



SHINE BRIGHT

SURVEY BASICS: A GUIDE FOR AGENTS

Unlike auto or homeowner's insurance, which charge premiums to cover future hazards, title insurance is a one-time purchase that safeguards a homebuyer against loss from title defects or misinformation that may already exist.

When it comes to property lines, for example, a fence doesn't always mark the spot. While the sellers may think they know where the boundaries are, they may be relying on what a neighbor or someone else told them. A professional survey will determine whether the house is within property borders, whether there are any encroachments on the property by neighbors and the extent to which any easements affect the property. In effect, a survey can help settle common property description issues before they become problems. With rare exception, lenders insist on a clear lender's title policy that includes survey coverage. Unless a survey, or in some instances a plat and inspection report, has been obtained the title coverage will likely show an exception for survey coverage. As a real estate professional, understanding the following survey basics can help you provide correct information to potential buyers:

- 1. BOUNDARY LINES** - Knowing the legal location of the property lines ensures that any new fence or planned room addition will be fully on the buyer's property.
- 2. OVERLAPS AND GAPS** - Part of the boundary line certification ensures there is no discrepancy or gap between the boundaries of the property and the neighbor's.
- 3. RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND EASEMENTS** - Previous agreements may give a neighbor or others the right to walk across the yard of the property.
- 4. PONDS, RIVERS, STREAMS, LAKES, AND WELLS** - The survey notes visible or surface waters on the property.
- 5. JOINT DRIVEWAYS, WALLS OR PROJECTIONS** - The new owner may have an obligation by law to support the neighbor's driveway, for example, by maintaining his own.
- 6. IMPROVEMENTS** - Certifies that outbuildings and other improvements are located within the boundary lines of the property.
- 7. UTILITIES, CABLES, WIRES AND POLES** - Notes the existence of underground cables or drains - important because a utility company may have the right to use a portion of the property for upkeep of utility lines and may have a say in how tall the property owner lets the trees grow.
- 8. CEMETERIES** - While it's unlikely there's an old family burial ground in the back yard, the survey will show the location if there is one.
- 9. ACCESS, INGRESS AND EGRESS** - Discloses access to the property.
- 10. ZONING CLASSIFICATION** - Reinforces whether the property is zoned for residential or light commercial use, and points out any specific restrictions on how the property may be used.

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