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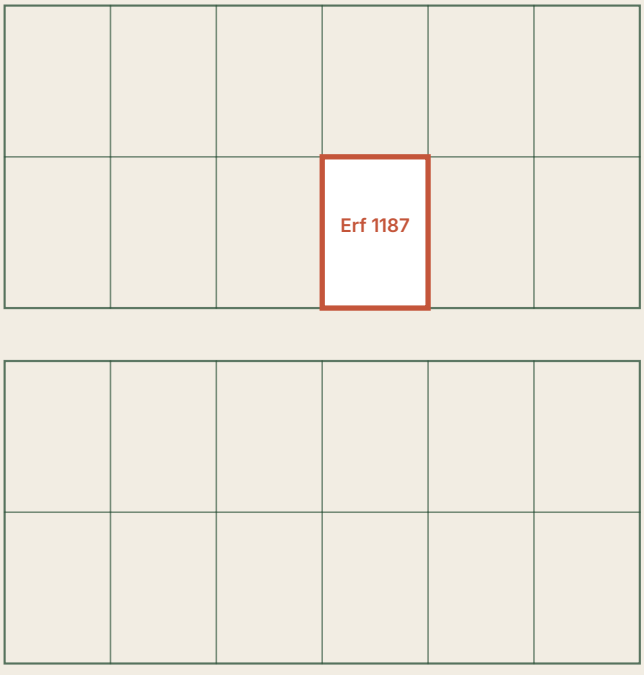
Erf Numbers in South Africa: How to Find, Read and Use Yours

What an erf number is, where to find yours, how to read the property description around it and the 21-digit SG code, and what the number is used for, from title deeds to zoning and building plans.

17 November 2026 · Reviewed every six months

Glensburg Town Planners

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An erf number at a glance

What it is
The number of a registered piece of land in a township or town

Read it with
The name of the township

Approved by
The Surveyor-General, on a general plan or diagram

Registered by
The Registrar of Deeds, at the Deeds Office for the area

Where to find it
Title deed, rates account, SG diagram, municipal map

Also called
Stand number; lot or plot in older records. Plural: erven

National code
The 21-digit SG code, also called the LPI code

Sectional title
A unit has a section number; the scheme stands on an erf

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Erf numbers in one paragraph

An erf number is the number of a registered piece of land in a South African township or town. It identifies a property only together with the name of the township, because the same number belongs to other properties in other townships. The number comes from a plan approved by the Surveyor-General, and your title deed and municipal rates account both carry it.

Key takeaways

- **Always give the township with the number.** "Erf 1187" alone could be any of many properties; "Erf 1187 Example Park Extension 3" is one.
- **Your title deed and your rates account both carry it.** Without either, the municipality's online map or valuation roll finds it from the street address.
- **The street address is not the erf number.** The Deeds Office cannot search by street address; its searches start from the owner, the erf or the title deed.
- **Subdivision and consolidation change the number.** They create portions, remaining extents and new erven, so the number on an old document may be out of date.
- **A sectional title unit has no erf number of its own.** It has a section number and a sectional plan number; the building stands on an erf.
- **The number identifies the land, not what it allows.** Zoning, title conditions and approved plans are separate records, filed under the erf number.

Stated as at 17 November 2026. South African law and practice. Every example is hypothetical.

What is an erf number?

An erf number is the number that identifies an erf, a piece of land registered in a township or town in South Africa. It is always read with the name of the township, as in "Erf 1187 Example Park Extension 3". The Surveyor-General approves the number on a survey plan, and the Deeds Office registers the land under it.

