



County of Santa Cruz

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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SURVEY FAQ

What services does the County Surveyor's Office provide?

- Responsibility of Maintaining the Survey System of Lands
- Checking and Recording of Parcel Maps, Subdivision Maps, Records of Survey and County Surveys
- Conducting surveys as required by the Board of Supervisors and the Courts, working with the State Land Commission
- Maintain the public index, by geographic location, of filings of record of survey, amended records of survey, and certificates of correction
- Determine boundaries of county owned properties, including roads, right-of-ways, easements and county-controlled areas
- Authorize retracement surveys of historical land division lines, such as government section lines, ranchos, and subdivision, using monument preservation funds
- Collaborate with other agencies in the land development process and provide support and expertise to other departments and jurisdictions for the benefit of the public

What services the County Surveyor's Office does not provide?

- Lot Line Adjustments or Lot Mergers
These applications are processed through the County's Planning Department.
- Parcel Map & Subdivision Map applications
These applications are processed through the County's Planning Department.
- Surveys of privately-owned lands
A private licensed Land Surveyor must be hired for this.

Where are things located on the web?

Public Works website: <http://www.dpw.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/>

County Surveyor: <http://www.dpw.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Home/CountySurveyor.aspx>

Recorded Map Index: On County GIS site under "Recorded Maps & Docs "

<https://gis.santacruzcounty.us/gisweb/>

Instructions for accessing Maps using the County GIS:

https://gis.santacruzcounty.us/gisweb/help/RecordedMap_lookup.pdf

Fee Schedule: <https://bit.ly/36BZAYG> - Select "**Public Works**" in the Department pull down menu box.

What survey documents are currently available on the County GIS site?

- **Recorded Maps Layer (entire County including all cities)**
Records of Survey
 - Tract Maps
 - Parcel Maps
 - Certificates of Correction
 - Corner Records.
- **Improvement Plans Layer (mostly County unincorporated areas only)**
 - Tract Improvement As-Builts
 - MLD Improvement Plans
 - Public Works Construction As-Builts
 - Public Works Drainage As-Builts (including City of Capitola)
 - Larger Commercial Project As-Builts
 - Plan Lines.
- **Non-Recorded Maps Layer**
 - Miscellaneous Historical Maps
 - Maps made by the County Surveyor
 - Road Map
 - GLO Plats
 - Other Non-Recorded Maps.

What is a map?

A representation as of the features of an area of the earth. Showing these features in their respective forms, sizes, and relationships according to some convention of representation.

What is an Assessor's Plat or Assessor's Parcel Map?

An Assessor's Plat or Assessor's Parcel Map is a drawing created by the County Assessor's Office used to show how parcels are assessed for taxes. Parcels shown on Assessor's Plats do not constitute legality of the parcels. It is to be used for tax assessment purposes only.

What is the GIS?

GIS stands for Geographical Information System. It is designed to display & manage digital geographical data.

What is a monument or land marking?

A monument is any natural or artificial object that is fixed permanently in land and referred to in a legal description of the land.

What is an easement?

An easement is a legal or equitable right acquired to use another's land for a special purpose, such as utilities or a driveway.

Why can't the County Surveyor's Office survey my property?

The County is a public Agency, paid for by public funds, therefore cannot survey privately owned land. Contact a private licensed Land surveyor for private land surveys.

Where can I get a copy of the survey map of my property?

Not all properties have surveys. Some parcels were created with just a deed description. If there is a recorded survey for your property it can be located online at the County's Recorded Map Index on the County GIS <https://gis.santacruzcounty.us/gisweb/>

Where can I get a copy of my deed?

All deeds are filed and maintained at the County Recorder's Office, Room 230 at County Government Building at 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz.

Do all properties in the county have a recorded map?

No. A great many of the parcels of land existing in the county were created before legislation was enacted in 1972 requiring a subdivision final map or a parcel map to create new parcels. A deed, therefore, may be the only recorded document describing the boundaries of a longstanding parcel. Please note that a formal survey of an existing parcel is not normally a County prerequisite to the issuance of a building permit.

How can I tell where my property lines are?

Refer to the current deed, available from the County Recorder, for a description of the property. The recorded description will refer to a recorded map. The existence of such a map of or even near your property increases the likelihood that survey markers (or "monuments") were set and may still be in place to help you locate your property corners. Recorded Map Index on the County GIS <https://gis.santacruzcounty.us/gisweb/>

It may also be useful to ask your neighbors if they have located their own corners recently for a building permit or other reason. When all is said and done, if it becomes necessary for you to hire a private surveyor to locate your property lines, any research you do yourself will generally save time and money.

What marks my property corners?

Property corners can be marked with any one of numerous types of monuments, or nothing at all. If your property has been surveyed then you need to refer to that map to find if and what your property corners were marked with. If no survey has been done then there are probably no monuments.

What is a permanent survey marker?

Typically, a surveyor will hammer a 1/2-inch diameter or larger iron pipe to ground level (or even below ground level to protect the pipe, necessitating a metal detector to locate it). The pipe will generally be 2-1/2 feet long with a brass or plastic tag containing the surveyor or engineer's registration number on top. In concrete there may be a lead plug with a tag instead of a pipe. Significant locations in roadways, bridges, etc., may have more elaborate and stable monuments. Wooden stakes or lath with ribbon, or nails in asphalt with paint marks are not considered permanent markers.

