

SURVEYORS

The Douglas County Zoning Office provides this list for your convenience. This list represents currently licensed individuals and is not meant to be an endorsement of any individual or company.

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I Want to Subdivide My Land, What Do I Need To Do?

This is one of the most common questions we receive at the Douglas County Planning, Zoning and Land Information office. The purpose of this handout is to explain the land subdivision process in order to assist you with your project. In our effort to answer your questions, the staff will explain how land is described, subdivided, recorded and transferred. While we are prohibited from providing specific legal advice, these processes are outlined in state statute and county ordinances. We encourage you to retain the services of an attorney and a Wisconsin-Registered Land Surveyor for specific guidance related to the legal aspects of land division and preparation of transfer documents. The regulation of land division is a basic function of state and local government. Throughout Wisconsin, Chapter 236 of Wisconsin Statutes is the regulatory framework outlining the requirements for the platting of land. In Douglas County, the subdivision of land is also subject to a local ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance 8.1. The origin of these methods and regulations is an interesting lesson in history, mathematics and the law.

The Public Land Survey System is the basis for the description of lands throughout Wisconsin. In simple terms, the state is divided into townships containing thirty-six square miles and one square mile sections. Established in the 1850's, this system remains the basis of land surveying throughout Wisconsin. You may be familiar with the terms Section, Township and Range (i.e., Section 26, T44N, R14W). This system allows today's WI-Registered Land Surveyor to resurvey an existing parcel of land and prepare a "map of survey." Existing lots of record fall into three categories – legal description, metes and bounds description and lots and blocks. These parcels may be further subdivided if they meet all current ordinance requirements.

In Douglas County, the size and shape of a proposed parcel is subject to dimensional requirements found in Zoning Ordinance 8.0, Subdivision Ordinance 8.1 and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance 8.4. If a forty-acre parcel is subdivided into fourths, no survey is required.

The land surveys prepared by a WI-Registered Land Surveyor creating a new parcel or parcels of land fall

into two main categories – plats and certified survey maps.

- A "plat" is defined in the statute as a subdivision in which five or more parcels are created.
- A "certified survey map (CSM)" is defined in the statute as a minor subdivision creating no more than four new lots.

Creating a Plat: In Douglas County, the process of creating a plat is a two-step process: the preparation of a preliminary plat and a final plat. A WI-Registered Land Surveyor prepares the preliminary plat based on Chapter 236 WI Statutes and Douglas County Ordinance 8.1. The plat is submitted to the Planning and Zoning office, reviewed by the County Surveyor and Zoning Administrator and placed on the monthly Zoning Committee meeting agenda. A copy of the preliminary plat is sent to the appropriate plan commission and/or town board for review and comment. If the preliminary plat is technically accurate and is approved by the Zoning Committee, the surveyor will prepare the final plat. The final plat is again placed on the next Zoning Committee meeting agenda. If the final plat is approved by the Zoning Committee, it is placed on the next County Board meeting agenda. Once approved by the County Board, and after obtaining all necessary signatures, the plat is then recorded at the Douglas County Register of Deeds. The lots may then be transferred by deed using this new legal description.

Creating a CSM: In Douglas County, the process of creating a certified survey map is also a two-step process: the preparation of a preliminary and a final certified survey map by a WI-Registered Land Surveyor. This approval process requires only the review and approval of both the County Surveyor (for technical accuracy) and the Zoning Administrator (for compliance with all zoning ordinances). If all statute and ordinance requirements are met, the certified survey map is recorded at the Register of Deeds. The lots may then be transferred by deed using this new legal description.