

Focal Point

A publication of the Sacramento Chapter
of the California Lands Surveyors Association



September 2024

**The next Chapter meeting will be held at the Round Table Pizza at 3290 Arena Boulevard in North Natomas on September 5th.
Hooray! It's Vendors' Night!**

President's Message

Annette Hovorka, PLS

2024 Sacramento Chapter President

Surveying and Golf

Surveying and golf are not often thought to correspond, but...

In golf, players navigate diverse landscapes, from wide-open fairways to challenging roughs and bunkers. The game demands a strategic approach, with golfers needing to understand not just the course's layout but also how environmental factors like wind and slope will affect their shots. This strategic mindset mirrors that of surveyors, who must analyze topography, vegetation, and man-made structures to provide accurate land measurements and maps. Just as golfers rely on precise club selection and shot execution, surveyors depend on advanced equipment like GPS devices and total stations to ensure their data's accuracy.

Equipment and technology also play a key role for each. Learning to use the proper tools for the proper job is also key to both types of endeavors being successful. This leads me to a reminder that this month we will have the opportunity to chat with the equipment experts. Please consider joining the Chapter for our vendor night. The Chapter will be paying for pizza for all those attendees. It is always an exciting time to see members, family, and friends and get a little education in the process.

Ultimately, both golf and surveying are about understanding and mastering the land. Whether calculating the perfect swing or measuring a property boundary, each requires a steady hand, a sharp eye, and a deep respect for the terrain. A great way to show off how these can meet is to join us for our Night Golf night. It is a kicking fun time, and it always includes good food and camaraderie. Form your teams and join us. As a bonus you can help support Chapter activities.

We are hoping that with the fun events planned over the next few months, you will find a way to join us and be part of the fun and laughter.


Annette Hovorka, PLS

2024 Sacramento Chapter President

The **Focal Point** newsletter is a publication of the Sacramento Chapter of the California Land Surveyors Association. Check us out at <https://www.sacramento-clsa.org>

Who's Who in the Sacramento Chapter for 2024:

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Currently Vacant	Vice President
Andrew Tapley PLS	Secretary
Laird Nelson	Treasurer
Cameron Clark PLS	Board of Directors Representative
Andrew Tapley PLS	Board of Directors Representative
Sherry Toutges PLS	State TrigStar Coordinator
Carl C.de Baca PLS	Editor Focal Point



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You can post job ads in the Focal Point for \$100 and they will run for a maximum of 1 year. And, you can take home one of our attractive slate CLSA coasters for a \$10 donation!

Contact the Focal Point editor at alidade.nv@sbcglobal.net

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Editor's Notes

In this edition we are running an Ad-hoc committee report regarding the relative merits of restarting a Professional Practices Committee (PPC) or perhaps coming up with an alternative that might be a better resource for local surveyors. Hopefully the idea can get some badly needed debate at a future chapter meeting.

Vendors Night is coming up on September 5th at the Round Table Pizza in Natomas. See you there!

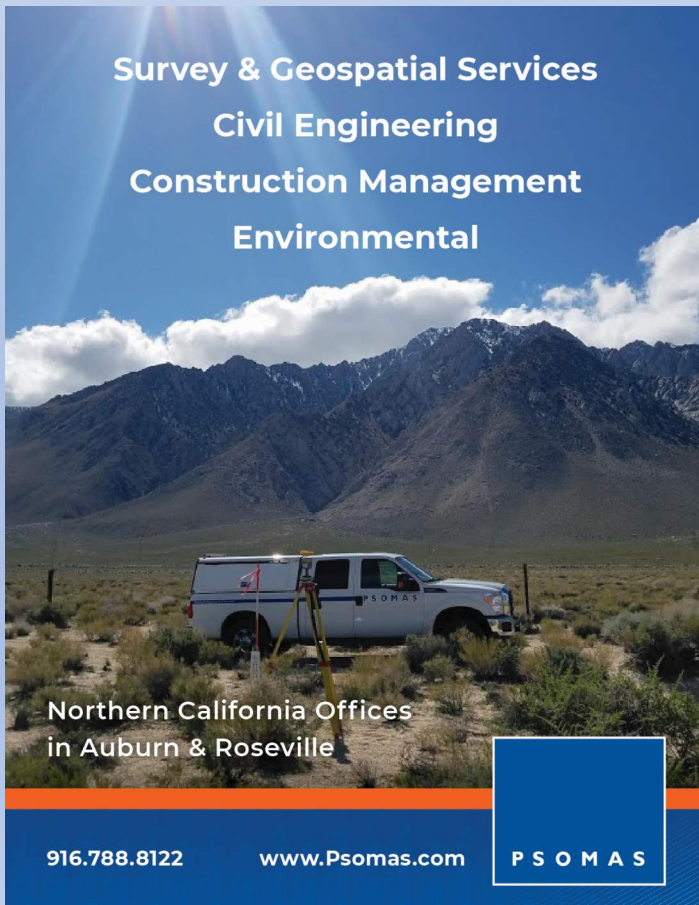
The editor was woefully unprepared to take the minutes at the August meeting so apologies if they seem disjointed or incomplete!