The word has a legal definition. The Deeds Registries Act, 1937, which governs the registration of land, defines an erf as:

> *"every piece of land registered as an erf, lot, plot or stand in a deeds registry, and includes every defined portion, not intended to be a public place, of a piece of land laid out as a township, whether or not it has been formally recognised, approved or proclaimed as such"*
>
> Deeds Registries Act 47 of 1937, s 102(1)[1]

Three things follow from it. An erf is urban land: land in a registered township, or land laid out as one. "Lot", "plot" and "stand" are other names for the same thing. And streets and parks are not erven, because the definition leaves out land intended as a public place, which the Land Survey Act, 1997 defines to include streets, roads and open spaces.[2] The Chief Surveyor-General's records

describe an erf in the same way, as a single parcel of land in a township or allotment area, "being an urban area".[3]

The number itself is distinctive only within its township or, in the regulations' terms, its allotment area. The Deeds Registries Regulations give each erf in an area "a distinctive number" in that area,[4] and other townships use the same numbers for their own erven. That is why every official record gives the township's name with the number, and why the Surveyor-General also gives each parcel a 21-digit code that is unique across the country (see What is the 21-digit SG code?).

Where the word comes from

"Erf" came into South African English from Dutch, where it first meant 'inheritance'. The *Dictionary of South African English* defines it simply as a plot of land and records two plurals, "erven" and "erfs";[5] legislation and title deeds use "erven". The same dictionary records the "erfgrondbrief", the original title deed granted for a plot at the Cape.[6]

Who gives an erf its number?

The Surveyor-General approves it. A land surveyor draws a general plan for a new township, or a diagram for a single piece of land, showing the erf numbers. The Surveyor-General for the province examines and approves the plan, and the Deeds Office then registers the land under those numbers, in a register for the township.

The Land Survey Act sets the sequence. A general plan or diagram must be prepared under the direction of a land surveyor and signed by one.[7] The Surveyor-General must examine and approve it before any registration in a deeds registry,[8] and no deeds registry may accept a general plan or diagram for the registration of land unless the Surveyor-General has approved it.[9]

The Deeds Registries Regulations govern the numbers. They give the Registrar of Deeds, in consultation with the Surveyor-General, the task of setting the limits of an allotment area where needed and of giving each erf in it a distinctive number. The Registrar then opens a register for the area and endorses the title deeds to show each erf's registration number.[4]

The municipality comes first. A new township, a subdivision or a consolidation begins as a land use application, decided under the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, 2013 (SPLUMA) and the municipality's planning by-law; in Johannesburg, the City of Johannesburg Municipal Planning By-law, 2016, as amended in 2023.[10] Once the erven are registered, the municipality uses their numbers in its valuation roll, its rates accounts and its zoning records.

Table 1 Who numbers an erf, and who records it

Who	What they do with the erf number
Municipality	Decides the application for a new township, a subdivision or a consolidation, and records the erf in its valuation roll, rates accounts and zoning records
Land surveyor	Surveys the land and prepares and signs the general plan or diagram[7]
Surveyor-General	Examines and approves the plan with its erf numbers, keeps it, and issues copies on request[8]
Registrar of Deeds	Numbers the erven with the Surveyor-General, opens the register for the township and registers title to each erf[4]

Source: Land Survey Act 8 of 1997; Deeds Registries Regulations; Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013.

The law behind the numbers is being revised. An Electronic Deeds Registration and Recordal Systems Amendment Bill was announced in July 2026,[11] and a draft Land Rights Registration Bill, 2026, which would replace the Deeds Registries Act, 1937, has been circulated.[12] Neither had changed the law when this guide was published.

Where can I find my erf number?

Look first at your title deed and your municipal rates account: both give the erf number with the township's name. The number also appears on the Surveyor-General's diagram, the deed of sale, bond documents, zoning certificates and building plan forms, and municipal maps and valuation rolls show it against the street address.

Table 2 Where an erf number is recorded

Document or record	Where the number appears	Who has it
Title deed	The property description at the start of the deed (see Figure 1)	The owner, or the bank while a bond is registered;[13] the Deeds Office keeps a copy[14]
Municipal rates account	The property description; Cape Town's guide to its valuation roll says the erf number is on the back of the account[15]	The owner
Valuation roll	Each entry, which must give the property's registered description and its physical address[16]	The municipality; most metros publish it online
Surveyor-General's diagram or general plan	The erf number, with the boundaries and the extent	The Surveyor-General, who issues copies on request[8]
Deed of sale and bond documents	The property description, taken from the title deed	The buyer, the seller and the conveyancer
Zoning certificate	Issued for each erf[17]	The municipality, and the owner who asked for it
Building plan application	"Erf No" and "Township" on every page of the national form[18]	The municipality and the owner
Municipal online map	Against each property on the map (see the next section)	Anyone online

An old document can carry an old number. If the erf has been subdivided or consolidated since the document was drawn up, the number on it may no longer describe registered land (see Can an erf number change?).

