



Our Communities,
Our Choice

ANNEXATION

You have questions. Check out the FAQs.



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The town of White City is planning another annexation attempt of large parts of the RM of Edenwold.

This is the eighth time in the past 26 years that White City has tried to annex parts of our communities.

This latest attempt would see White City triple in size by taking away:

- Emerald Park and the Emerald Park Business District;
- Park Meadows;
- Meadow Ridge;
- Escott;
- Deneve;
- the Great Plains Industrial Park; and,
- additional undeveloped lands.

Residents in Emerald Park & the countryside, our commercial sector, and all our surrounding communities have concerns about the impacts annexation could have on them including increased taxes, loss of services, new costs for water, and continued economic growth. Residents have many questions about the impact annexation will have on ongoing economic growth and prosperity in the corridor from Balgonie to Regina.

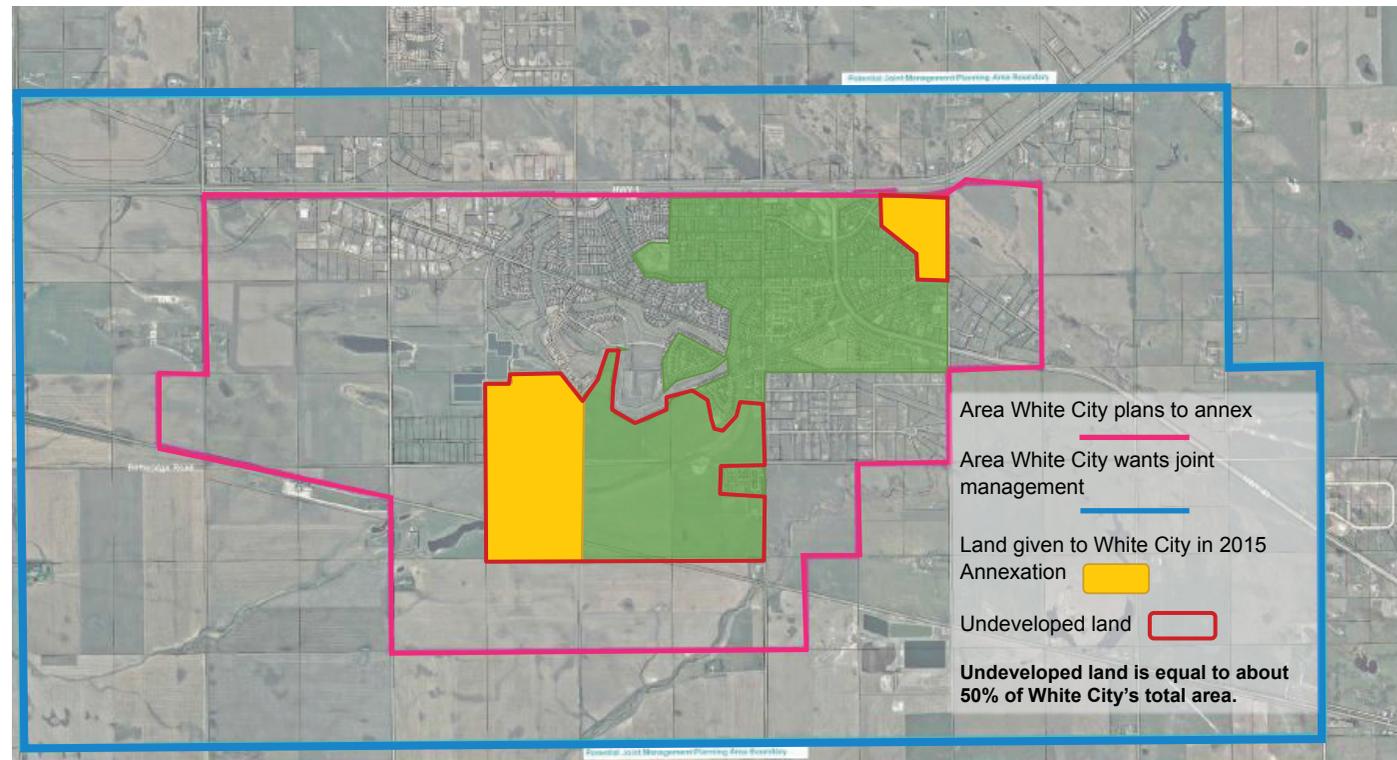
We will continue to stand for the residents of Emerald Park and the RM to make sure their voices are heard. Annexation is an issue that affects us all. These are Our Communities, and this is Our Choice.