-Ed

Useful Quotes:

"I don't need a compass to know which way the wind shines."

-Ben Stiller (as Mr. Furious) *Mystery Men* 1999



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NSPS Lobby Day 2024

One of this year's three talking point handouts

Survey Mark Preservation in a Disaster Cleanup

Disasters, whether they are wildfires, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, landslides, or floods, can have an adverse impact on the cherished property rights enjoyed by the American people. Land surveyors, as stewards of the nation's property corners and geodetic points, are entrusted with establishing and protecting such "marks" and monumentation. When disasters damage or obliterate such points, corners, and monuments, their reestablishment and restoration are essential rebuilding, preserving a home or business owner's property rights, and getting back to normal. The preservation and remonumentation of marks set by professional land surveyors should be included in any disaster relief and cleanup effort. A major part of the success of the cleanup and rebuilding process will rely on the preservation of the surveying marks monumenting the property corners and geodetic marks.

Surveying marks are physical points on the ground identifying the location of property corners and boundaries. Surveying marks are visible and tangible objects that landowners can see and touch, and bring meaning to property corners, property boundaries, and property ownership. Surveying marks designate property lines, road right-of-way lines, utility easement lines, and various districts and agency boundary lines on the ground. The ownership of land, and consequently the ability to define boundaries, is dependent on surveying marks. Ensuring that boundaries and corners are protected means that the location of boundaries are readily identified. This allows landowners and agencies affected by a disaster to quickly rebuild improvements in the correct location.



Although often overlooked, surveying marks are critical for a successful rebuilding process. Realizing the importance of surveying marks as a critical asset is the first step in helping to preserve them for the benefit of all. The cleanup contractor should not destroy one of the most important assets landowners have – the surveying marks on their property corners and boundaries. The effort to preserve surveying marks will not hinder or delay the cleanup process, but rather, will facilitate the success of the rebuilding. Surveying marks are the foundation of any building project. Whenever a surveying mark is destroyed the location of property lines, and therefore, ownership, are brought into question. When surveying marks must be replaced, it delays the rebuilding efforts, it incurs significant monetary costs and loss of time, and in some cases, adds property line location uncertainties, which are all negative consequences. It costs much less to preserve a surveying mark in place than it does to replace it after being destroyed.

It is in the public interest to preserve surveying marks by including land surveyors in pre-cleanup discussions and meetings with all governmental agencies, clean-up companies, landowners, and various contractors. Professional surveyors should be authorized to enter the disaster zone ahead of the cleanup crews when the impacted area is determined to be safe to locate, measure, post, protect, or preserve the position of surveying marks. The right-of-entry forms should include language explaining the importance of preserving surveying marks and authorizing land surveyors to enter the property, if needed. Survey mark preservation requirements, standards, and reimbursement eligibility should be incorporated into disaster relief protocols with all Federal, State, and local governmental agencies.

Solution:

The definition of "cleanup" in disaster assistance programs in FEMA, SBA, and other agencies should include surveying mark preservation performed by land surveyors and be eligible as a home or business repair prior to or concurrent with disaster cleanup and recovery.

ACTION REQUESTED:

NSPS respectfully urges Congress to include a provision in disaster planning and response legislation ensuring that survey mark reestablishment and preservation by professional surveyors be included in both pre-cleanup discussions as well as access to recovery and disaster relief and assistance programs. For more information, contact John "JB" Byrd, NSPS Federal Lobbyist, at jbyrd@mwcapitol.com or 703-383-1330.

