

Plot Plan: What is it & who needs one?

First of all, what is a Plot Plan?

A Plot plan is a drawing (a special kind of survey) showing a birds eye view of your property. It must show at least three things:

1. The property lines
2. Structures already on your property, and
3. What you want to build.

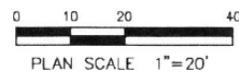
If you want more details [this link will take you to what we used to call *The Blue Pages*](#) and will show you RI laws and regs that matter to plot plans; look for section 113.6. A plot plan is not always the same as a site plan because plot plans are focused on a single lot. A site plan may not.

That sounds complicated. Do have to hire an engineer, Registered Professional Land Surveyor (PLS), or Registered Design Professional (RDP)?:

Short answer is no. The Building Official is required to accept all drawings and plans then either accept or reject the documents, then tell you why in writing. You or your contractor can submit a plot plan, but an engineer such as a Registered Professional Land Surveyor or Registered Design Professional is more likely to give you what your project needs the first time.

That sounds okay but what has to be on my Plot Plan?

A Plot Plan we can Approve must meet four basic minimums whether for temporary or permanent structures. Those four basic minimums are **highlighted** below:

1. A title block containing
 - a. Where the property is (Assessors Plat and Parcel Number, **street name, town/city**)
 - b. When it was drawn (month/day/year) and if it was revised from the original drawing date, the new date needs to be shown too.
 - c. A scale that looks similar to this:
 - d. Lines showing how far the structures are from each other and the property lines.
 - e. The name and address of who drew the plot plan.
2. If the plan is shrunk by half its size, everything must still be legible.
3. Streets, roads, and easements of record and/or usage
4. Location of buildings and other substantial physical features, as may be appropriate. Stuff like stone walls, barns, etc.

That's fine but I hear there's a bunch of different Plot (Survey) Plans. What kind will I need?

Every project is unique, so it depends on what you're building, but generally speaking, the following type/class of Plot Plan (survey) will meet what Building Code requires:

Certified** Class I Limited Content Survey

Certified** Class I or II Construction Survey

Certified** Class III Data Accumulation Survey*

Class IV Compilation Plan may only be used for non-permanent structures such as above ground pools and sheds.

*Data Accumulation Survey, Class III *may* also require topographic survey accuracy or vertical control standards or both on a case by case basis. Please call the Town Building & Zoning Official for confirmation.

**Certification shall be by PLS, RDP, or other entity subject to Building/Zoning Official Approval.

All this sounds expensive. So tell me why a Site/Plot plan is required?

Short answers are it's the law and it protects the property owner and the municipality: In the State of Rhode Island, no locality, town, or city can issue a building permit until all guess work is eliminated. If you want to see the law about this [here is a link to Rhode Island General Law Ch. 23 §23-27.3-114.1 \(a-f\) as applicable](#). Once a permit has been issued, and the owner proceeds with construction, if it is later discovered that the structure violates some aspect of law or local ordinance, revoking the permit to halt further harm may be very costly to you, the owner, and if it goes too far along, stopping construction may not even be legal. A plot plan helps prevent all of that.

But what does a plot plan look like?

To help you see what all this should look like, here is a sample of a **portion** of a plot plan that was submitted and approved. Notice the measurements, simple outline of structure, and wetlands easement. The address and other private citizen information is intentionally removed.

