dictated by the client's needs, site considerations, state laws and local ordinances governing subdivisions. However, before a tract of land can be subdivided, its corners and boundaries must be established by a retracement survey.

A retracement survey is a boundary survey which re-establishes the corners and boundary lines of a parcel of land previously surveyed. This involves a thorough research of both public and private records to arrive at a proper description of the property. Often the surveyor must include a historical analysis of property configurations in the general area. Such research may involve public records in other county courthouses or even research of the original land patent records maintained by the General Land Office in Austin, Texas. Angular and linear measurements locating existing property corners and other evidence of ownership are then correlated with this title research. Complex survey problems, often solved using analytical analysis, trigonometric calculations, high-speed computers and plotters, are then resolved and final monumentation of property corners and boundary lines is established. Easement lines may also be located and/or established with this type of survey. The details of the survey are shown on a survey map or on a series of maps. Copies of maps with the Surveyor's signature and stamped with the Surveyor's seal, usually accompanied by a written legal description, are then prepared for the client's needs. The Registered Professional Land Surveyor maintains the original map tracings and other record research as he may be required at a later date to represent his findings in a Court of Law.

Land Title Survey:

If you are purchasing title insurance, often a land title survey is required. This is usually a boundary retracement survey with additional surveying to meet the specific needs required by title insurance companies. The map of such a survey must show particular information in detail and exactness of matters discoverable from survey and inspection, and not necessarily evidenced by public records. Unrecorded easements, access roads to other properties, physical encroachments of buildings, and other visible adverse uses of the property by other parties, are examples of matters of particular concern for a land title survey.

Topographic Survey:

A survey locating topographic features, natural and man-made, such as buildings, improvements, fences, elevations, trees, streams, contours of the land, etc. This type of survey may be required by a governmental agency or may be used by engineers and/or architects for design improvements or developments on a site.

Site Planning Survey:

A combination of boundary and topographic surveys for preparation of a site plan to be used for designing improvements or developments.

Subdivision Survey:

The subdivision of a tract of land into smaller parcels, showing monumentation and survey data on a map, in conformance with local ordinances and/or the Texas Local Govt. Code Chap. 212.

Control Survey:

Precise location of horizontal and vertical positions of points for use in boundary determination, mapping from aerial photographs, construction staking, and other related purposes.

Court Exhibit Survey:

Analysis of various legal descriptions and survey maps; field locating of record, existing monuments, and physical features; and mapping showing this information for the purpose of presenting a visual exhibit to be used in a courtroom.

Construction Survey:

Construction staking of improvements shown on improvement plans for control of construction on developments for roads, buildings, pipelines, etc.

LAND SURVEYOR-CLIENT RELATIONS

The Professional Land Surveyor renders a highly technical and complex service. He/she is a member of a professional team--attorney, title company, architect, engineer, and others--and prepares the foundation upon which your project is built.

In cases of controversy, a Land Surveyor appears in court on your behalf as an expert witness. No one else can assume responsibility for the correctness and accuracy of the work performed by an individual Surveyor.