Sacramento Chapter, CLSA

Minutes for meeting of August 1, 2024

The meeting of August 1, 2024 was held at Logans Roadhouse in Natomas and called to order by President Annette Hovorka at 6:10 PM.

Going around the table, the following people made self-introductions:

Annette Hovorka, Adam Foster, Justin Lambert, Curt Burfield, Carl C. de Baca, Laird Nelson, Dan Beever, Bob Makenzie, Sean Davis, Jimmy Byrum, Roger Perez, Jonathan Rohrs, Morgan Thalken, Andrea Tirapelle, John Wilusz, Brandon Thompson and Gilbert Pascua.

President's Report (Annette Hovorka):

1. We have a location for the Vendors' Night event on September 5th. It will be held at the Round Table Pizza in Natomas. The chapter will pick up the food cost (but not the libations...!)
2. The Night Golf even is coming up soon so its time to start working on your team. The chapter will be developing a menu shortly for that event.

Vice President's (Acting) Report (Annette Hovorka):

1. We will be getting a brief presentation tonight about the current status of the Sacramento City College Program from instructor John Wilusz
2. We have some discussion to take care of at tonight's meeting regarding PPC's.
3. Upcoming next month will be officer elections for 2025
4. It will soon be time to decide how many scholarships to give out this year.

Treasurer's Report (Laird Nelson):

1. Invoices are being prepared for Focal Point advertisers and sponsors
2. A preliminary tally of current chapter members has been assembled for a report to the state.

State Board Representative Report (Curt Burfield):

1. The recent Board of Directors meeting was a live, in-person event.
2. The Board plans to start holding an annual fundraiser golf tournament which will alternate north and south by year. It will be in southern California in 2024 and northern Cal in 2025.
3. The 2025 conference will be a joint conference with NALS in Reno in 2025 (see 'Save the Date bulletin herein) and in 2026 it will be held in Las Vegas with NALS and WFPS.
4. Grim news was reported regarding the current status of the Oregon Tech survey program. They are losing professors and students and the feeling is the program is near collapse.
5. Regarding the Leg. Committee, funding for monument preservation has found its way into a bill that should pass the legislature and be signed into law but it comes with a 4 year sunset clause. The committee is also looking at legislation to require that the surveyor in responsible charge of an office be listed in any advertising the firm might prepare. The committee is still unable to agree on wording to clarify portions of 8765 of the LS Act.
6. It is noted that at least one chapter of CLSA is now paying for the chapter meeting dinners of LSITs who attend, as a way to encourage attendance.
7. The next Board meeting is scheduled for October and will be an online meeting.

Minutes for meeting of August 1, 2024 (continued from Page 5)

Focal Point Editor's Report (Carl C.de Baca):

1. We've had two months in a row with guest-written editorial content, including most recently the excellent article by Justin Cisneros of the El Dorado County Surveyor's office. It is very encouraging that the Focal Point is becoming a local forum for airing issues and opinions. The editor would to encourage every one who has a story, an axe to grind, the inside line on a new topic, whatever, to send it in and it will be (gently) edited and published. This newsletter is for all of you and the more you write, the less of the editor's opinion you will have to read.

Ad Hoc Committee Considering PPC Action (Carl C.de Baca)

This discussion originated with a query by a local land surveyor wondering if there was still an active PPC in the Sacramento area. It was discussed in the monthly chapter Excom Zoom meeting and it was decided to have Mr. C.de Baca to take a look at where we are with respect to a PPC put together a simple summary report with some possible suggestions. It was discussed at the meeting, a motion was made, seconded and supported unanimously to create an ad-hoc committee to explore the issue. *A summary of the issues being considered can be found immediately following this report.* Everyone is urged to read the report and offer your opinion, (politely, if at all possible).

Sac City College Report (John Wilusz):

1. It was reported that there are 29 and counting enrollees for the Elementary Surveying class Fall Semester taught by Mr. Wilusz and 9 are enrolled in the Evidence and Procedures class taught by Mr. John Adam in the spring 2025 semester,
2. John noted that the program could use another 4 auto levels. If anyone has a desire to help out the program by donating a functioning auto level, it would definitely be appreciated.
3. Opportunities are available, and everyone is encouraged to consider making a presentation to the Elementary Survey class, either in person or virtually, and the program could use volunteer teachers assistants for the Saturday Labs which are field exercises typically held next door in Land Park.

