

# Why do I need a land surveyor? How do I hire one?

*Take the first step by opening this brochure*



**PLSO**  
PROFESSIONAL LAND  
SURVEYORS OF OREGON

## Got questions? We've got answers.

Professional land surveyors' first role is to serve the best interests of the public. Their work is crucial to responsible land development and property management. Surveyors determine property boundaries and features, identify easements and encroachments, help private landowners from making costly boundary line mistakes and ensure that building codes and regulations are enforced to protect the public. There are several services that only a licensed professional surveyor can provide, including surveys for property titles and real estate financing, insurance, boundaries, and construction. If you think you need a land surveyor and don't know where to start, this short guide will help.

If you have more questions, visit [plso.org/surveyor](https://plso.org/surveyor).  
Or to find a surveyor, visit [plso.org/find](https://plso.org/find) to get started!



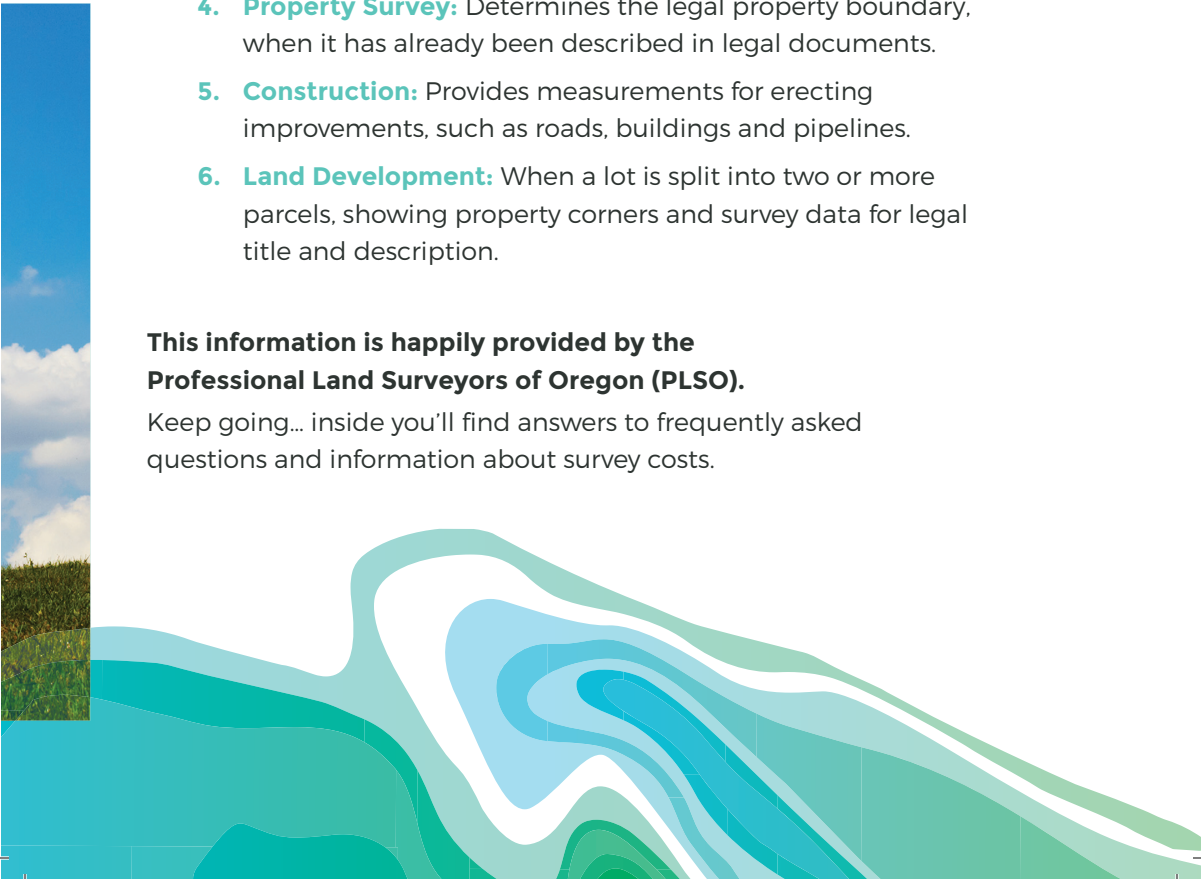
## When do I need a land surveyor?