What is White City trying to annex?

The town of White City has indicated their intention to annex into their town:

- Emerald Park
- Park Meadows Estates
- Meadow Ridge Estates
- Escott/Deneve
- Great Plains Industrial Park (Emerald Park) and additional lands

White City is calling this an “amalgamation” but ratepayers of the RM of Edenwold know better. This is an annexation of our communities plain and simple. These areas have provided the backbone of much of the corridor’s growth over the past decade and have benefitted from the leadership of the RM’s Council. So why is White City suddenly trying to grab these lands now? What will annexation mean for ratepayers?



***Did you know?* The area in yellow was part of the 2015 mutually agreed upon annexation and equals an area larger than Harbour Landing in Regina.**

What does this mean for our communities?

Residents of the RM have rightly been asking what it will mean for them if White City is allowed to annex large parts of the RM. The architects of White City's plan simply dismiss these concerns and tell our ratepayers not to worry and to trust them. Well, here's the full story. There is the potential for:

- **Increased Taxes.** Many residents of Emerald Park already pay lower taxes than they would in White City. White City has announced plans for a new town-centre, their new town office and other facilities to be located on an undeveloped & unserviced agriculture field. These are expensive wish-list items. Tax hikes will also likely be necessary to pay for tax-loss compensation to the RM – just one of the many costs of annexation.
- **Loss of weekly services** like garbage pickup, to a twice a month system as is currently done in White City.
- **Cost of converting well water systems.** White City's annexation plan suggests that properties with well-water will be "grandfathered" and allowed to stay on their existing well systems. However, what happens when properties change hands? Residents in other communities have walked through the conversion process to a civic water system, costing some homeowners tens of thousands of dollars each. Our communities have no long-term guarantees that this will not happen to them after annexation. White City still has outstanding responsibilities from the 2015 annexation so how can residents trust their promises on "grandfathering"?
- **Degradation of regional cooperation.** Thanks to a forward-thinking approach and sensible planning from the RM, the corridor between Balgonie and Regina has seen significant growth over the past decade or more. Both the town and the RM of Edenwold have benefitted from this cooperation and growth in the region. It hasn't always been easy, but the results speak for themselves. Annexation is a solution looking for a problem. By trying to force an annexation of several established RM communities, regional cooperation and growth is under threat. This impacts everyone in the RM, White City, and the region. Continued growth along this corridor benefits everyone so why gamble with it so recklessly?
- **Limited experience and capacity.** The town has very little experience with the different types of developments they are proposing to take over. Commercial, industrial, agricultural, and resource-based development requires a very different planning process than the low-density residential White City has experience with. The town currently claims they have no commercial lands to develop. However, White City decided to develop more residential areas along Highway 1 & Highway 48 despite the land's potential for commercial development. In 2015, the RM voluntarily released 40 acres to White City along Highway 1, but again the Town opted for more low-

What does this mean for our communities? (cont.)

density residential development instead of other uses. White City's plans to concentrate commercial development in the yet-to-be built town centre are in an undeveloped area lacking services. Business and commercial owners have indicated to the RM this makes development there less desirable than along Highway 1.

- **Financial insecurity.** White City claims taxes have not increased even though there have been infrastructure investments. But that's not the whole story. White City has sold assets to pay for infrastructure development in the past such as the water treatment plant. Town residents are now paying for this decision every month through their water bills. Now, the town is proposing to sell off their municipally owned recreational lands along Highway 48 to make way for commercial development, despite the town's stated goal of improving recreational opportunities. What happens when the town has no more assets to sell?

- **Lack of transparency.** Were the town's residents consulted before the town started spending their tax dollars pursuing annexation of a neighbouring community? Were residents even informed about what the town intended to do with their tax money? Do residents know how much has been and will be spent pursuing this latest annexation attempt? The town claims to be honest and transparent, but even their own residents were kept in the dark while this plan was fabricated. This is the fifth annexation attempt by White City since 2005, why are town ratepayers continually being asked to pay for repeated failed annexation attempts?