This last report was given before and during dinner and once dinner was complete the chapter was privileged to see a Presentation on Workflow Optimization by Jonathan Rohrs of CSDS. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.



Restart the PPC or Do Something New

Ad-hoc committee Report by Carl C.de Baca PLS

The Sacramento Chapter of CLSA received an inquiry in late July from a local area surveyor who was wondering if there was a Professional Practices Committee (PPC) in the area these days. As a one-time president of this chapter, many years in the past, I recalled that Sacramento did indeed have a PPC but it seems to have dissipated some time ago, as interest in maintaining it waned and all the original committee members moved on. As recently as 2012, maybe even later, there was indeed a Sacramento PPC, with Jon Scarpa, Evan Page, Ian Wilson and Neal Jones as the members. But it is clearly dormant now. This begs a couple questions: Should a PPC hereabouts be reinstated and, barring the one recent inquiry, is there even a need/interest in having one?

Those questions can be unpacked to create several more. But before we do that, let us take a quick look at PPCs. The concept of the Professional Practice Committee was clearly born out of an ethics concern. The feeling was that most preventable violations were probably ethics-related and CLSA has always had an interest in maintaining a high ethical standard. In a way, the PPC is akin to the kind of self-policing that the Bar performs for lawyers. Of course, California law does not in any way support self-policing for surveyors, and PPCs in no way usurp the authority of the Board of Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors and Geologists (BPELSG). So, it may be somewhat surprising to see that the BPELSG gives tacit approval to the formation and deployment of PPCs, and the two have worked well together over the years. This was most likely based on the theory that anything that improves compliance is good. Overall, PPCs have a solid track record.

PPCs are chapter-based committees and there really isn't an all-encompassing statewide overseer. Once basic ground rules were set up by CLSA, each chapter was left to create their own PPC, if they so chose. There are bylaws and mission statements and guidelines for each chapter that has a PPC. They are mostly very similar and only vary in level of detail. There are currently 21 chapters in CLSA and less than half operate a PPC. Some, like the Sacramento Chapter, have a framework and history of having had a PPC but nothing is going at the moment. Why is that?

PPCs are awkward. The guidelines and mission statements of every one of these committees identifies soliciting complaints, reviewing facts and contacting the potentially offending surveyor... and that is about it. Obviously, the focus is to head off potential violations before they become BPELSG complaint and enforcement actions. In that regard, the average surveyor should appreciate the opportunity to get back on the righteous path without a slap-down from the authorities. Yet there is a lingering feeling that PPCs are a 'witch hunt'. Is it coincidental that most of the PPCs have county surveyors on board? I am not going to go into all the reasons why viewing the PPC as a 'witch hunt' is misperception, but the fact remains, most practicing surveyors are uncomfortable with PPCs and few want to serve on one for the betterment of the profession. So PPCs have an image problem. Also, a general reluctance by surveyors to report potential violations either to the BPELSG or even to the PPC's mean that these committees are not very active, unless they are 'activist' and that brings us back to the perception of 'witch hunt'. And in any case, what the PPCs do not offer new surveyors is any sort of advice, mentoring or impartial thoughts on interpretation. The PPC starts and ends with preventing violations and heading off disciplinary actions. A noble idea, but too limiting in this surveyor's estimation.

Let us analyze with fresh eyes what we need in the way of assistance to fellow surveyors and then look at whether a PPC is the best venue to address those needs. Then we can start trying to envision some new ways to skin the proverbial cat.

Continued on page 8

PPCs...

Continued from Page 7

What is the most common problem with practicing land surveyors in our area, with respect to violations of the LS Act or the SM Act? Is it dishonesty and corner-cutting, i.e. the aforementioned ethics problem, or is it ignorance that stems from a lack of mentoring, experience and peer-review? I think most of us would say it is the latter. How many new firms have popped up, employing only a single licensee, or worse yet, a survey technician or intern taking direction from an engineer or engineering group? I can name three or four in the area without really trying. So can you. How about lean staffs where mentoring does not take place due to the abundance of work and the dearth of spare time? What about the firms where the principal LS is simply not the mentoring type? We all know some of those...

