

CHAPTER 5

ANNEXATION POLICIES AND URBAN GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN CALGARY

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RATIONALE

WHY DOES THE CITY OF CALGARY MAINTAIN A LONG TERM SUPPLY OF LAND FOR GROWTH?

- ✓ It enables The City to comprehensively plan for new development necessitated by growth, facilitating the orderly and economic development of the City;
- ✓ It ensures new development is appropriately located and reduces the need for numerous, incremental annexations;
- ✓ It helps to ensure a healthy and competitive residential and industrial marketplace;
- ✓ It facilitates major servicing and transportation infrastructure planning and expenditures; and
- ✓ It provides a sense of long term stability in the Calgary region helping adjacent municipalities and landowners to plan with more certainty.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ANNEXATION?

- ✓ A healthy and competitive residential marketplace helps achieve a measure of housing affordability;
- ✓ Annexation helps provide location and price choice in the housing marketplace. Housing consumers have traditionally preferred single-detached homes in new suburban communities where comparative affordability is achieved (i.e., the most house for the least personal cost);
- ✓ When compared to the growing regional country residential trend, Calgary's suburban residential development at 6 to 8 units per gross developable acre reflects an efficient use of the land base. Annexation helps ensure development does not leapfrog past contiguous urban form and extend throughout the countryside;
- ✓ Annexation facilitates a comparatively more efficient pattern of development and reduces the premature fragmentation and conversion of farmland;
- ✓ With annexation, all development must connect to urban sanitary and storm servicing; this helps mitigate any negative impact to the environment with respect to water quality;
- ✓ Annexation facilitates the efficient long-term planning and servicing of contiguous development, thus helping to avoid the duplication of municipal services and the fragmentation of services between municipalities;
- ✓ Annexation of areas within The City's growth corridors helps reduce "edge" constraints to contiguous urban growth that can escalate public

- ✓ infrastructure costs (e.g., incompatible uses abutting border areas); and
- ✓ Annexation helps achieve fairness in property tax revenues and public expenditures by ensuring the costs of development and services enjoyed by residents, and revenues generated from development accrue to the same municipality.

ANNEXATION NOTICE

The Municipal Government Act in Section 116 (2) (b) requires, as part of a written notice of a proposed annexation, that the notice “set out the reasons for the proposed annexation”. The following is an **overview** of the context and major reasons why The City of Calgary is pursuing annexation of the lands identified on the map of proposed annexation areas. Further and more detailed annexation justification will be provided as part of the report to be prepared describing the results of the annexation negotiation / mediation, and public consultation processes.

The annexation justification is based on three categories of land supply need: strategic interests, long term growth, and opportunity.

Provision for the strategic needs and interests of The City of Calgary

A number of strategic interests identified in The City of Calgary Municipal Development Plan and the Calgary Transportation Plan (GoPlan) are achieved through annexation:

- A long term land supply achieved through annexation facilitates an efficient growth management approach in conjunction with planned infrastructure extensions;
- Most housing growth will be accommodated within the north and south growth corridors closer to major employment centre locations;
- Improve the jobs/population balance to reduce travel distances and improve the efficiency of existing transportation infrastructure; and
- The major north growth areas within the annexation boundary include conceptually planned extensions of future LRT to provide modal choice over the long term.

Figure 5.1 shows The City of Calgary’s history of annexation by decade. Currently, The City of Calgary is proposing annexation to meet both future residential and industrial / commercial needs in order to achieve a better **balance of housing and employment** by location (Figure 5.2). Annexation to the north will provide significant residential development in close proximity to existing and future employment centres; annexation to the east will provide for a renewed growth corridor of residential development adjacent to the major southeast industrial employment areas, and provide continuity of the land base for future long term servicing; annexation to the west will provide for the opportunity of long term employment land uses near existing residential.