Property line disputes and contractual sales are often why one might need to hire a surveyor. Below is a list the common types of surveys that an individual might need:

1. **American Land Title Association Survey (A.L.T.A.):** Provides a property title company and mortgage lender with location data for issuing a property title and mortgage insurance, such as the boundaries, easements, and the location of improvements (structures, fences, utility lines, roads, etc.).
2. **Boundary:** Locates property corners and boundary lines of property.
3. **Floodplain:** Determines the elevation of a building or piece of land and whether it is located within a floodplain.
4. **Property Survey:** Determines the legal property boundary, when it has already been described in legal documents.
5. **Construction:** Provides measurements for erecting improvements, such as roads, buildings and pipelines.
6. **Land Development:** When a lot is split into two or more parcels, showing property corners and survey data for legal title and description.

**This information is happily provided by the Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon (PLSO).**

Keep going... inside you'll find answers to frequently asked questions and information about survey costs.



# Frequently asked questions

## Who can provide me with an official survey?

Only a licensed professional land surveyor may provide a legal land survey and create or modify boundaries or easements. Professionals licensed through the Oregon State Board of Examiners for Engineering and Land Surveying (OSBEELS) are authorized to provide legal land surveys or create or modify surveys in Oregon. Learn more about OSBEELS at [oregon.gov/osbeels](https://oregon.gov/osbeels).

## What do I look for when hiring a surveyor?

Always consider qualifications and if a surveyor is licensed to work in the state. As any other profession, references and past projects are a good indicator. Price is not the sole indicator of the quality of work a surveyor may do for you. A land surveyor acts on the behalf of the public and may appear for you in planning commission meetings or in a court of law. Surveyors often communicate with your neighbors on your behalf. Make sure you are comfortable with the surveyor you hire, and that you both have a clear understanding of what you're trying to accomplish. Make sure to clearly define the scope of work by clarifying goals and expectations.

## Will a land surveyor tell me where my boundary lines are?

In Oregon, as in most states, only a court of law can decide questions of property ownership. Your land surveyor locates the boundaries of the property on the ground as described in your deed, marking the property corners with physical monuments if none exist, provides a map, and documents survey results. This map will be recorded with the County Surveyor in the county in which the property is located. If conflicts exist, your land surveyor will advise on property remedies. Boundary disagreements may need to be resolved by a court of law; only the courts can settle ownership disputes.

## Will I know if encroachments on the property exist?

Possible encroachments are identified as part of the survey. Encroachments may not have to be shown on the map submitted for filing with the county surveyor. A separate map may be necessary.

## **Will I know if easements exist on my property?**

An easement grants another entity the right to cross or use your land for a specific purpose, such as a utility company. A surveyor can determine this if a title report is provided by the owner or ordered during the survey. The owner should make it clear to the land surveyor what additional information should be disclosed by the survey. Researching one boundary is generally the same as surveying the 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 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 property survey may reduce potential boundary and easement conflicts or resolve outstanding issues.

## **Why do I need an Elevation Certificate for my property and how do I get it?**

An Elevation Certificate is one way to comply with the National Flood Insurance Program requirements. It is required to properly rate certain structures for flood insurance premiums. Elevation Certificates must be prepared and certified by a Licensed Land Surveyor.

## **How will I know what has been surveyed?**

Your land surveyor will perform the survey in accordance with the mutually agreed upon scope of work. If the scope of work calls for monumentation, property corners will be marked with steel rods or other permanent monuments, and a survey will be filed. 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.

# Understanding Survey Costs

**Like anything else, it depends on the amount of time and detail needed for the scope of work. Below are examples of scenarios that may affect the cost:**

- Type of Survey
- Type of Deed Description
- Amount of Record Research Needed
- Property Size and Shape
- Terrain and Vegetation
- Accessibility to Property and Neighbor Relationships
- Amount of Existing Evidence on Property
- Time of Year
- Title Company or Lender Requirements
- County Fees



There are many variables that make it difficult to determine exact costs in advance. Based on experience, your land surveyor should be able to provide a cost estimate. The land surveyor you choose may require a contract for their services that details the work to be done and the compensation required.

**Find a surveyor at [plso.org/find](https://plso.org/find).**

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