



## **Annexation in Alberta: Beaumont's Story**

This article is the second installment in a three-part series that examines annexation in Alberta, Beaumont's annexation, and the purpose, function, and approval process for *Our Complete Community*: Beaumont's new Municipal Development Plan. Our first article, *Annexation in Alberta: What it means to Beaumont*, defined annexation, the process and key participants, along with identifying the potential costs.

As explained in our first article, the annexation process is complicated. The story of Beaumont's annexation occurs over a number of years and involves our regional neighbours Leduc County and both the cities of Leduc and Edmonton. It's important to remember that decisions and actions made by all parties were made in the context of what was happening at that time, with some challenges being obvious to everyone and others only known to those involved in the negotiations. What occurred in the past does not dictate the future, including relationships made or strained, investments managed, and decisions made by the Province. This is the nature of annexation, it is complex and political. This article will touch on the highlights of Beaumont's annexation process, in addition to explaining the current annexation being proposed by the City of Edmonton. For more details regarding Beaumont's annexation or the City of Edmonton's new annexation application, please visit Beaumont's website:

<http://www.beaumont.ab.ca/193/Annexation>

### **Historical Annexations:**

For those that might not be aware, this most recent annexation is not Beaumont's first. Lands were previously annexed from Leduc County in 1980, 1984, 1988, and 1999 to accommodate Beaumont's fast-paced growth and development.

### **2009 – Population 11,794:**

Beaumont's most recent annexation began in 2009, at least from a formal intermunicipal perspective. Discussions regarding Beaumont's growth and the need for expansion through annexation began long before this. If you recall from the first article, an intermunicipal development plan can assist municipalities in planning for annexation. Beaumont and Leduc County have had an intermunicipal development plan in place since 1998.

In late 2009 Beaumont and Leduc County contracted Stantec Consulting Ltd. to undertake a Joint Growth Study. A steering committee comprised of Elected Officials and administrative representatives from both municipalities was established and met nine times throughout 2010 and early 2011. There were also two public meetings to engage residents regarding the Study.

### **2011 – Population 13,287:**

In July of 2011, the Joint Growth Study was presented to Beaumont's and Leduc County's Councils. While both municipalities received the Study as information, there was disagreement on the projected population numbers and the amount of land that Beaumont needed to grow. From Beaumont's



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perspective, the study confirmed what the Town already knew, demand for new homes and land development was outpacing land supply, different types of housing were necessary to support residents, and a sustainable tax ratio of commercial versus residential was desperately needed. All of this could only be solved through Beaumont's annexation of Leduc County's lands.

## **2012 – Population 13,977:**

Early in 2012 Beaumont contracted ISL Engineering and Land Services Ltd. to prepare a Growth Study in support of a proposal to annex lands from Leduc County. The intent of the Beaumont Growth Study was to determine the development capacity of the Town's existing land supply, estimate future land needs, and to establish an annexation area that would sufficiently address Beaumont's future growth for the next 50 years. While the Study was being prepared, Beaumont met with the City of Edmonton twice to discuss Beaumont's future growth and the proposed lands that would be needed to support it. Based on the updated study and in late November, Beaumont's Council made the decision to commence negotiations with Leduc County on an annexation proposal for 24 quarter sections north, west, and south of Beaumont.

In late November 2012, Beaumont publicly announced its proposed annexation of 24 quarter sections of land from Leduc County. The Beaumont Growth Study was also adopted by Council as a supporting document in the forthcoming annexation application.

## **2013 – Population 14,916:**

Over 2013 and 2014, there were 17 mediated and technical meetings between Beaumont and Leduc County. There were also a number of joint updates provided by both municipalities. On March 5, the City of Edmonton filed a *Notice of Intent to Annex* Leduc County lands on the east and west sides of the QEII Highway, which included lands that were just 0.8 kilometres north of Township Road 510; some of the same lands that Beaumont was proposing to annex. Beaumont met with the City of Edmonton two more times to discuss the Town's need for growth and the proposed Leduc County lands the Town needed to grow. Then on April 30, Beaumont filed a *Notice of Intent to Annex* 24 quarter sections north, west, and south of Beaumont. In June, Beaumont hosted four public open houses with residents, landowners, and interested parties. Ultimately, a large majority of the impacted owners were supportive of Beaumont's proposed annexation.