If you have lost your title deed

You do not need the original deed to find the erf number. The Deeds Office keeps a copy of every registered title deed, and its records are open to the public;[14] a search on the owner's name lists the property by its description.[19] While a property is bonded, the bank holds the original.[13] Replacing a lost original is a separate, formal application, usually made through a conveyancer, and it is not needed to find the number.[13]

How do I find an erf number from a street address?

Search the street address on your municipality's online map or valuation roll: the result gives the erf or stand number and the township. The Deeds Office's own online search does not take street addresses, so a deeds search starts from the owner's name, the erf number or the title deed number instead.

The street address and the erf number come from different systems. The municipality gives the address, for post and services; the erf number is the land's registered identity in the survey and deeds records. The two meet in municipal records, not in the deeds registry. DeedsWeb, the Deeds Office's online service, states that a search by physical street address is not possible,[19] and the Government's guidance on deeds registry information asks for the erf number and township, or the farm name and number, "not the street address".[20]

Table 3 Where the five largest metros show erf numbers online

Municipality	Tool	What it shows
City of Johannesburg	Online Maps	Stand numbers, owners, street addresses, values, extents and zoning, with no registration; zoning is shown "but not interpretation"[21]
City of Johannesburg	Corporate Geo-Informatics (CGIS)	Confirms street and erf numbers, and issues zoning certificates and zoning information for each erf, for a fee[17]
City of Cape Town	City Map Viewer	Erf numbers on the map: registered erven in grey, erven approved by the Surveyor-General but not yet registered in green[22]
City of Cape Town	Valuation roll search	The property's entry on the roll; the City's guide notes that a search on an erf number alone lists several properties[15]
City of Tshwane	General valuation roll 2025 to 2029	The roll online, searched with the property description on the municipal account[23]
City of Ekurhuleni	Ekurhuleni GIS	Stands, zoning and addresses, among its core data sets[24]
eThekwini Municipality	Corporate GIS Map Viewer	The municipality's public viewer for its spatial data[25]

Source: the municipalities' own sites, as at 17 November 2026. Online services change.

Where a municipality has no public map, its valuation roll still lists every property by its registered description and its physical address,[16] so the roll links the two.

Searching the deeds registry

Deeds records are public. DeedsWeb notes that under section 7 of the Deeds Registries Act the Deeds Office may not refuse anyone access to them, once the fees are paid.[19] DeedsWeb searches by person, by property (township, erf and portion; farm and registration division; or sectional scheme) and by title deed, and it is the only deeds information that the Chief Registrar of Deeds underwrites.[19] Its fees are set in the regulations' schedule of fees, most recently replaced with effect from 27 March 2026.[26]

The Electronic Deeds Registration System went live on 1 April 2025, with a public portal that offers a limited set of services.[27] Commercial services resell the deeds records with tools of their own. WinDeed, for one, searches by property description or by the 21-digit code, returns the erf that a sectional scheme stands on when searched by code, and offers to convert a street address to an erf number.[28]

How do I read a property description?

A property description names the land in a fixed order: the erf number, the township, the registration division, the province, the extent and, in a title deed, the deed the land is held under. Read together, the parts identify one piece of land; each part on its own is ambiguous.