Is it illegal to pull out survey markers?

Yes. Under Section 605 of the California Penal Code it is a misdemeanor to intentionally remove or destroy a permanent survey marker. Removal or destruction of survey markers should be reported to the County Sheriff's office or to the appropriate police department if it was done within one of the four incorporated cities (Santa Cruz, Capitola, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville). If the monument is removed by a professional land surveyor or civil engineer, you may also file a complaint with the State of California Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors at (916) 263-2251, or at the Board's website, https://www.dca.ca.gov/consumers/complaints/oos_students.shtml

Survey markers are sometimes destroyed during major construction projects if it is impossible to protect them in place because of the nature of the work. If this occurs, the obliterated markers should be replaced or memorialized in another way that will maintain continuity of the historical record.

Will the County Office survey my property?

No. County employees cannot undertake private survey work within their jurisdiction. The conducting of private surveys by the County's survey crew would constitute unfair and illegal competition with private surveyors doing work in the county.

My neighbor's property was surveyed. Why isn't there a recorded map?

State law requires that a map be recorded when a surveyor sets a permanent marker with the surveyor's registration number attached. There are several instances where a survey might be performed without the setting of permanent markers (monumentations), including the following:

- Sufficient existing monumentation was found, eliminating the need to set new permanent markers.
- The surveyor's client commissioned the survey for informational purposes only, so only temporary markers, such as lath and ribbon, were set.
- The survey was of a type other than a boundary survey, such as a topographic or a planimetric survey, often done to detail existing ground, landscape, and structures for a proposed development.
- The survey was not completed (and, presumably, no monuments were set), because the project was abandoned or the surveyor was not paid.

What if my neighbor disagrees with me on the location of our property line?

If you are in disagreement with your neighbor about property lines, you should contact a private licensed Land Surveyor.

Is a recorded survey map the absolutely correct and final word on my property line, sanctioned by the County?

No. All recorded maps (subdivision final maps, parcel maps, records of survey, etc.) are based upon an historical record which over years has collected many discrepancies, conflicts, and uncertainties. The surveyor can only identify pertinent inconsistencies and apply informed judgment in assembling maps based on research and fieldwork. The County Surveyor reviews maps submitted for recording according to standards of practice and technical requirements but does not adjudicate inconsistencies in the historical record. Disputes over property lines may have to be resolved as civil matters before judicial courts.

My land division project was approved, and I just got my development permit.

What do I do now?

The process of dividing and developing land calls for a significant investment of time and money. To receive a tentative land division map approved by the Planning Commission, it becomes the holder of a land division and development permit. In order to record a final map or parcel map, the conditions in the permit, so-called "tentative map conditions," must be fulfilled. This can be found under the heading "Prior to or concurrent with recordation of the final/parcel map, the following conditions shall be met."

The following is typical of what it takes to get a final or parcel map recorded once the Planning Department issues a development permit which includes a land division. The permit typically allows you two years to do the following:

- Submit final engineered improvement plans to the Surveyor and Development Review section of Public Works, together with any pertinent supporting information, such as drainage calculations, structural calculations and soils reports

for retaining walls, and a preliminary engineer's estimate of the cost of construction.

- Submit a final or parcel map to the Surveyor and Development Review section of Public Works, together with any pertinent supporting information, such as closure calculations, preliminary title report, and pertinent deeds.
- Submit the soils report and an erosion control plan to the Environmental Planning section of the Planning Department.
- Submit copies of the improvement plans to the appropriate water purveyor for review and comment. In addition to Public Works approval, the plans will have to be approved by the water purveyor. Furthermore, if the improvements include a water main extension, you'll probably have to enter into a main extension agreement with the water purveyor and submit whatever securities and fees the water purveyor requires.
- Submit a landscape plan and a biotic restoration plan, if required, to the Environmental Planning section of the Planning Department.
- Submit any landscape, biotic, drainage, roadway, sanitation, or other maintenance agreements, homeowners' agreements, and conditions, covenants and restrictions (CC&R's) to Public Works and Planning.
- Acquire any easements and rights-of-way necessary to construct required improvements or gain access or secondary access to the project.
- In the case of full tract subdivisions (five or more lots created), enter into an agreement countersigned by the Planning Director to meet the County's affordable housing requirements.
- Execute a subdivision agreement with Public Works, agreeing to make the improvements shown on the plans and required by the tentative map.
- Submit construction securities in the form of a letter of credit from a financial institution or a cash instrument to insure construction of the required improvements. The securities will be based on the estimate of the cost of construction, the cost of deferred monumentation in the case of tracts, and the amount required to secure the coming year's taxes on the property underlying the subdivision. In addition, all property taxes currently due must be paid in full. Typically, the overall amount of securities is a bit more than 150% of the estimated cost of construction.
- Pay all fees due prior to recording. Typically, these include drainage fees, road and roadside improvement fees, park dedication fees, childcare fees, additional review fees, pavement striping deposit, and construction inspection deposit.
- In the case of tracts, the project must be placed on the Board of Supervisors' agenda to get the final map approved. This takes about three weeks lead time.