- **Unchecked utility rates and spending.** According to the town, one of the benefits of becoming a city is that they can set their own utility rates and operate within a debt limit without annual oversight from the Saskatchewan Municipalities Board (SMB). White City already charges higher rates for water than the RM; what will happen if the utility rates

are unrestricted, especially in the case where there is no competition from the RM locally? White City is proposing to annex massive amounts of land from the RM, which requires payment of tax loss compensation among other costs, including the building of a new office and a recreational facility which will cost millions of dollars more. Based on past financial performance, how can residents trust White City to manage these huge costs and debt responsibly when there is no longer any oversight from the Saskatchewan Municipal Board?

What will annexation cost?

Annexation is a costly approach; it produces losers on both sides, and all parties should have the full story before a plan is finalized and have their say. It should be a last step rather than opening pitch.

Any RM that loses land in an annexation must be compensated for the loss. In our case the town would need to pay tens of millions of dollars for the estimated compensation costs. According to their own financial statements, this is money that the town does not have, so residents are asking if White City will raise taxes to pay for it.

The town is also musing about building a brand-new multi-use recreation facility. Based on the items included in their recent request for proposals, the cost of this facility is estimated to be about \$80 million to build, not including operation costs once it is up and running. White City is also planning to build a new town centre.

The costs of their plans keep mounting, as do questions about their ability to pay for it all.

Despite White City's vague assurances about taxes not going up, sooner or later the bills will come due – how else can they pay for compensation, a new multi-use facility, and a new town centre, plus the additional operating costs, while still maintaining the daily upkeep for streets, roads, water, sewer and other infrastructure unless they hike taxes?

What are some of the other options available other than annexation?

White City's annexation proposal is a "one size fits all approach" that doesn't work for our communities or residents. There are many choices open to the RM and White City.

- **Status quo** – our two communities remain and continue to exist side-by-side, working together where appropriate to ensure the long-term growth and prosperity of our communities and the corridor. It's not a perfect arrangement but it works most of the time; however future developments may require a new way of doing things.
- **A Planning District** for White City and Emerald Park (and possibly surrounding areas), that encourages joint planning and develops a structure for comment, consultation and collaborative efforts.
- **A Planning Authority**, which takes planning and development out of the municipal realm and moves them to the regional level. This does not require municipal restructuring.
- **A Municipal District.** Municipal Districts are new for Saskatchewan, but the provincial government has legislation in place to allow for their creation. Municipal Districts are used successfully in several other provinces to help mixed communities like the RM and White City work together more effectively to plan for the long-term prosperity of their region. The RM is a community of communities, from agricultural, to urban residential and includes large-scale commercial and industrial areas all contributing to the overall success of not only the RM but to neighbouring communities.

Municipal Districts present an untapped opportunity to build a model that works best for our communities and flexible enough to allow for almost any governing structure we choose. A Municipal District reinforces the "community of communities" model and allows for greater cooperation and for the RM and White City to truly join together to form a new, forward-looking governance model planning for the future of all communities and residents together.

What can we do?

Speak up!

Make sure our communities and our choice are heard. Tell White City you want all the facts. Tell White City you want to work together on these issues and not be subject to an annexation that threatens regional development and creates nothing but uncertainty.

The RM of Edenwold has a long history of working with our neighbours. The RM continues to develop a regional planning strategy that builds the future together within our municipality and with our neighbours. Our neighbours include one city, three towns, one village, five First Nations and six rural municipalities. Our newly updated Official Community Plan is being built with input from our residents and ratepayers and will be presented for feedback this winter. We have plans for a multi-use facility, more walkways,

more recreation opportunities, diversified community service amenities and most importantly we have the municipal lands, utility services and funds to pay for it. We also continue to work collaboratively with neighbours on projects such as wastewater treatment, street and road construction, joint drainage projects and collaborative regional land use, servicing and infrastructure planning.

The RM of Edenwold has a plan for the future and a strong record of building community responsibly. Let's continue.

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