Only a Professional Land Surveyor (land surveyor) licensed through the Oregon State Board of Examiners for Engineers and Land Surveyors (OSBEELS) is authorized to perform land surveys in Oregon. Before selecting a land surveyor, a property owner or developer needs to consider the surveyor’s qualifications. Details of the surveyor’s past experience and references should be requested. Like many professions, price is not the sole indicator of the quality of work that will be done for you. Select a land surveyor only when you are confident the person has the necessary facts as well as a thorough awareness of your needs and the requirements of governmental agencies.

In more complex land development projects or where boundary disputes occur, a land surveyor is often part of a team comprised of other professionals; e.g., attorneys, engineers, architects, planners and environmental specialists.

Surveying is a highly technical field that requires expertise in real property law, public records research, evaluation of historical survey evidence, mathematics, statistics, measurement systems, planning regulations and current computer technologies.

Surveyors are often retained:
- Prior to purchasing real property
- Prior to beginning any construction improvements within property boundaries
- When dividing parcels of land for sale or adjusting existing parcel boundaries
- When property ownership disputes arise
- To investigate written records and historical survey evidence

Employing the services of a land surveyor can help property owners avoid lawsuits or unnecessary expenses relating to land ownership or a potential land purchase.

As a property owner, have you been in the position of needing a land surveyor? If so, the Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon (PLSO) has prepared this brochure to help you better understand this process.

SELECTING A LAND SURVEYOR

VALUE OF RETAINING A LAND SURVEYOR

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ADJOINER: The next-door neighbor or the property next to the owner’s.

ADVERSE POSSESSION: A situation where ownership can be claimed by use or occupation. As defined by law, certain rules apply which are best understood through consultation with a land surveyor or legal counsel.

AGREED BOUNDARY: When adjoiners reach agreement where boundary locations are in conflict. This can save thousands of dollars that would otherwise be wasted in resolving disputes.

ENCROACHMENTS: Physical evidence that may represent intrusion or trespass by someone with no legal rights to use the property as described in a deed (use of an owner’s land without permission).

OCCUPIED BOUNDARY: The property owner occupies that may be defined by fences, hedges or other improvements constructed near or on boundary lines, erected by either the owner or neighbors (adjacents).

OWNERSHIP BOUNDARY: The perimeter of a parcel of land as defined in a deed or represented on a subdivision/partition plat. When the “Record Title Boundary” and the “Occupied Boundary” agree without evidence of unwritten “Encroachments,” a parcel is considered to be free of encumbrances. If the deed is in conflict with the “Occupied Boundary” or evidence of unwritten rights only the courts can settle the issue of ownership, e.g., the public creates a path across property without securing permission from the owner.

RECORD TITLE BOUNDARY: The limits of land conveyed as described in a property owner’s deed.

Provided by the Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon
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**A.L.T.A. SURVEY OR EXTENDED TITLE INSURANCE COVERAGE:** To supply a title company and lender with survey and location data for issuing American Land Title Association or Extended Coverage Title Insurance. Such surveys typically show the relationships of existing improvements on a parcel of land relative to the boundaries as defined by the deed. (A.L.T.A. or American Land Title surveys may require a boundary survey).

**BOUNDARY:** To locate the property corners and boundary lines of a given parcel of land. This involves record and field research, measurements and computations to set boundary lines in accord with state law. Boundary lines and encroachments may also be located in this type of survey.

**CONSTRUCTION:** To provide construction personnel with directions (by way of staking or other notes) for erecting buildings, and pipelines.

**FORESTLAND:** Such a survey is not necessarily limited by governmental agency or may be used by engineers and/or foresters. It is also an excellent management tool for large tracts of forestland. Such a survey involves record and field work on a map in conformance with local and state law.

**TOPOGRAPHIC:** Modern computer systems also assist the land surveyor in mapping from aerial photographs, construction staking and mapping of points on the ground for use in boundary determination, mapping of water boundaries, has a direct effect on the time required to perform the survey, the owner should clearly define the scope of work prior to beginning a survey. Your land surveyor can assist you in understanding these requirements.

**SURVEY COSTS**

1. **SURVEY TYPE:** The complexity of a survey and the presence of any disputes are significant factors. The development of large industrial sites or rural land could require many hours of effort as compared to the survey of a residential lot, cost is proportional to the time needed to complete a survey but is not necessarily proportional to parcel size.

2. **RECORD SEARCH:** Research varies by the number of past transactions; and (c) the quality of legal descriptions, which may require examining property ownership documents; (d) deed records, road records, and planning reports.

3. **PROPERTY SIZE AND SHAPE:** An irregularly shaped parcel has more property corners to mark than a rectangular parcel containing the same area. The property size, along with features such as water boundaries, has a direct effect on the time required to survey the land.

4. **SECTIOINALIZED SURVEY WORK:** Oregon rural property surveys are typically based on records performed more than 100 years ago by General Land Office (GLO) surveyors. Following in the footsteps of these “sectioinalized” surveys (a section = one square mile) could require considerable effort. Looking for evidence of old surveys is an art and can require extensive fieldwork.

5. **TERRAIN:** A level parcel of urban land is easier to survey than a mountainous rural parcel.

6. **VEGETATION:** Branches, brush, and small trees must often be cleared near the property boundaries to provide a line of sight. Shrubs, flowers, and trees on home sites are normally not disturbed but may require additional field time to avoid when placing final corners.

**WILL I KNOW IF EASEMENTS EXIST ON MY PROPERTY?** If the purpose of the project were a complete boundary survey, the answer would normally be yes. In the case of a survey for one boundary line to check the location of an improvement or fence line, possibly not. The owner should make it clear to the land surveyor what additional information should be disclosed by the survey. Practically speaking, the research necessary to survey one boundary is generally the same as surveying entire parcel. If the property has not been surveyed in a long time or boundary monuments have disappeared, a complete boundary survey is the most cost-effective.

**HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT HAS BEEN SURVEYED?** Your land surveyor will perform the survey in accordance with the scope of work mutually agreed upon. If the scope of work calls for monumentation, property corners will be marked with steel rods or other permanent monuments with the license number of the land surveyor or the registered business name stamped on it. The property corners should be shown to the owner. A survey map will be filed whenever property corners are set indicating dimensions of property lines and other relative data as required by state law.

**SHOULD I EXPLAIN WHAT I WANT A SURVEY MADE?** Prior to beginning a survey, the owner should clearly define the scope of work with the land surveyor by clarifying goals and expectations for the finished product. The more the land surveyor knows the owner’s needs, the better he/she can recommend the type of survey work needed.

**HOW CAN THERE BE CONFLICTING BOUNDARY AND EASEMENT LINES?** Boundary and easement line disputes, gaps, and overlaps are sometimes a result of faulty legal descriptions that were originally written and recorded by persons lacking proper qualifications. It is critical to have property lines clearly described and surveyed when boundaries or easement lines are created or changed. Under current law, any newly created and most adjusted boundary lines require a survey and processing through governmental agencies. A proper survey may reduce potential boundary and easement conflicts or resolve outstanding issues. The creation or modification of boundaries or easements should only be attempted using the expertise of a professional land surveyor.