Figure 1 The parts of a property description (hypothetical)

1 Erf 1187 2 Example Park Extension 3 Township, 3 Registration Division I.R., 4 Province of Gauteng, 5 measuring 892 (eight hundred and ninety-two) square metres, 6 held by Deed of Transfer T45210/2011

1. **Erf 1187.** The erf number, distinctive within its township.
2. **Example Park Extension 3 Township.** The township, with its extension. An extension is a township in its own right, and its erf numbers may carry on from those of the township before it.
3. **Registration Division I.R.** The registration division, a block of the survey grid (see below).
4. **Province of Gauteng.** The province. Older deeds give the former province, such as Transvaal.
5. **Measuring 892 square metres.** The extent: the area of the land as surveyed on the Surveyor-General's diagram, which may differ from what fences or walls enclose.
6. **Held by Deed of Transfer T45210/2011.** The title deed the land is held under, with its serial number and the year of registration. It changes with every transfer; the erf number does not.

Registration divisions: IR, JR and the rest

Descriptions of land in the former Transvaal, which includes Gauteng, carry a registration division of two letters, such as IR, IQ or JR. The Deeds Registries Regulations make each degree square, the block between whole lines of latitude and longitude, a registration division,[4] so the letters work as a grid reference: central Johannesburg lies in IR and Pretoria in JR. Farm numbers run within each

division, which is why a farm is always described with its division, as in “Portion 5 of the farm Example No. 391, Registration Division J.R.”.

KwaZulu-Natal descriptions also carry a registration division; the Chief Surveyor-General’s own example lies in division FT.[29] In the Cape, Natal and the Free State, the regulations allow farm numbering to follow the administrative district instead,[4] and Cape descriptions name the division: “Erf 2863, Cape Town, situated in the City of Cape Town, Cape Division”.[30]

Table 4 How property descriptions read (invented names and numbers)

Land	How it is described
An erf in a Gauteng township	Erf 1187 Example Park Extension 3 Township, Registration Division I.R., Province of Gauteng
A portion of an erf	Portion 1 of Erf 1187 Example Park Extension 3 Township, Registration Division I.R., Province of Gauteng
What remains after a subdivision	Remaining Extent of Erf 1187 Example Park Extension 3 Township, Registration Division I.R., Province of Gauteng
An erf in Cape Town	Erf 25001 Cape Town at Example Bay, in the City of Cape Town, Cape Division, Province of the Western Cape
An erf in KwaZulu-Natal	Erf 2464 Example, Registration Division FT, Province of KwaZulu-Natal
An agricultural holding	Holding 12 Example Agricultural Holdings Extension 1, Registration Division J.R., Province of Gauteng
A farm portion	Portion 5 of the farm Example No. 391, Registration Division J.R., Province of Gauteng
A sectional title unit	Section 14 as shown and more fully described on Sectional Plan No. SS 412/2009, in the scheme known as Example Court

Source: formats from the Deeds Registries Regulations, the Sectional Titles Act’s forms and published notices.[4, 31, 30, 32] All names and numbers are invented.

Older deeds and diagrams

Older documents use older names. A Gauteng deed may give the province as Transvaal, as in “Registration Division I.R., Transvaal”. “Lot” and “stand” appear where a modern deed says “erf”, and the Deeds Registries Act treats them as the same.[1] Old Cape diagrams and notices give areas in morgen and square roods; a 1982 notice for Cape Town still described erven in square roods.[32] One morgen is about 0.8565 hectares, or 8 565 m².

What do portion, remaining extent and consolidation mean?

They name land that has been divided or joined. A portion is a piece cut from an erf by subdivision and numbered in sequence. The remaining extent is what is left of the original erf. A consolidation joins two or more erven into one piece of land, which is given a new erf number.

