

## WHERE ARE MY PROPERTY BEACONS ? (December 2009)

### Introduction

Whenever a property owner wishes to construct a new building, extend an existing one or erect a fence or wall along a boundary, it is very important that they know where their property beacons are.

The bend points of property boundaries are defined by beacons. These are typically iron pegs or pipes driven vertically into the ground and have been placed there by a Professional Land Surveyor. Information on the position of these beacons is included on the Diagram or General Plan the Land Surveyor would have prepared when the site was originally surveyed. Additionally, the Land Surveyor's records are filed in the office of the Surveyor General in Pietermaritzburg.

### The Surveyor General

The Surveyor General is the official custodian of cadastral data (ie Diagrams & General Plans). Copies of these documents can be obtained from his office. Details are as follows:

Address = 300 Pietermaritz St, Pietermaritzburg

Telephone = 033-3552900

Document search web site = <http://csg.ruraldevelopment.gov.za/esio/searchindex.htm>

The web site enables searches for Diagrams either by property description or by document number (on Diagrams, see top right hand corner)

### eThekwini Municipality

In Durban, the Surveying and Land Information Department has a public counter. Details are as follows:

Location = 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Engineering Unit Building, 166 K.E.Masinga Rd , Durban

Telephone = 031-3117219

Copies of most Diagrams and General Plans relative to the eThekwini Municipal area are available together with cadastral compilation sheets and GIS extracts – note that search and copy fees are applicable.

Additionally, eThekwini Municipality has a web site <http://www.durban.gov.za> . On the right hand side of the home web page there is a link for "maps". Clicking this provides a link to the Surveyor General site mentioned above and to a map view. Choosing map view opens an interactive map of the city which provides a large number of available data sets which are listed on the right hand side.

A zoom tool enables the user to zoom in to any area and as one does this, various layers become visible. Further layers can be switched on and off by clicking the tick boxes on the right hand side. It is useful to tick the bottom four layers. These are aerial photographs – currently dated July 2008.

There is a search tool above the map. This allows searches of various kinds and will not only highlight the found item on the map, but display further tabulated information relevant to the highlighted data.

This Geographic Information System(GIS) is very useful as a first step in a beacon search. It Enables the owner to get a rough idea of where his beacons are relative to details which appear on the underlying photographic imagery and other details such as services etc. The Diagrams and General Plans provide additional mathematical evidence ( ie coordinates, length of sides and directions or internal angles of the figure) and also descriptive evidence (ie description of the beacons originally placed). Note that distances given are horizontal and not slope distances.

### Professional Land Surveyors and PLATO

With this information a property owner may be able to find some or all of their beacons but before proceeding with any building construction or discussions with neighbours it is very important that a Professional Land Surveyor be engaged to undertake a survey to prove that existing beacons are in their legal position and correct them if necessary and to replace others that cannot be found.

Only Professional Land Surveyors registered with the South African Council for Professional and Technical Surveyors (PLATO) are legally entitled to undertake this work. There are a number of individuals providing this service who are not Professional Land Surveyors. Please be aware that should a boundary dispute occur as the result of an illegal survey, the evidence supplied by such a surveyor will not be relevant in a Court of Law.

A list of Professional Land Survey Firms can be found in the yellow pages under “**Surveyors - Land**”. Alternatively, go to the PLATO web site <http://www.plato.org.za> .Follow members/professional/land surveyors/by region/KwaZulu Natal/KwaZulu Natal Durban. The table provides a list of all Professional Land Surveyors in the Durban area. The letters PP in column D denotes Land Surveyors in private practice. The table also gives contact details. Give one of them a ring. You will find them very helpful.