

10 Questions to Ask Before You Order an ALTA Survey

*Confused by ALTA Survey and Table A Item requirements? You're not alone. Your ALTA Survey will show any encroachments or title issues. Great. What about Table A Items? Do you know which ones you should choose? Table A is an important part of an ALTA Survey that provides additional **optional** items requested by the purchaser, seller, or lender beyond the normal boundary information. Get our take on the process. It's based on over 30 years of experience performing ALTA Surveys.*

1 *If you want Utilities shown on the survey, do you need to select Table A Item 11?*

Our Take: We typically recommend Table A Item 11 *only* if construction will take place.

Why: When the [ALTA/NSPS Minimum Standard Detail Requirements](#) were revised in 2016*, the requirement to locate above ground evidence of utilities was moved into the base standards and is now required on **all** ALTA/NSPS Land Title Surveys. In addition to above ground evidence, if a client wants underground utilities marked and shown they must now select Table A Item 11.



*ALTA/NSPS Minimum Standards are updated every 5 years. Updates are not expected until 2021.

2 *If a prior survey has been performed, should you use the prior surveyor for the update?*

Our Take: Even though a prior survey exists, there may be instances where it is beneficial to the client to pursue the completion of a new survey.

Why: Timing; if the prior surveyor is unavailable and the successful closing of the real estate deal is dependent upon the survey, it is appropriate to seek the services of another surveyor.

3 *Is the surveyor responsible to research Zoning when Table A Item 6 is requested?*

Our Take: Refer to the most current ALTA/NSPS Standards.

Why: According to the ALTA/NSPS Standards, the surveyor must be provided a Zoning Report or letter if being asked to show zoning information on the survey (Table A Item 6).



4 *Will all wetlands be shown on the survey if Table A Item 18 is requested?*

Our Take: Wetlands can only be shown on a survey if a field delineation has been conducted by a certified wetland specialist hired by the client.

Why: If Table A Item 18 is requested and a field delineation has **not** been performed, then a note stating such must be placed on the survey.

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5 *Will all division and party walls be shown if Table A Item 10 is selected?*

Our Take: The only division walls that will be shown on a survey are those which affect adjoining properties.

Why: Interior walls (between tenants) are typically not located. A party wall is defined as:

“A partition or wall erected on a property boundary, partly on the land of one owner and partly on the land of another, to provide common support to the structures on both sides of the boundary.”

6 *Do all surveys of comparable size cost about the same?*

Our Take: The size of the property (acreage) is not the only deciding factor in determining the cost of a survey.

Why: Many other variables must be taken into account:

- **Geographic location;** A 5 acre survey in CA does not cost the same as a 5 acre survey in GA.
- **Complexity of the boundary;** A parcel with 25 sides will cost more than a parcel with 4 sides.
- **Additional requirements requested;** An ALTA Survey will cost more than a Boundary Survey.

7 *Should Table A Item 19 be selected to depict Appurtenant Easements on the survey?*

Our Take: The latest version of the ALTA/NSPS Minimum Standard Detail Requirements states that all easements benefitting the property will be depicted.

Why: Table A Item 19 requires that those easements also be surveyed on the ground. This is typically not necessary (and usually costs more).

8 *Will the cost increase by selecting Table A Item 1 (setting monuments at property corners)?*

Our Take: Setting monuments does require more time in the field.

Why: Although setting monuments does require more time in the field, many states require it on all surveys in order to meet the state’s minimum standard of care. In those locations, Table A item 1 does not affect the cost of a survey.

9 *Does the surveyor determine encroachments?*

Our Take: The surveyor cannot express a legal opinion.

Why: Although surveyors can make a statement about possible encroachments such as improvements located across boundaries, the surveyor **cannot** express a legal opinion regarding ownership or otherwise allowed encroachments.



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10 *Should the survey always depict building setback lines?*

Our Take: Table A Item 6(b) does state that the surveyor shall graphically depict the setback lines (if provided in a Zoning Report).

Why: Table A Item 6(b) specifies that the surveyor can only do so if it does **not** require an interpretation by the surveyor. Such interpretations might be:

- Which property line is considered by the jurisdiction as front, side, and rear
- Setbacks have multiple “overlay” districts with conflicting setback requirements

Simplify *your* ALTA Survey process. Clarify when and why you need Table A items.

Questions? Let's Talk.



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EMG – Providing Expert Survey and Zoning Guidance

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