The Deeds Registries Regulations set the rules. Portions are numbered consecutively, and portions already registered keep their numbers. In an allotment area, a subdivision may instead be given a

new erf number of its own. When two or more whole erven are consolidated, the result gets a new number; when portions of the same erf are consolidated, it gets the next portion number.[4]

Two habits follow. In Gauteng, a subdivided erf usually becomes “Portion 1 of Erf 1187” and the “Remaining Extent of Erf 1187”. In Cape Town, a subdivision is often given a new erf number, recorded with its parent: a 1982 notice describes “Erf 111828, a portion of Erf 66836, Cape Town”.[32]

Table 5 Words for divided and joined land

Term	Meaning	Example (hypothetical)
Portion (Ptn)	A piece of an erf or farm created by subdivision, numbered in sequence	Portion 1 of Erf 1187
Remaining extent (RE)	What is left of an erf or farm after portions have been cut from it	Remaining Extent of Erf 1187
Consolidation	Two or more adjoining pieces of land registered as one	Erf 1203, the consolidation of Erven 1187 and 1188
New erf on subdivision	A subdivided piece given an erf number of its own, in an allotment area	Erf 25001, a portion of Erf 1187
Erven	The plural of erf	Erven 1187 and 1188

Source: Deeds Registries Regulations, reg 9.[4]

Figure 2 One erf’s history: consolidation, then subdivision (hypothetical)



Worked example (hypothetical)

The owner of Erf 1187 buys the neighbouring Erf 1188 and, in 2014, consolidates the two. The Surveyor-General approves a diagram of the joined land, and the Deeds Office registers it as Erf 1203. In 2024, Erf 1203 is subdivided: Portion 1 of Erf 1203 is sold, and the owner keeps the Remaining Extent of Erf 1203.

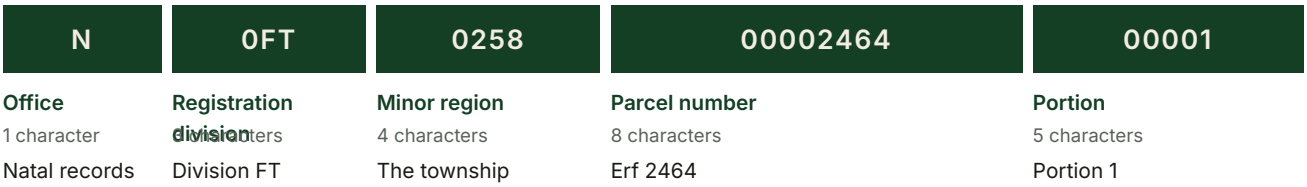
The 2011 title deed for Erf 1187 still exists, but it now describes land that is no longer a registered unit. A rates account or a building plan from before 2014 carries a number that a conveyancer could not use today.

What is the 21-digit SG code?

The 21-digit SG code is the Surveyor-General’s identifier for a land parcel, unique across South Africa. It joins five parts: the Surveyor-General office (1 character), the registration division (3), the township or minor region (4), the erf or farm number (8) and the portion (5).

The code is also called the LPI code, for land parcel identifier: the Chief Surveyor-General's erven layer gives each erf's identifier as its "21 Digit Code or LPI",[3] and deeds-search services search by it.[28]

Figure 3 The Chief Surveyor-General's example, read part by part



N0FT02580000246400001 is Portion 1 of Erf 2464, Registration Division FT, KwaZulu-Natal.[29]

Table 6 The five parts of the 21-digit code

Part	Characters	What it holds
Surveyor-General office	1	A letter for the Surveyor-General office whose records hold the parcel: C, F, N or T, letters that date from the four provinces before 1994, the Cape, the Free State, Natal and the Transvaal[33]
Registration division	3	The registration division: letters in the former Transvaal and Natal, with a leading zero (0IR), and a number in the Cape and the Free State
Minor region	4	The township or allotment area, as the Surveyor-General numbers it; 0000 for farm land
Parcel number	8	The erf or farm number, filled out with zeros
Portion	5	The portion number; 00000 for the erf or farm itself

Source: Chief Surveyor-General.[29]

Two limits are worth knowing. The code cannot be built from a title deed, because the minor region is the Surveyor-General's own number for the township and is not written in the description. And the code identifies the surveyed parcel, not the owner or the deed: when land is consolidated or subdivided, the new parcels have new codes.

> **Worked example (hypothetical)**
>
> A Gauteng code T0IR03450000118700000 would read: Transvaal records (T); Registration Division IR (0IR); a township whose minor region is 0345; Erf 1187 (00001187); the erf itself, not a portion (00000). The minor region 0345 is invented. The real number for a township comes only from the Surveyor-General's records.