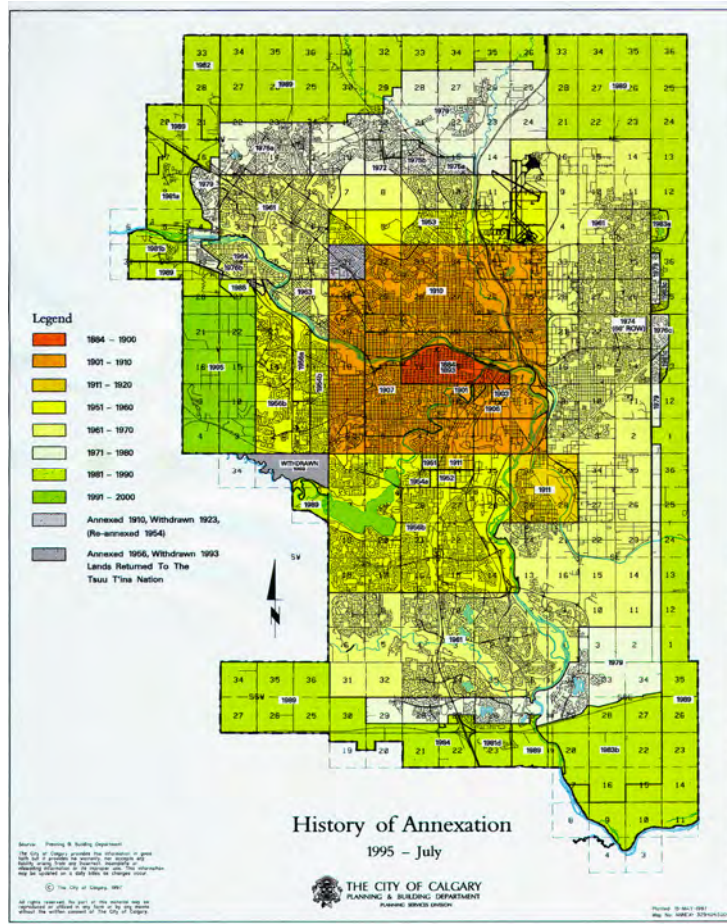


Figure 5.1 History of Annexation, Calgary
Source: City of Calgary, Planning & Building Department

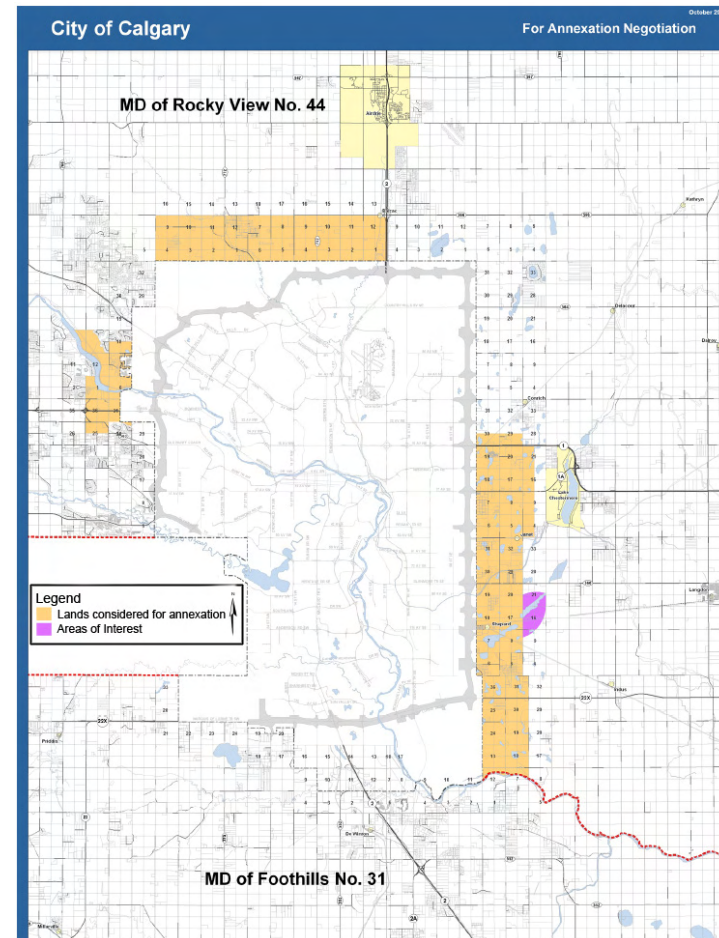


Figure 5.2 City of Calgary proposed annexation
Source: http://www.calgary.ca/DocGallery/BU/planning/pdf/annexation_negotiation_map.pdf

The annexation proposal recognizes the importance of providing for a **variety of growth corridors** in order to achieve competition and affordability in the marketplace. In the west, selected additional lands are identified to bolster the fast-depleting west and northwest sectors in an area increasingly fragmented by country residential development. In the north, annexation will provide for the traditional major growth corridor in this area identified in the MD of Rocky View / City of Calgary Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP), and served by future LRT for modal choice. Moreover, additional selected lands in this direction will provide for a market alternative to the desirable northwest sector. In the east, annexation will re-establish the east sector as an attractive growth area providing for more affordable residential development.

The majority of lands proposed for annexation are unfragmented and can be more easily urbanized and serviced. The proposal avoids large areas of heavily fragmented country residential development and areas affected by long term sour gas reserves. In addition, the annexation proposal recognizes the importance of the southeast industrial sector (rail and truck serviced market distinct from the airport industrial area) and the need to continue to provide for a large industrial employment base.

Site-specific strategic interests are met through annexation. The annexation proposal provides for land adjacent to key City entranceways. In addition, it provides for increased City jurisdiction over water supply protection and environmental stewardship of the Bearspaw Reservoir and surrounding lands. The

Shepard Wetland Complex is a key stormwater management requirement for the future development of the east sector.

