

# Property Documentation: Maximizing Value Across the Ownership Lifecycle

## Executive Summary

For too long, accurate building documentation was a professional prerequisite, managed only by architects, contractors, and leasing agents. Today, commercial and residential property owners are increasingly recognizing the strategic necessity of owning and controlling their building's digital record. By engaging specialists like Ground Truth 3D directly, property owners can generate accurate, easy-to-share 2D and 3D existing conditions documentation that provides immense value from the initial purchase through renovation, operation, and eventual sale. This level of control ensures efficient communication, reduces risk, and simplifies future maintenance and marketing efforts.

### I. Overview: A Shift in Ownership Control

Existing conditions documentation is the process of measuring, photographically documenting, and generating comprehensive 2D and 3D plans for a building or collection of buildings. Historically, the primary users of this crucial input were Architects, Interior Architects, Contractors, and Leasing Agents. These professionals recognized the need for accurate data to begin their work, and they typically engaged specialized companies like Ground Truth 3D to "capture" the building and produce the necessary plans, models, and photographs.

A significant shift is occurring as commercial and residential owners recognize the distinct advantage of engaging with Ground Truth 3D directly. This direct engagement often happens before a final decision to buy or lease is made, and always as a precursor to involving other professionals. The key benefit is that having accurate, easy-to-share building information ensures more efficient communication with potential consulting partners. Most importantly, this proactive approach ensures that the owner maintains definitive control of the building documentation throughout the entire duration of their building ownership, establishing a centralized source of truth from day one.

### II. Purchasing / Leasing a Property

The foundation of smart purchasing and leasing decisions rests on the accurate evaluation of a building's potential, alongside a realistic assessment of the time and cost required to execute desired changes. Existing conditions documentation provides this foundation. The process involves digitally capturing the building and site and converting the raw data into plans and models that facilitate renovation options evaluation and preliminary budgeting.

This digital documentation can then be seamlessly shared with all potential external partners, including architects, interior architects, landscapers, contractors, and even permitting agencies, streamlining the due diligence process. Furthermore, comprehensive 360° photos enable virtual visits to the property, which significantly cuts down on the need for physical site visits. Prospective partners can review building details remotely and instantly, accelerating their initial analysis and commitment to the project.

### III. Planning Renovations

When planning renovations, owners often face a debilitating "chicken and egg" challenge. Architects, designers, and contractors require a budget to thoughtfully engage with the owner, yet the owner requires cost feedback from these professionals to determine the final form and scope of renovations.

Existing Conditions Documentation provides the critical, objective information needed to break this stalemate. This information can be easily shared with prospective consulting partners, leading to faster, lower-cost analysis. This results in a more focused and productive discussion about what scope of work is achievable and what it is likely to cost. Beyond the fundamental value of up-to-date plans, elevation, and site information, the inclusion of comprehensive 360° photographic documentation allows for ad-hoc virtual "visits". Consultants can use this to quickly fill in memory gaps or to remind themselves of all visible aspects of the property without needing to schedule a return visit.

#### IV. Team Selection and Communication

Renovation planning can quickly become a logistical challenge, potentially involving four or more prospective partners in key roles such as Architects, General Contractors, Interior Architects or Designers, and Landscape Architects / Landscape Contractors. Moreover, many other specialty contractors and consultants are often involved from the earliest planning stages, including those specializing in Solar, HVAC, Electrical/lighting, Pools and Spas, and A/V systems. When considering that primary partners may also bring their own subcontracting partners to bid on the project, the total number of entities requiring information and property access can become very large.

The owner's generation of accurate, standardized existing conditions documents that are easily shared among all participants maximizes efficiency and accuracy in the bidding process. This standardization drastically reduces communication time and eliminates unnecessary, time-consuming visits to the site by multiple teams.

#### V. As Built: Closing the Documentation Gap

It is a well-established reality that completed building and renovation projects rarely match the original construction documents. Variations may arise from evolving programs, budget overruns necessitating scope reductions or changes in finishes, or fluctuating material costs forcing updates. Construction and renovation often take a year or more to complete, during which time the accumulated variation from initial plans can be considerable. While well-managed projects document all changes, this is often the exception to the standard. Even when changes are recorded, the format can be inconsistent, ranging from updated full-sized plan sets to detail updates, emails, and text messages.

