

You may require the services of a land surveyor only once or twice in your lifetime. The need usually arises when you buy a home, lot or a tract of land. This purchase usually represents the largest single investment made by an American during his lifetime. In view of this, the South Carolina Society of Professional Land Surveyors has prepared this pamphlet so that you may better understand the necessity for surveying, how it can help you and the various types of surveys that you need.

### **WHEN IS A SURVEY REQUIRED?**

- **Before** a title to land is conveyed, it is wise to have an up to date land survey of boundaries and acreage in order to prepare an accurate legal description of the property. It is important to make sure that land usage conforms to legal description (i.e., no encroachment, projections, etc.)
- **Before** land is subdivided, a survey must be performed in order to meet city, county and State subdivision regulations.
- **Before** undertaking improvements (i.e., buildings, fences, etc.), it is wise to know the exact location of property boundaries as well as any easements or right of ways that may affect the subject property. This will aid in avoiding encroachments which could lead to law suits.
- **Before** land is partitioned by will, it is wise to have a plat prepared and recorded to assure that your intent is carried out. With the rate of current inflation, the earlier this type of survey is done, the less it will cost.

### **SELECTING A PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR**

When it is determined that a land survey is required, only a competent professional land surveyor, licensed by the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, is legally permitted to make a survey in the State of South Carolina.

His qualifications are established by a Code of Laws of South Carolina and minimum standards have been

established by which he must abide. All qualified surveyors possess evidence of their current license to practice land surveying.

Many licensed land surveyors are listed in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory under the heading "Surveyors-Land."

It may not be necessary to visit the surveyor's office or the property to be surveyed. Usually the information needed by the surveyor can be sent to him by letter. This is preferred as it gives the surveyor written authorization to proceed with the survey.

To perform an accurate survey, the surveyor should have a copy of the deed for the property to be surveyed and the adjoining properties, if available; copies of any applicable plats; and any other information the owner has that might aid the surveyor in his research of all documents related to the property to be surveyed.

### **COST OF A SURVEY**

The cost of the survey will be based on a number of factors. Those may include time to search the court records for evidence to establish the original boundaries, conduct the field survey, make necessary computations, prepare a plat survey (drafting), mark the property lines if ordered, and placement of appropriate markers as required by the Code of Laws.

Factors that tend to affect the cost of a survey are: missing property corners, disputed property lines, rough terrain, heavy underbrush, old inaccurate descriptions, travel time to the property, and professional liability of the surveyor's opinion.

Because of these varying conditions, it is difficult for a surveyor to predict an exact cost.

### **TYPES OF SURVEYS**

It is very important that the purpose of the survey is communicated to the Professional Surveyor. He can

usually recommend the type of survey required and the amount of detail that will need to be shown on the plan or plat.

#### **Boundary Survey:**

A boundary survey of a tract of land with appropriate markers set, as required by State law, if missing, to perpetuate the lines and corners of subject property.

#### **Closing or Loan Survey:**

A property survey of a lot or parcel of land with corners located or set, showing location of structures, easements or rights-of-way, and encroachments or projections (if found). This type of survey is usually required by a lending institution.

#### **Topographical Survey:**

A survey locating all topographical features, natural and man made, such as buildings, roads, fences, creeks, rivers, marshes, elevations, contours of the property, etc.

#### **Site Planning Survey:**

This survey uses a boundary and topographic survey as a base to design future improvements. It can be a design for a house, a residential subdivision, a store, a shopping center, a new street or highway, a playground or other improvements.

#### **ALTA/ACSM Survey:**

This survey is a very detailed survey usually of commercial property and often required by lending institutions. The request for this survey must be in writing and be accompanied by all deeds, plats and easements affecting the subject property, as well as all adjoining properties. A list of items to be located as noted in the ALTA/ACSM publication can also be included.

The above does not include all types of surveys, but briefly defines the most common surveys.

The surveyor can re-survey your land only according to the deed and other information available to him. He cannot guarantee the legal title to the land. However, the accuracy by which he accomplishes his service is backed by his professional integrity.

The surveyor renders a highly technical and complex service. He is a member of a professional team comprised of Surveyor, Title Attorney, Engineer and/or Architect, all of whom must rely heavily on the surveyor's integrity and the accuracy of his work.

The surveyor, and no one else, assumes responsibility for the correctness and accuracy of the surveyor's work.

In case of litigation, the surveyor will appear in court as an expert witness and his testimony is accepted by the court as professional evidence.

### **Advice To The Public On Land Surveying Matters**

*Title 40, Chapter 22, Code of Laws of South Carolina (1976), as amended, protects the welfare and property of the public by prescribing that any person in either a public or private capacity practicing or offering to practice Land Surveying be required to meet minimum standards of education, experience and examinations, and to be registered by the South Carolina State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors.*

*The Board investigates illegal and unlicensed surveying activities and has noted that such surveys frequently are of poor quality and can lead to civil court action and boundary disputes.*

*The following are recommendations provided for the guidance and protection of the public, in dealing with surveying of your land, which is becoming more precious each day:*

*(1) If any doubt exists, contact the Board to insure that the individual contracted to survey your land is licensed as a Professional Land Surveyor in South Carolina.*

*(2) Make sure that a survey map or plat delivered to you bears the raised embossed Seal of a Professional Land Surveyor. The law requires each Professional Land Surveyor to stamp his plats with his Seal when filed with public authorities, such as a Register of Deeds. The Seal must bear the words "Professional Land Surveyor," the inscription "South Carolina," and the name and certificate (license) number of the Professional Land Surveyor responsible for the conduct of the survey.*

*(3) Beware of persons offering to survey your land on the basis of an alleged "arrangement" with a Professional Land Surveyor, who purportedly will check and place his Seal on the work of the unlicensed person. The Law allows for employees or subordinates of Professional Land Surveyors to work for a Professional Land Surveyor, but only under direct supervision, checking and responsibility of the Professional Land Surveyor. Please inquire of the Board if you have any doubt as to the legitimacy of any such offer.*

*(4) Exercise caution in contracting for a "bargain survey." You may receive an illegal and worthless survey map, not suitable for filing with Register of Deeds, or for adequate deed preparation.*

*(5) When seeking the services of a Land Surveyor, the public is well-advised to deal directly with the Professional Land Surveyor and to make payments for services rendered only to the Professional Land Surveyor or his firm.*

*Current registrations may be verified by contacting the Board at the following address:*

S.C. Dept. of Labor, Licensing & Regulation  
Board of Professional Engineers and  
Land Surveyors  
Synergy Business Park, Kingstree Building  
PO Box 11597  
Columbia, South Carolina 29211-1597  
Phone: (803) 896-4422  
Fax: (803) 896-4427  
[www.llr.state.sc.us](http://www.llr.state.sc.us)

# **FACTS YOU NEED BEFORE CALLING A LAND SURVEYOR**



**Published as a public service by**

## **THE SOUTH CAROLINA SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYORS**

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