Do sectional title units have an erf number?

Not of their own. A sectional title unit is identified by its section number and its sectional plan, as in "Section 14, Sectional Plan No. SS 412/2009, Example Court". The building stands on an erf, which the sectional plan records; the unit's title deed names the township but not the erf.

The prescribed form of a sectional title deed shows why. It describes the section "as shown and more fully described on Sectional Plan No. SS …", names the scheme, and locates the land and buildings by the town or township and the local authority, not by erf number.[31] The erf is on the sectional plan

instead. The Sectional Titles Act requires the plan to show the boundaries of the land according to its diagram or general plan, and the plan's first sheet gives the description of the land as that diagram or general plan has it.[34]

For an owner, that means two things. The erf is found through the scheme: on the first sheet of the sectional plan, a copy of which the Deeds Office supplies,[14] or through a deeds search on the scheme, which deeds-search services link to the erf it stands on.[28] And applications for the property use the erf: the national building plan form asks for the erf number and township on every page.[18] A scheme is developed on an erf, so planning for a new or extended scheme starts from the erf's own records; see Sectional Title Development.

Worked example (hypothetical)

The owner of Section 14 in Example Court needs the erf number for a building plan application. The title deed gives Section 14, Sectional Plan No. SS 412/2009, the scheme's name and Example Park Extension 3 Township, but no erf. The first sheet of SS 412/2009 describes the land as Erf 1195 Example Park Extension 3 Township, and that is the number the application uses.

Erf, stand, plot, holding or farm: what is the difference?

Erf, stand, lot and plot all mean a registered piece of land in a township or town, and the Deeds Registries Act treats them as one. An agricultural holding is a different kind of registered land, found in the former Transvaal. A farm portion is rural land, described by the farm's name and number and its registration division.

Table 7 An erf and the other names for land

Term	What it is	Where you will see it
Erf	A registered piece of land in a township or town[1]	Title deeds, rates accounts and planning records across the country
Stand	The same as an erf	Common in Gauteng: Johannesburg's online maps show "stand numbers"[21]
Lot	The same as an erf	Older deeds and diagrams
Plot	The same as an erf in law; in Gauteng, often an agricultural holding	Johannesburg's application forms pair plots with agricultural holdings, as they pair erven with townships[35]
Agricultural holding	Land registered as a holding under the Agricultural Holdings (Transvaal) Registration Act, 1919[36]	Peri-urban parts of the former Transvaal: "Holding 12 Example Agricultural Holdings"
Farm portion	Rural land outside a township, described by farm name, farm number, portion and registration division	"Portion 5 of the farm Example No. 391, Registration Division J.R."; its 21-digit code has 0000 for the minor region[29]
Section	A unit in a sectional title scheme	See Do sectional title units have an erf number?

Farm land becomes erven through township establishment. Once a township is approved and its general plan registered, the land is divided into numbered erven and streets: a farm portion might

become, say, Erven 2501 to 2620, Example Park Extension 4. A holding follows its own register and its own planning route; see Excision of Agricultural Holdings.

Can an erf number change?

Yes, but not when a property is sold. The erf number stays with the land through every transfer; only the title deed number changes. It changes when the land does: a subdivision creates portions or new erven, a consolidation creates a new erf, and township establishment gives farm land erf numbers for the first time.

Old numbers stay on old paper. A deed of sale, a building plan or a rates account can still carry the number the land had when it was drawn up. The Deeds Office examines every deed against its records, and one conveyancing firm lists an erf number out of date after a subdivision among the common reasons for rejecting one.[37]

Municipal records catch up through supplementary valuations, which the Municipal Property Rates Act requires for property subdivided or consolidated after the last general valuation.[38] Until one is made, a rates account can still show the earlier erf. A street address, on the other hand, can change without any change to the erf: renaming a street leaves the erf number as it was.