The most efficient method to ensure the owner possesses sharable, digital information for effective operation and management of future maintenance and changes is the re-scanning and modeling of the building following construction. If the project was initiated with quality existing conditions documentation, the cost and time required to update the plans, models, and photographs are significantly less than the initial documentation. This recovery of time and cost is achieved by avoiding the communication overhead, bid padding, and costly mistakes that

inevitably arise from relying on poor or outdated information.VI. Operation: Long-Term Asset Management

While the immediate motivation for generating existing conditions documentation is often to plan and execute a significant renovation project, efficient maintenance and operation of a property deliver a second, and potentially larger, value to the owner.

A standard Ground Truth 3D project focuses on recording geometric elements like walls, floors, windows, and doors. However, Building Information Models (BIM) can easily be updated to include a wealth of information related to all building elements. This detailed data often includes manufacturer, model number, finishes, and source information, but is virtually unlimited in scope. Critical elements, such as maintenance contact information, service schedules, purchase records, and operating documents, can be integrated directly into the model for rapid retrieval when needed. Up-to-date 2D and 3D plans, PDF sheets, and photographic documentation are essential tools for facilitating communication with third parties to secure maintenance bids and plan necessary repairs. By maintaining accurate, annotated BIM information, owners simplify the efficient, ongoing operation of their buildings and establish the necessary groundwork for all future improvements.VII. Selling / Leasing: Meeting Modern Market Demands

Commercial building owners and operators must repeatedly market their property throughout the lifecycle of their ownership investment. Historically, simple 2D space plans, combined with a modest number of photographs, were sufficient to entice potential tenants to tour the property.

However, profitably leasing space has become more difficult as supply often surpasses demand. Space that is currently aligned with or can easily be adapted to tenant requirements holds a powerful market advantage. Today's sophisticated tenants have learned to expect to understand a property in granular detail, and from a distance, before investing their limited time on a potential property. A building that possesses current, detailed existing conditions documentation and models faces a much lower hurdle when being presented as a desirable option for these discerning tenants, accelerating the sales and leasing cycle.VIII. Existing Conditions Documentation Process

The comprehensive documentation process follows a disciplined workflow to ensure accuracy and utility. It begins with Project Scoping and Planning, where a clear definition of the required deliverables (e.g., 2D plans, BIM model level of detail) is established. The second stage is Data Capture, which involves deploying advanced technologies such as laser scanners, photogrammetry tools, and high-resolution 360° cameras to perform high-speed measurement and gather geometric and visual data of the site and structure. Following data collection, the Processing phase involves registering the generated point clouds and converting the data into usable formats, including orthographic views and elevation sheets. Finally, the Deliverables stage focuses on generating the final 2D computer-aided design (CAD) plans, developing the 3D BIM models, and integrating all photographic documentation into an easily navigable digital system for the owner.IX. Time and Cost: An Investment in Efficiency

While engaging in an existing conditions documentation project represents an initial investment, it should be viewed as a foundational asset that generates significant returns on investment throughout the building's lifecycle. Much of the documentation effort recovers its own cost by mitigating risks. For instance, consultants frequently build "bid padding" into their proposals to cover the time and effort required to measure and confirm existing conditions themselves. By providing accurate, standardized documentation upfront, the owner removes this variable, leading to tighter, more competitive, and more accurate bids. Most critically, the upfront expense serves as an insurance policy, preventing expensive construction errors, delays, and change orders that stem from inaccurate base plans—mistakes that can easily dwarf the initial documentation cost.

#### X. Conclusion

Existing conditions documentation has evolved from a professional technical requirement to an essential, strategic asset for the modern property owner. By taking direct control of the documentation process, owners ensure efficient communication, smarter acquisition and leasing decisions, and streamlined renovation planning. When documentation is maintained and integrated into operation via annotated BIM, its value compounds, ensuring easier maintenance and a powerful competitive advantage when it is time to market the property. Comprehensive, sharable, digital building information is no longer optional—it is the bedrock of responsible and profitable property ownership.