## **2014 – Population 15,828:**

In February 2014, acting on feedback received from public and landowner consultations, negotiations with Leduc County, in addition to considering the needs of the City of Edmonton, Beaumont filed an amended *Notice of Intent to Annex*, which reduced the proposed annexation from 24 to 21 quarter sections. This served as an effort to meet in the geographic middle like the City of Calgary and Chestermere when both annexing from Rocky View County a few years back. It also reduced the area of overlap with the City of Edmonton's proposed annexation from eight quarter sections to five quarter sections. On July 3, Beaumont sent its formal application to the Municipal Government Board.



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As a side note, Beaumont was asking for 21 quarters (0.5 % of Leduc County's land base). For comparison: The City of Edmonton was asking for 254 quarter sections (it has now been reduced to approximately 136 quarter sections in their current proposal). Other annexation applications recently approved in Alberta include: Grand Prairie (city) annexed 98 quarter sections; Chestermere annexed 42 quarter sections; Airdrie annexed 79 quarter sections; and Strathmore annexed 18.5 quarter sections. At the time, Beaumont ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in population out of 21 for urban municipalities (10,000-60,000) in Alberta, yet it had the smallest land area (21<sup>st</sup> out of 21).

In September 2014, the Municipal Government Board conducted a preliminary hearing for Beaumont's annexation application. Leduc County and the Cities of Edmonton and Leduc made presentations at this hearing. In November, an updated Beaumont Growth Study report by ISL Engineering and Land Services Ltd. and a Financial Impact Report prepared by CORVUS Business Advisors were completed. These reports were prepared to support Beaumont's proposed annexation and were based on consultation feedback, in addition to addressing the concerns raised by Leduc County and the Cities of Edmonton and Leduc at the Municipal Government Board's preliminary hearing.

## **2015 – Population 16,768:**

In April 2015, the City of Edmonton, without any prior discussion with Beaumont, filed an amended *Notice of Intent to Annex*. This new *Notice of Intent to Annex* included lands all the way up to Township Road 510 (Beaumont's old jurisdictional boundary). Rather than meeting in the geographic middle, this created an overlap of 9 quarter sections between the City of Edmonton's proposed annexation and Beaumont's proposed annexation.

In June, the final Annexation Hearings were held by the Municipal Government Board for Beaumont's proposed annexation. There were 13 days of public hearings. Presentations were made by Beaumont, Leduc County, City of Edmonton, City of Leduc, technical experts and consultants, impacted stakeholders, landowners, and interested parties. The City of Edmonton didn't want Beaumont to grow north, Leduc County didn't want Beaumont to grow south. Beaumont couldn't grow east unless it grew north and south due to the excessive costs of servicing the eastern lands. Beaumont needed more lands than the eight quarter sections that were available to the west.

Based on these hearings, the Municipal Government Board prepared a 93-page recommendation report for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. This report can be found here:

[www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/mgb/M012-16.pdf](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/mgb/M012-16.pdf) . The report addresses the concerns raised by all parties involved. Further, it recommended that Beaumont should be granted its proposed annexation.

## **2016 – Population 17,720:**

In November 2016, Alberta Municipal Affairs announced, that in accordance with the Municipal Government Board's recommendation, the Province had approved Beaumont's annexation application. The requested 21 quarter sections would be annexed to Beaumont effective January 1, 2017



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## **2017 – Population 18,320:**

In February 2017, based on mediation and negotiations with Leduc County, the City of Edmonton filed a new *Notice of Intent to Annex*. The proposed annexation includes Beaumont's newly annexed lands. The City of Edmonton attempts to justify this by stating that the City can more efficiently and effectively service the lands north of Township Road 510. Beaumont and the City of Edmonton have met a number of times to discuss the City's annexation application. In the recommendation report for the approval of Beaumont's proposed annexation, the Municipal Government Board already determined that Beaumont can adequately service these lands. However, in the spirit of intermunicipal collaboration and in order to make sure residents are receiving the best value for their tax dollars, Beaumont has agreed to explore potential joint-servicing of these lands with the City of Edmonton.

## **Today**

From start to finish, Beaumont's annexation took approximately seven years for approval. During that time, Beaumont's population increased by 6,526 residents, and it still continues to grow at an incredible rate today. According to the 2016 federal census Beaumont is the 5<sup>th</sup> fastest growing community in Canada, and the fastest growing municipality in the Capital Region.

Two weeks ago, the City of Edmonton sent its annexation application to the Municipal Government Board. Their application still proposes to annex Beaumont's lands. Beaumont will be contesting this application and anticipates that the Municipal Government Board will schedule the Public Hearings in 2018.

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