Approved is not yet registered

A new erf number exists on paper before it exists in law. When the Surveyor-General approves a general plan or a subdivision diagram, the numbers are fixed, but the new erven are not registered until the Deeds Office registers them. Cape Town's map viewer shows the difference: registered erf numbers in grey, numbers approved by the Surveyor-General in green.[22]

Registration also waits on the municipality. Section 53 of SPLUMA provides that the registration of any property resulting from a land development application may not be performed unless the municipality certifies that the requirements and conditions of the approval have been met.[39] The certificate concerns new erven, from a new township, a subdivision or a consolidation, and not the resale of an existing erf.[39]

What is an erf number used for?

The erf number is how the Deeds Office, the Surveyor-General and the municipality identify a property. It is needed to register a sale or a bond, to search the deeds registry, to value and rate the property, to obtain a zoning certificate, and to apply for building plans, rezoning, subdivision or consolidation.

Table 8 What the erf number is used for

Purpose	How the erf number is used
Sales, transfers and bonds	The deed of sale, the transfer and the bond describe the property by erf number and township, and the Deeds Office checks the description against its records[37]
Deeds searches and copies	A deeds search or a copy of a deed is asked for by erf number and township, not by street address[20]
Rates and valuation	The valuation roll lists each property by its registered description[16]
Zoning	A land use scheme zones all the land in the municipality;[40] zoning certificates and zoning information are issued for each erf[17]
Building plans	The national application form carries the erf number and township on every page[18]
Land use applications	Forms ask for the township and the erf, plot or farm numbers, with the Surveyor-General's diagram and a zoning certificate[35]
Notices	Government and heritage notices identify the property they concern by erf number[30]

That is why a planner, a land surveyor or an architect asks for the erf number before anything else: every record they need is filed under it. Glensburg's own request for a quotation asks for the erf number and township, or the street address.

What an erf number cannot tell you

An erf number identifies land; it does not say what may be built on it or how it may be used. Zoning, title deed conditions, servitudes, approved building plans and pending applications are separate records. Each is filed under the erf number, and each has to be read for the property itself.

01 **Have the zoning checked against the scheme.** A zoning certificate gives the zoning, but Johannesburg's own zoning map notes that zoning information must be read with the scheme's clauses and the amendment schemes relevant to the erf.[41] See Planning Due Diligence.

02 **Have the title deed's conditions checked.** Conditions registered against the title can limit how the land is used, whatever its zoning, and removing one is an application of its own. See Removal of Restrictive Conditions.

03 **Have the approved building plans checked against what stands on the site.** The erf number finds the plans in the municipality's records; it does not show whether the buildings match them. See Retrieval of Approved Building Plans.

04 **Have a new erf's registration checked before relying on its number.** An approved number is not a registered erf until the Deeds Office registers it, after the municipality's certificate. See Subdivision Applications and Consolidation of Erven.

05 **Have the boundaries checked if a wall, a fence or a building is in question.** The extent and boundaries in the deed are those of the Surveyor-General's diagram, which fences and walls may not follow.

> **What this guide does not do.** It explains how land in South Africa is identified. It does not say what a particular erf may be used for, or whether what stands on it is lawful. Those answers come from the records of the property itself.

Frequently asked questions about erf numbers

Is an erf number the same as a stand number?

Yes. “Stand” is another word for an erf, used widely in Gauteng, and the Deeds Registries Act treats erf, lot, plot and stand as the same. A stand number and an erf number in the same township refer to the same piece of land.

Is the erf number the same as the street number?

No. The street address is given by the municipality for post and services, and it can change if a street is renamed or renumbered. The erf number is the land’s registered identity and stays with the land. Municipal maps and valuation rolls link the two.

Can two properties have the same erf number?

Yes, if they are in different townships. An erf number is distinctive only within its township, which is why it is always given with the township’s name. Only the 21-digit SG code is unique across South Africa.

Where is the erf number on a title deed?

In the property description near the start of the deed, before the extent: for example, “Erf 1187 Example Park Extension 3 Township, Registration Division I.R., Province of Gauteng, measuring 892 square metres”.

