

LAND SURVEY DEFINITIONS

ALTA/ACSM Surveys are the most comprehensive form of survey and improvement location. It covers all aspects of a boundary survey and improvement location and identification of any additional evidence of possession or use which could be adverse to the interest of the purchaser.

ALTA (American Land Title Association) and the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping (ACSM) have worked in conjunction to develop a set of land surveying standards. Their goal is to promote uniformity in land surveys. An ALTA survey is a boundary survey prepared to a set of minimum standards that have been jointly prepared and adopted by the ALTA/ACSM. In addition, an ALTA survey shows on-site improvements, easements, rights-of-way, and other elements that affect the land.

An important part of the ALTA is having a current title commitment. Which is required before an ALTA Survey can be completed. The surveyor will refer to the title commitment for the legal description of the property and for the legal description of any encumbrances (exceptions)

Boundary Surveys establish or re-establish the boundaries or limits of a parcel, legal description or easement identified by a recorded document and/or deed. This type of survey will not only identify the location of the boundary, but will disclose possession limits and discrepancies that may exist between the record description of the property and that of the adjoining properties. Boundary surveys in the State must adhere to the requirements of Washington State Law.

In addition to the use of modern equipment and computer software, our staff of professional surveyors have a strong understanding of the legal aspects and principles of land surveying, including the history and original distribution of land throughout the area. This knowledge, together with a thorough understanding of the early techniques of measurement utilized by surveyors in this area assist us in making the critical boundary determinations necessary to protect the welfare of the public and enable reliance upon the professional work performed.

FEMA Flood Survey If your property is located within a flood hazard zone as determined by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) you may be required to complete a FEMA Elevation Certificate in order to purchase flood insurance, as a part of the sale of the property or as a part of a new construction or remodeling process for your home. An elevation certificate is prepared by a licensed surveyor and will measure the elevations around your house and property and compare them to the floodplain elevations determined by FEMA. This process helps an insurance estimator or city/county official determine the actual flood risk to your home and property.

After the Elevation Certificate is completed, this can be submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for review and potential reclassification of flood zone status. This is an important tool for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Note that this certificate alone does not provide a waiver of flood insurance. It is a tool to be used to determine if other forms are necessary, such as the Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) or Letter of Map Revision (LOMR). If you are currently paying for flood insurance but feel your home, business or other building is not in danger of flooding, an Elevation Certificate may help you avoid unnecessary insurance charges.

GPS (Global Positioning System) control surveys utilizes high precision survey grade Global Positioning Receivers to establish vertical and horizontal values for remote areas. Measurements can be determined without the necessity of a clear line of sight between points on the ground which enables the surveyor to work in challenging terrain and to cover very large areas in an efficient and precise manner.

Topographic surveys establish the change in elevation of land and constructed features such as roadways, drainage channels, utilities and structures which are frequently utilized for design purposes. Specific costs relative to the construction of a foundation of a proposed structure or other improvements can be determined more precisely if a topographic survey is completed prior to design. This type of survey is critical to enable the design for adequate drainage of a site before construction is completed. Elevations can be assumed relative to an arbitrary stable point (Bench Mark) or can be based upon a government identified sea level datum. It is becoming more and more common for the municipalities to require a bench mark on their datum.

Tree surveys locate desirable or otherwise significant trees on a property which are frequently needed for design purposes or to adhere to a community landscape ordinance. This type of survey can locate specific trees of a certain species or minimum trunk size as desired by the client. If the tree survey is being made in order to comply with a community landscape ordinance, the trees which are applicable to the requirements of the ordinance will be identified, measured and tagged. The trees measured will be shown on a boundary survey drawing of subject property.

Many times we are called upon, due to one neighbor encroaching on another with their timber cutting or clearing, to locate the stumps of trees that have been removed. We locate the stumps and show the diameter and species if we can identify it in relationship to the property line.

Utility Locate Surveys identify and locate underground utilities, tanks, and foreign objects essential to employing safe operating procedures. An accurate utility survey provides confidence and gives you peace of mind. Above ground utilities on or near a property will be measured and identified and shown on a boundary survey of the subject property. Underground utilities can be identified as either marked on the surface by utility locators or as shown on plans prepared by respective utility companies. A boundary survey will need to be performed either beforehand or simultaneously with the Utility Location Survey.