



By Michael J. Pallamary, PS

Michael Pallamary, PS, is the author of several books and numerous articles. He is a frequent lecturer at conferences and seminars and he teaches real property to attorneys and other members of the legal profession. He has been in the surveying profession since 1971.

## The City of San Diego Begins to Restructure

**F**or many years, the City of San Diego has neglected and dismissed the role land surveying plays in the development of America's seventh largest city, an otherwise enviable metropolis with wonderful weather and a population of 1.3 million hard working, taxpaying individuals. Over the last few years, the city has been beset with a lot of problems which have had a dramatic impact on the city and its ability to issue much needed bonds.

Because of these problems, the city of San Diego's Independent Budget Analyst has urged city leaders to develop a comprehensive, multi-year and citywide strategy to whittle down a massive backlog of major capital projects, estimated at \$898 million, and rapidly growing. Over the last few years, zealous to satisfy legions of constituents who are tired of potholes and associated car damage, miles of city streets have been paved over and countless monuments buried or destroyed leading to complaints and recently, issuance of a critical Grand Jury report.

Constant pressure by local surveyors and the state Engineer and Surveyor's Board persuaded the city to take a serious look at these issues and to take better measures to protect these valuable street monuments as well as making a better effort at assisting local land surveyors in acquiring vital engineering and land surveying records. As the recent Grand Jury Report noted, part of the problems with the city's survey operations and related access to city records had to do with a lack of oversight and the fact that the city main-

tained two separate and distinct offices, one, at city hall where the mapping and subdivision department worked and the second, located miles away, where the field survey group worked. Although both departments were supposed to be working under the same laws, the field survey group operated quite differently, as the department head argued that he and his co-workers were not subject to the same rules and state laws related to land surveying.

in leadership and management from SDSU, the National Management Association, Stephen Covey, Center for Organizational Effectiveness, and a Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems from Penn State.

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With the recent departure of the city's chief field surveyor, it was clear the city needed to reorganize its field department. With the support of the City Engineer, in September 2012, the city's chief Land Surveyor, Greg Hopkins was promoted to an Assistant Deputy Director and formally designated the City Land Surveyor/Deputy City Engineer for the City of San Diego, a long title with good reason. Unlike his predecessor, Hopkins brings an enviable background to the office. He earned a Bachelor's degree with distinction from San Diego State University in Public Administration and has certificates

Department, and includes Discretionary Engineering and Transportation approvals, all private and public sector generated land title document approvals, including, but not limited to Final and Parcel Maps, Lot line adjustments, Certificates of Correction and Certificates of Compliance, easement acquisitions and abandonment's, right-of-way dedications, street vacations, addressing and street naming, as well as managing the Public Works Department's Field Survey Section. He appears before Planning Commission and City Council when necessary on matters of Land Surveying and reviews

all germane proposed legislation and drafts Municipal Code updates when necessary to bring the city's municipal code into conformance with any new state laws. Never before has the city relegated so many responsibilities to a Professional Land Surveyor.

In addition to his work related contributions to the profession, Greg is a subject matter expert and consultant for the California Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors and Geologists (BPELSG), a member of the California Land Surveyors Association Legislative Committee and has been licensed in California as a Land Surveyor since 2001. He is an advocate for pushing efforts forward that help elevate the surveying profession through education, along with defining and modeling ethical behavior

work was being done and by the time they found out, the contracts had been deemed satisfied and the books closed.

Unlike other areas across the state and country, San Diego has its own unique set of survey procedures and methods of monumentation, making their preservation even more valuable. As an example, one of the oddities of San Diego involves its use of "tie points," typically set as small drill holes filled with lead plugs, set at seven foot offsets to the block corners and centered with a small copper tack. Older tie point monuments are often difficult to spot. Their location is memorialized on what are known as city prepared "tie point sheets." Prior to Mr. Hopkins's involvement in this issue, the tie point sheet were difficult to obtain and in many instances, had reportedly been

- City Records
- Coordination of City work in progress
- Subdivision processes


In outlining his reasoning and methodology, Hopkins noted:

*Monument preservation shall be performed with every public improvement project, all work performed by City forces and every private land development project or Right of Way permit within the City. Under the direction of the City Engineer, the Field Engineering Division—Field Survey Section (Field Surveys) and the Development Services Department—Map Check Section shall assure conformance with statutory requirements for the preservation of survey monuments. The City Engineer shall, through Appointing Authorities, enforce the requirements of this regulation.*

Under the proposed outlines by Hopkins, the responsibility of protecting the monuments is placed on the contractors. Under his provisions, the contractors were deemed responsible for protecting the survey monuments, also requiring that all points be referenced and replaced by a Licensed Land Surveyor and a "Corner Record" be filed in accordance with state law. Moreover, Hopkins insisted that all contracts require the inclusion of monument preservation be specifically included in the scope of work.

Hopkins's background includes formal education in GIS and like many innovative survey professionals he intends to integrate the survey world into GIS.

Over the years, owing to redevelopment and reconstruction of failed streets and sidewalks, the city's vital survey infrastructure has been decimated and Hopkins is working towards rehabilitating the city's control network.

Another innovative provision requires that in the event a contractor destroys a monument without notice to the city, the contractor shall be responsible for the cost of re-establishing the position of the monument. In such a case, the contractor could hire a private surveyor or he/she could be forced to compensate the city's survey group to replace the monument. In either case, the city would not release the completion of the contract. 

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that will enhance the public's perception of the land surveyor.

In his new role, one supported by public and private sector Land Surveyors, one typically held by Civil Engineers, Mr. Hopkins began implementing many progressive ideas. Beginning with overseeing the city's field section, he has begun establishing uniform methods for performing work while assuring that his department adheres to the laws of surveying while implementing good practices measures.

In one of the more challenging areas of responsibility, Mr. Hopkins is in charge of assuring the city and its contractors comply with state regulations regarding the preservation and protection of land survey monuments. As the city learned, although the public works contracts made ambiguous reference to the contractor's obligations to preserve survey monuments, most didn't and the city never bothered to see that this

destroyed. Thanks to Mr. Hopkins efforts, the tie point sheets were retrieved and made available on line. It is worth noting that the streets and valleys of San Diego are the rich palette within which the late Curt Brown worked and many of the models for his informative textbooks come from San Diego. Mr. Hopkins has played a vital role on protecting this framework.

In addition to internal reorganization and owing to his background in private sector surveying, one of the first things Mr. Hopkins did was to call an industry meeting to discuss these well documented problems and to solicit ideas from his peers in the private sector. In addition, he sought industry support to join him by serving as a committee member, outlining a number of committees:

- Horizontal and Vertical control
- Monument preservation/perpetuation
- Tie point sheets