Can I find my erf number online for free?

Often, yes. Several metros publish free online maps or valuation roll searches that show erf numbers against street addresses, and Johannesburg’s Online Maps needs no registration. Searches of the Deeds Office’s records, through DeedsWeb or commercial services, are charged for.

How do I find the erf number of a flat or townhouse in a sectional title scheme?

Look at the first sheet of the scheme’s sectional plan, which describes the land the scheme stands on. The unit’s own title deed gives the section and the sectional plan number but not the erf. A deeds search on the scheme, or the municipality’s map, also shows the erf.

What does “Remaining Extent” mean?

It is what is left of an erf or a farm after one or more portions have been subdivided from it. The Remaining Extent of Erf 1187 is Erf 1187 less its registered portions. It is often shortened to RE.

What is the difference between an erf number and the SG code?

The erf number is the land’s number within its township and is read with the township’s name. The 21-digit SG code adds the survey office, the registration division, the township’s code and the portion, so it identifies the parcel uniquely across the country.

Does the erf number change when a property is sold?

No. The erf number stays with the land through every sale. A transfer produces a new title deed with a new deed number, but the erf number changes only if the land is subdivided, consolidated or laid out again as a township.

What do IR and JR mean in a property description?

They are registration divisions, the survey grid used in the former Transvaal, including Gauteng. Each division is a block between whole lines of latitude and longitude. Central Johannesburg lies in IR and Pretoria in JR.

Do I need the erf number to submit building plans?

Yes. The national application form for the approval of building plans asks for the erf number and the township on every page.

What is the plural of erf?

Erven. The Dictionary of South African English also records “erfs”, but legislation, title deeds and municipal records use erven.

How do I get a copy of the SG diagram for my erf?

The Surveyor-General’s office for the province keeps approved diagrams and general plans and issues copies on request, for a fee. The erf number and township, or the 21-digit code, identify the diagram.

Why does my rates account show a different erf number from my title deed?

Usually because the land has been subdivided or consolidated and one of the two records has not caught up, or because one of them predates the change. Have both checked against the Deeds Office’s records before relying on either.

Know your erf number? Find out what it allows.

The erf number opens a property’s records: its zoning, its title conditions, its approved plans. Glensburg Town Planners reads those records for owners, buyers and developers, and sets out what the property allows and which application, if any, it needs.

We are a town planning and architecture practice in Illovo, Johannesburg, working across Gauteng and in eThekwini and Mahikeng. Our planners are individually registered with the South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN). The first consultation is free, and we reply within one working day.

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Related services: Planning Due Diligence · Subdivision Applications · Consolidation of Erven · Township Establishment · Removal of Restrictive Conditions · Excision of Agricultural Holdings · Sectional Title Development · Retrieval of Approved Building Plans

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- **Guide No. 1.** Rezoning in South Africa: A Practical Guide
- **Briefing 2026/02.** The Johannesburg Land Use Scheme: What Changed and What Applies Now
- **Guide No. 2.** Best Town Planners in Johannesburg: How to Choose the Right One

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About the author

Glensburg Town Planners

Glensburg Town Planners is a planning, architecture and development practice based in Illovo, Johannesburg. Its guides are written and checked by the planners and architects who prepare the applications they describe.

Every application the practice prepares starts from the records this guide explains: the title deed, the Surveyor-General's diagram and the municipality's records for the erf.

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How this guide is maintained

This guide cites the law and the official records it describes, and dates what changes, such as online services. Its examples are hypothetical: every erf number, township, deed and plan number in them is invented.

It is reviewed every six months, and sooner if the law on deeds registration or land survey changes. The next review is due by 17 May 2027. To report an error or ask about this guide, write to planning@glensburg.co.za with the subject “Publications: a question about a practice publication”.

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This guide is general information, current at 17 November 2026. It is not legal advice about any particular property. Records, procedures and fees differ between municipalities and deeds registries and change over time, so have a property’s records checked before relying on them.