

Surveyor's love of details fits her job



TIMES PHOTOS BY JASON WACHTER

Linda Brown, Paul Wellen & Associates, checked a printed plot of a subdivision she is working on for a client.

Linda Brown is one of five women in state with license

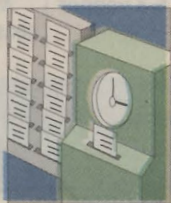
By Bridget Falbo

SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Linda Brown views her job as a creative process. She transforms data describing land formations and contours into curved and straight lines on her computer.

The lines become the basis for building a neighborhood of homes and roads.

"It's enjoyable to take a piece of land and plot roads and houses and then see it actually, physically appear," Brown said.



ON THE JOB

She began her surveying career after she earned an engineering degree. She worked for a company that used both engineers and land surveyors. After becoming acquainted with the work of land surveyors, the idea of working with land appealed to her.

She studied, interned in the field and passed the tests to fulfill the requirements to become licensed as a land surveyor in Minnesota. She is one of only five female licensed surveyors in the state.

Although most people think of surveyors as the people who stand out on the roads or in fields working with measuring instruments on tripod legs, land surveyors also construct images on computer screens, working with the data collected from the field.

Brown prefers to work in the office, rather than in the field. Her main responsibilities lie with residential subdivision design and land title surveys for the American Land Title Association/American Congress on Surveying and Mapping.

From the data collected by other surveyors in the company, Brown certifies that a commercial building has the required amount of set back, meets other building and parking lot requirements and is placed on the lot as is recorded. The work often is required by mortgage companies.

Brown begins residential subdivision design projects by talking with the developer and finding out how they view the project. Some developers know exactly how they want the development to look and others give her more leeway in the design, she said.

“Some developers are very cre-

and they are so much fun to work with," Brown said.

A surveying crew collects data on the topography of the land to be developed, now using the newest in Global Positioning System equipment. Brown loads the information into her computer and uses a type of graphics software specially developed for plotting land.

She first draws roads through the development.

"My personal preference is to use curves," Brown said. "Years ago I lived near the Centennial plat (in St. Cloud) which had curving roads and I loved it."

Because she enjoys the design aspect of her job so much, she said she's spent time learning about design theory and method from books and the owner of the surveying firm, Paul Wellen, who has been in the surveying business for more than 40 years.

She recently discovered a new type of design for developments, called coving, which involves curving roads with varying footages of house set back from the road to create a more interesting neighborhood design, she said.

After the roads are laid out on the development plan, she draws in all the lot lines for that development. Once the designs are approved, a surveying crew then will take the development blue

ABOUT BROWN

Who: Linda Brown

Job: Land surveyor

Location: Paul Wellen and Associates, St. Cloud

Duties: Uses data collected from surveyors in the field to design residential developments

Training and Education: bachelor of science in engineering, licensing by the State of Minnesota

Hours: 40 to 50 hours per week

prints and place stakes in the corners of each lot.

Brown must be aware of all city and county regulations regarding buildings and roads, such as road widths allowed and the amount of required set back from the road. She conducts her work in a three-county vicinity and within the boundaries of numerous cities and townships, so she must keep up on all the building regulations of each city and county.

Brown also works with her company on new construction, setting the placement for new buildings on a property and staking the developments for both curb and gutter.

Being detailed and accurate is a major requirement of the job, and her personality fits that description.

Her engineering aptitude makes her a competent land sur-



Brown creates plots for single residential lots and large subdivisions with multiple sites.

■ It's sort of a sleeper profession. People don't know it's out there. ■

Linda Brown
SURVEYOR

veyor, but it's her feeling for the land that gives her job satisfaction. "I love land," she said simply, explaining why she enjoys her work.

Finding a career that suits her abilities and preferences has made her an advocate of the land surveying profession in hopes that more people, especially women, will enter the field.

"It's sort of a sleeper profession," Brown said. "People don't

know it's out there."

A new degree program at St. Cloud State in land surveying may lead to more public knowledge of the profession, she said.

For the land surveying degree, a student would earn an associate degree in a two year program at a technical college and complete the bachelor's degree at St. Cloud State, the only college in Minnesota to offer the land surveying degree.