From where exactly are these new surveyors supposed to get their sense of nuance and the wisdom to stay on the right side of the gaggle of laws, regulations and localized interpretations thereof? What can our chapter provide to these surveyors and anyone else who needs but is denied, or is unaware of the opportunity for meaningful dialog and feedback? Assuming you agree that this is needed and that helping out your fellow surveyor, even though he or she may be a competitor, is a good idea, how can we provide the resources of peer review and experienced advice? Can we make a committee? What would that committee look like, what would be that committee's operating parameters and limitations? Who would serve on it? Who would use it? Or can we simply add some extended functions to the remit for the PPC and bring it back to life with a modified mission statement?

Alternatives

1. The Sacramento Chapter PPC could be brought back to life with some new operating guidelines to function as an advice and mentoring entity for people who need to ask questions and have no in-office resources to turn to.
1. The PPC could be left dormant and a new committee - for now we can call it 'Peer Mentoring' until a better title is negotiated, could be constructed to serve as an advice and mentoring resource. PPC-related issues, if any, would continue to go unaddressed, as they have for the past few years.
1. Both committees could be brought to life and would operate with little or no overlap.
1. The PPC is left dormant and a new (mentoring) committee is not created, maintaining the status quo.

Each of these four alternatives has both pros and cons. The single biggest con for alternatives 1, 2 and 3 is that volunteers who genuinely want to commit to helping their fellow surveyors are likely to be in short supply. The biggest pro for those same three alternatives is that overall professionalism is enhanced if the committee(s) can do their job.

I recommend the Sacramento Chapter explore bringing back the PPC like Dr. Frankenstein waking his creation, but adding some new "Peer Mentoring" functions developed by considering options for a framework and a set of guidelines. If it comes to pass that the obstacles to creating such a committee are insurmountable, then the only thing wasted was a little bit of time, but all the discussion will prove to have been valuable.



According to the field notes, the BLM remonumented this corner in 1972 replacing the 1968 corner set by a PLS and shown on a record of survey just 4 years before. Then the BLM very helpfully stuck the 1968 monument back in the ground “alongside” the newer monument. For clarity, of course.

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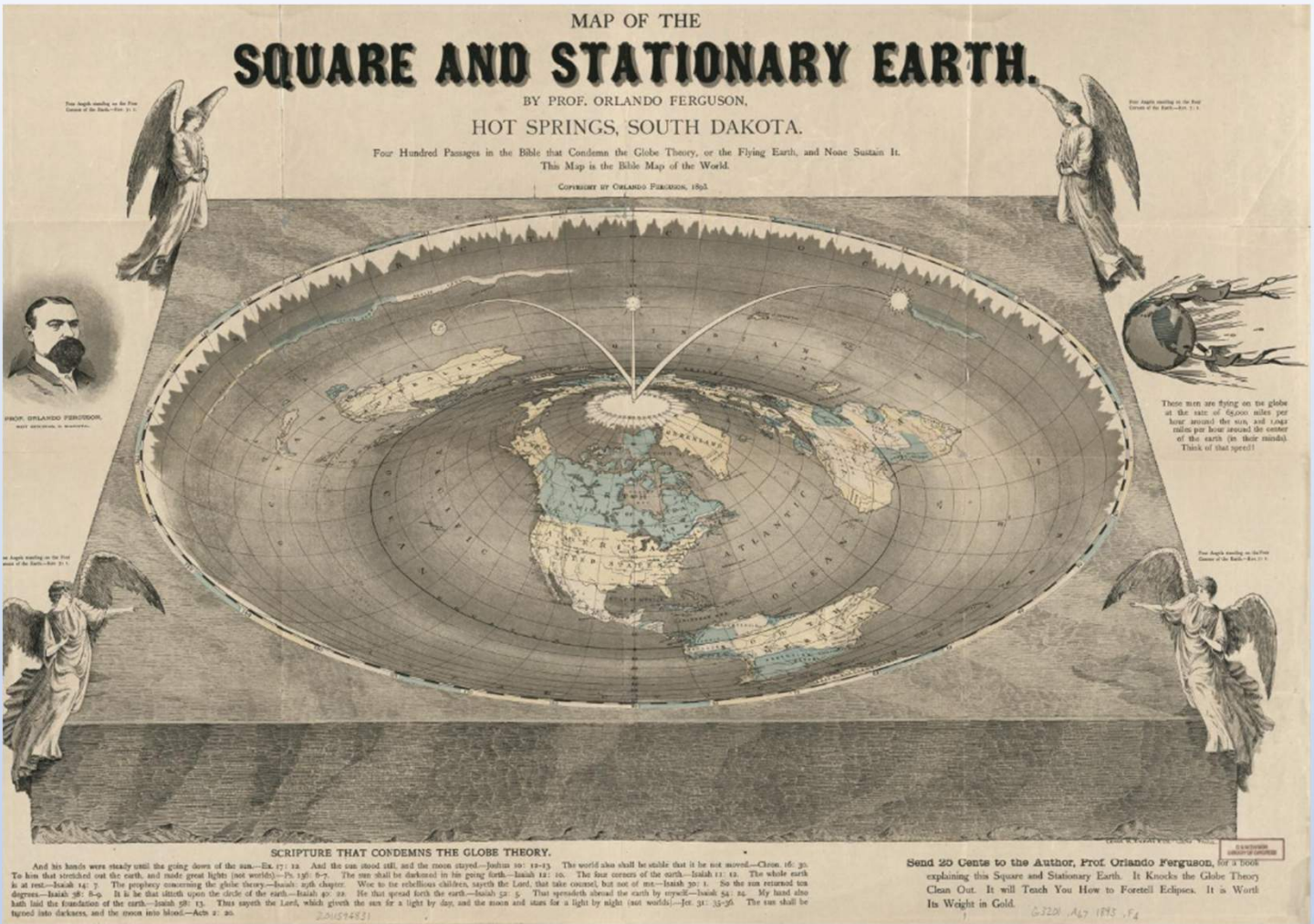
There is a new section to the Professional Land Surveyors Act likely going into effect on January 1st, 2025. This was put together by the CLSA Monument Preservation Committee and attached to a bill for signature by the Governor. This newest section will be numbered 8771.6. The text of the proposed law is copied below for your information. Let us know what you think.

