

Four Good Reasons to Get a Land Survey

7/21/2011 [William W. Hall](#)

For just about any real estate purchase, your real estate attorney's standard advice will be to "get a survey, get a survey, and get a survey!" This is not conspiracy to drive up the cost of your real estate purchase. It is common sense, though, particularly for a big-ticket purchase like real estate.

Obtaining a land survey of the property you plan to purchase will identify potential problems and give you peace of mind. A survey of the proper scope and detail can tell you:

1. **Whether there are any encroachments across the boundary lines.** Does your building, fence or driveway impinge on the neighbor's property? Does the neighbor's building, fence or driveway encroach on yours? If so, now is the best time to fix the problem with an appropriate deed, easement or license. Not after you have paid the purchase price and your seller is nowhere to be found.
2. **If you have roadway and utility access.** Does a public road right of way abut the property? If not, does a private driveway easement connect the property to a public road? What about utility easements? Are the electric, gas, water, sewer, cable and other utility lines all located in easements benefiting your property? Or is your property in danger of having its access to the World cut off? A property with deeded roadway and utility access is a lot more valuable than one you can only visit by helicopter or boat.
3. **Whether you are really buying what you thought you were buying.** The survey stakes the surveyor places in the ground will permit you to eyeball the property's boundaries. Is the building located on the property? Does the property extend all the way to the lakefront? Is the stand of trees screening your property from the road yours, or can your neighbor chain saw it to the ground without your consent? You may find that the boundaries aren't where you thought they were.
4. **If the property meets zoning requirements.** Does your building meet the setback requirements from boundaries and roadways? Are standards for lot size, building coverage, height and minimum number of parking spaces met? The best time to beg a zoning authority for a variance that would permit you to use your property as planned is before you spend the money to buy the property, not after.

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For your next real estate purchase, ask your real estate attorney to recommend the scope of land survey you need. Have him or her solicit quotes from reputable surveyors, so you can make an informed decision as to cost and time to perform. And then get a survey!

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