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## **ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING PROPERTY SURVEYS**

**Q:** What information is a property survey?

**A:** A property survey is the process of locating, marking, and recording a described tract of land on the ground.

There are two distinct cases for which property surveys are performed. The first case involves a survey of an existing described parcel. In this case, a survey would locate and mark the legal boundaries of a described parcel as described in a deed.

The second case is where a new parcel of land is created by splitting it off from a larger, existing parcel. In this case, the survey would involve locating and marking the newly created boundaries and then describing these boundaries.

In either case, the survey must be documented and recorded with the county recorder.

**Q:** What information is needed from the client?

**A:** The client needs to provide the surveyor with a deed that describes the boundaries of the parcel of land to be surveyed. In the case where a new parcel of land is being created, a deed should be provided that contains a description of the parcel from which the new parcel is to be created. A deed containing the boundary description of a piece of land is the strongest legal evidence as to the location of the boundaries of that property. For this reason, the surveyor must work from the exact words shown on the deed. County tax descriptions are often abbreviated, leaving out critical evidence as to the location of the boundaries. Abstracts contain a copy of the boundary description along with information concerning the history of the boundary lines. An abstract may contain references to other legal evidence which can be of use to the surveyor, however, a survey should not be based upon the description included in the abstract due to the fact that the abstracted description may contain errors.

The client may also be able to assist the surveyor by providing any knowledge of the existence and location of property or section corner monuments. This information may save the surveyor time, thereby reducing the cost of the survey.

**Q:** What does a property survey involve?

**A:** The first step in providing a property survey is to research written evidence which may locate the boundary lines of the parcel. This written evidence may be in the form of deeds, other property plats, subdivision plats, road establishment records, road construction plans, notes of the original government surveys, railroad maps, and many others.

Once the surveyor has gathered all of the written information concerning the legal boundaries in an area, field measurements are made to locate the physical evidence found. These measurements are then compared with the written evidence to aid in determining the location of the boundary lines. Sometimes additional evidence is found in the field which may lead the surveyor to other sources of written evidence.

The surveyor is required by law to make a diligent search for all written and physical evidence of the boundary lines. This search may include excavation in order to verify the existence of corner monuments. In the case where excavation is required in the right-of-way of a county road, the surveyor will usually request assistance from the county engineer for the excavation. Some counties will provide this assistance and some do not. In the case where the surveyor is unable to obtain assistance from the county, a contractor must be hired to perform the excavation. The cost of this work may or may not be included in the surveyor's estimate for the survey.

Once the boundary lines are established on the ground, a written plat of survey must be prepared which shows the findings of the survey. By law, this written record must be recorded with the county recorder.

**Q:** How much does a property survey cost?

**A:** This is probably the most frequently asked question concerning property surveys, it is also the most difficult to answer. Unless the surveyor is familiar with the area, he has no idea how much work will be required to locate the boundary lines you are needing. From the information above, you can see that size of the parcel to be surveyed has very little to do with the amount of work involved or the cost of the survey. The major factors that affect the cost of the survey are the existence of boundary corner monuments, how the property is described in the deed, whether the property is adjacent to a river or a railroad, the terrain or the lay of the land, and the time of year. The time of the year may play a big factor in the cost of the survey. During the summertime, visibility is greatly reduced due to the existence of leaves and crops in the fields. This reduced visibility makes the measurements for the surveyor more difficult. For the above reason, he will usually need to perform some preliminary research to estimate the cost of the survey.

**Q:** When should I have a property survey performed?

**A:** When buying or selling land and you do not clearly know where the property line is on the ground. When land is not clearly defined by a plat, legal description, or older Land Survey. When you cannot be certain of the location of your property corners or boundary lines. When you think you might have an encroachment on your land. To settle a boundary dispute. Before land is divided or developed. When a lending institution requires a survey for a mortgage. Before making improvements to your property such as a house addition, building a fence, or a shed or anything close to an unknown property line. Many times, an Attorney, Bank or title insurance agent will require that a Land Surveyor clear up an ambiguous land description, or verify the location of structures on the property so that the lending on the property so that the lending institution can agree to finalize a loan.