8771.6

In every case where a monument or corner accessory is found with a physical condition that is less than permanent and durable, the licensed land surveyor or registered civil engineer using that monument or corner accessory as control in any survey shall reconstruct or rehabilitate the monument or corner, so that the same shall be left by them in such physical condition that it remains as permanent a monument or corner accessory as is reasonably possible and so that the same may be reasonably expected to be located with facility at all times in the future.

-Ed.

Geodesy for Dummies



Orlando Ferguson Map of the Square and Stationary Earth © 1893
Taken from the Library of Congress website Geography and Map Division

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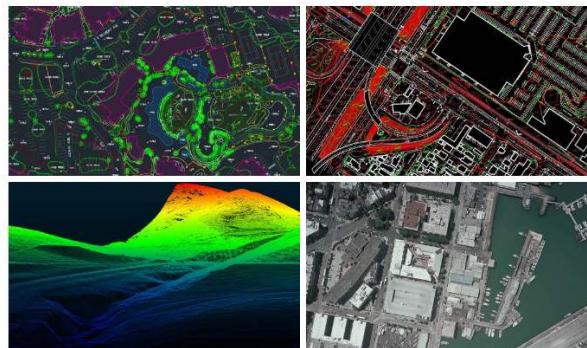


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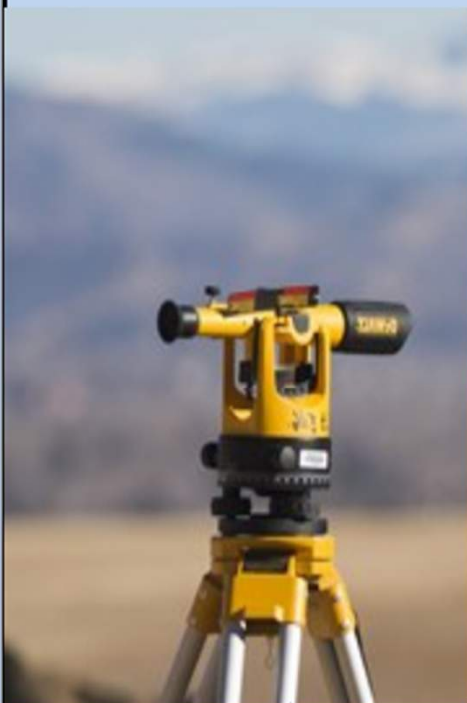
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Announcing Sacramento Chapter CLSA Annual Vendor Night September 5th

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