



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Land Surveying During the Fire Recovery Process

This is intended as an informational resource for residents affected by the October wildfires.

Presented by the Sonoma County Chapter of the California Land Surveyors' Association.

What is a professional land surveyor and why would I need one?

A Professional Land Surveyor is the only person licensed and authorized by the State of California to determine and physically locate the boundary lines of your property.

I don't need to know exactly where my property line is. Can you just show the boundary as approximate?

Surveyors DO NOT show approximate boundary lines on maps.

What is a boundary survey?

A boundary survey is a process by which a Surveyor can determine and mark a legal description physically on the ground. This may include placing durable monuments at or near property corners or temporary wood stakes along a property line. Once completed the Land Surveyor is required to file a Record of Survey at the County recorder's office.

On smaller sites or when development is proposed near a boundary line, the location of the boundary line must be precisely determined in order to protect the rights of you and your neighbors as well as to adhere to City or County regulations.

What is the difference between a boundary retracement and a boundary survey?

If a boundary has been previously shown on a map of record (Record of Survey, Parcel Map or Final Map), a boundary retracement may be done to locate and flag existing monuments at or near the property corners. Missing corners will not be reset.

In a boundary survey, existing corners will be found and flagged. Missing corners and/or previously unmarked corners will be set. The setting of any monuments requires filing documentation with the County. Your Surveyor will determine the appropriate documents to file based on the condition of the existing monuments found during your survey.

Lots in subdivisions are generally shown on a map of record and a boundary retracement may be performed, provided existing monuments are sufficient to retrace the filed map.

Deed described parcels that have not been previously shown on a Record of Survey will require a boundary survey to mark property lines on the ground or show them on a map.

I have an Assessor's Parcel Map. Doesn't that show my property line?

An Assessor's Parcel Map (AP Map) is a useful tool but it is not a legal property map. Lines shown on AP Maps are created by the Assessor's Office for tax purposes. They may be similar to record boundary lines but cannot be used to locate property lines.

My lot is shown on a GIS website. Can that be used to show my property lines?

Most GIS applications use digitized AP Map lines (see previous question) and are an approximation of boundary lines. GIS is an invaluable resource but cannot be used for true boundary location.

Once the survey is completed, how will I know where my property line is?

After a boundary survey is performed, your Land Surveyor will flag up existing monuments that have been found or set new durable monuments. Monuments are typically iron pipes driven in the ground with plugs stamped with their license number. Boundary surveys may require a Record of Survey map be filed with the County which will show both the found and new monuments.

If a boundary retracement is performed, existing monuments will be flagged to make them more visible. Missing corners will not be set and no Record of Survey will be filed.

What is a topographic map and why would I need one?

A topographic map, commonly referred to as a topo, shows relative elevations on a site and locates existing site features such as foundations, fences, significant trees, sidewalks, driveways, etc. A topo is used as the base mapping for architectural, civil engineering and landscape design work. Topos are used by civil engineer to design the site grading (including the building pad elevation), and to prepare an estimate of how much fill soil, if any, will need to be brought to the site to meet City or County regulations.

Are there any County fees associated with a boundary a survey?

Survey fees will vary based on many factors such as the size of the site, whether it's been previously surveyed and whether the found lot monuments agree with those previous surveys. County fees, if required, vary depending on the type of survey being performed and may range from \$17 to \$694. Generally speaking, the most effective way to reduce the survey fees for parcels in a subdivision is to work together with your adjoining neighbors. There are no County fees for topographic surveys.

My architect requested the building setback lines. What are building setbacks?

Building setbacks are requirement determined by the City or County that dictate how close a new building or structure can be placed to a boundary line, waterway, well or other feature. Setback distances vary between County and City and even neighborhood. Locating a setback will most often require a boundary retracement or boundary survey.

I just need the corners of my foundation marked, how do I do that?

If your building is close to a setback to the property line you will need a boundary retracement or boundary survey to determine the location of the foundation.

What if my question isn't answered here?

Please feel free to email additional questions to the Sonoma County Chapter of the CLSA at Secretary at secretary.sonco.clsa@gmail.com but please note, we will not be accepting requests for proposals. You may also visit us at www.sonomacountyclsa.com.