

Annexation of RM's land seen as spur to city growth

Details on property, compensation remain to be worked out

BY WILL CHABUN, LEADER-POST MAY 25, 2013

The City of Regina has outlined a dramatic plan to annex from the Rural Municipality of Sherwood pockets of land on all four sides of the city.

At a news conference Fri-day, Mayor Michael Fougere said the plan includes a financial compensation package for the RM, adding he sees it as being good for both the city and the RM.

Both the precise size of the land parcels and the amount and terms of compensation for lost property revenue are being negotiated, he added.

Fougere said the plan was brought forward because several landowners on the fringe of the city had asked to have their holdings brought into it, with access to water and sewer service, transit and fire protection.

He said these include Harvard, Dundee and Forster Developments, plus Rosewood Park Alliance Church, though there are others. "They want certainty for growth and as part of our 'tools' for growth, we're saying we'll move forward on that. Sherwood has been advised.

"We're talking hundreds of millions of dollars of potential investment and jobs around the city and in the region. This is a way to facilitate it."

The RM had planned to respond Friday afternoon, but postponed this until early next week.

But Fougere said he expects the RM will agree to the annexation "because it's in our mutual interest".

Areas eyed for annexation won't surprise anybody who's been watching Regina's growth over the last decade: The southwest adjacent to Harbour Landing, the northwest, industrial land in the north east, and residential land in the southeast.

"If we keep our eyes on the big picture, we'll all benefit from this."

Fougere added that annexation talk "isn't to say that the RM loses anything at all", stating there potentially are other developments on the city's fringe that will stay within the RM. Nor does the city have any plans to annex built-up areas, like the RM's decades-old Sherwood Industrial Park north of Regina on Highway 6 - only farmland.

Fougere, speaking in front of a map that showed the approximate areas potentially facing annexation, said the city is hoping for a joint resolution, or identical resolutions, from the two councils on the boundaries, adding "we're very confident that will happen in the short term".

The proposal then goes to the provincial government for approval.

The mayor said this plan flowed from discussion between the city and RM over the past few months. "We talked with them about how we can jointly work together on planning for the future."

It also reflects a push for closer regional co-operation, as with the "White Butte Association" that embraces municipalities in the Rural Municipality of Edenwold on the east side of the city and the Moose Jaw-Regina industrial corridor concept.

He also said there could be work on a regional approach to wastewater treatment, a landfill and recreation.

Asked about the relationship between the city and the RM, which has been sensitive in the past, Fougere said, "I would say it's still a work in progress because we do have some differences. But that's totally understandable, with two orders of government, that there are differences.

"The relationship is maturing and we're understanding each other better."

Fougere, Regina's mayor since last autumn, said the city's official community plan discusses a potential population of 300,000, but he added that "we want to secure land for future growth of about 500,000."

wchabun@leaderpost.com

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