Provision of an adequate land supply for long term growth

The City of Calgary Municipal Development Plan prescribes that Calgary's growth be accommodated, and that an adequate land supply be maintained to provide for The City's long-term growth needs. Policies 1-1A and 1-1B state:

“Continue to protect and manage Calgary's long-term growth requirements within the UniCity framework”

“Endeavour to have within The City's jurisdiction at least a 30 year supply of developable lands for all uses, to allow for the comprehensive planning of new areas, and to encourage choice and competition in the marketplace”

Calgary's significant rate of growth (approximately 1,400 acres of residential land and 250 - 300 acres of industrial land absorbed on average each year) necessitates a comprehensive annexation of lands to ensure that The City of Calgary can continue to accommodate the 16,000 (on average) people that come to the City each year. The proposed annexation boundary is designed to bring the needed additional years of land supply into the city for long-term growth, and within appropriate growth corridors. As development incrementally absorbs the planned and

serviced land inventories, annexation will help maintain a continuous supply or source of raw developable land for a range of future urban land uses.

Opportunity

A longer term land supply is being sought than was identified in the 2002 annexation notice in recognition of the increasing development pressures and fragmentation in border regions of the City. The City of Calgary is concerned about the constraints and impacts associated with a growing regional urban form, and requires longer term protection of established growth corridors.

The MD of Rocky View has indicated that it is experiencing similar pressures for development associated with a buoyant economy and is increasingly accommodating urban-intensity development in close proximity to Calgary. The MD has approved significant development potential through a number of area structure plans for both residential and industrial immediately abutting the City. As these areas develop, future annexation will be limited by:

- An increasing number of landowners and residents involved in the process;
- Increasingly fragmented border area lands which are difficult to urbanize;
- Challenges to agreeing on reasonable compensation for loss of developed lands; and

- Challenges to integrating development which has been built to different standards and levels of services.

Figure 5.3 shows The City of Calgary’s annexation process in six phases from 2001-2004.

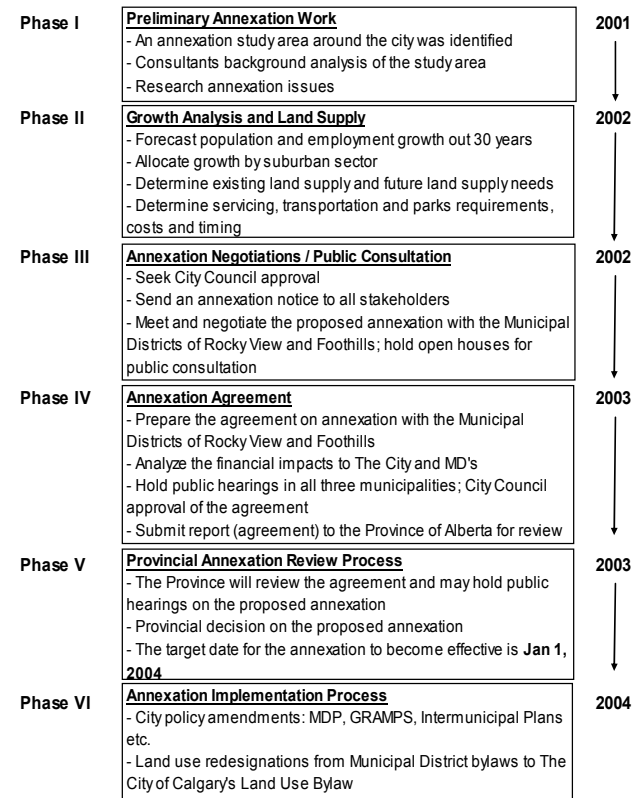


Figure 5.3 The City of Calgary’s annexation process
 Source: Tim Creelman presentation, 2005

The annexation process is becoming increasingly uncertain, time consuming and costly for both municipalities involved. The present legislation (MGA) enables annexation, but The City of Calgary cannot assume in the longer term that both provincial legislation and practice will remain the same. A longer term land supply will help provide more certainty for The City of Calgary, the MD of Rocky View and landowners.

CONCLUSION

This overview of the three categories of need (strategic interests, long term growth, and opportunity) forms the initial justification for the proposed annexation boundary to facilitate negotiations and mediation with the MD of Rocky View and for public consultation. Further and more detailed annexation justification will occur as part of the annexation negotiations and public consultation processes, providing the basis for The City of Calgary's annexation application to the Province of Alberta.

Tim Creelman, ACP, MCIP, is Senior Planner at The City of Calgary. He has extensive experience in land use planning & policy and is leading the planning, consultation and negotiation process related to the current annexation long-term policy.