



THE CITY OF MYRTLE BEACH GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING ANNEXATION

“FIRST IN SERVICE”

June 2007

Prepared by the
City of Myrtle Beach City Manager's Office

The information contained in this packet is intended to provide a summary of the benefits of annexation and the annexation process. Applicants and other interested persons are encouraged to learn more about the City of Myrtle Beach by visiting the city's web site, www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com.

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Guide to Understanding Annexation

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Introduction

The City of Myrtle Beach incorporated as a town in 1938 and became a City in 1957. Its name comes from the wax myrtle, a shrub that grows abundantly in the area. Our more than 25,000 permanent residents welcome millions of visitors to this full-service resort community each year.

In addition to welcoming literally millions of visitors each year, Myrtle Beach remains a very attractive residential community. Balancing the needs of the residents with the needs of the business owners often requires hard work, but the results speak for themselves.

The City is a municipal corporation of the State of South Carolina and, as such, possesses all the general powers granted to municipalities by State Constitution and Statutes. The City of Myrtle Beach provides both the traditional range of municipal services and several additional utility and recreational services to its customers.

With 790 regular full-time employees, the City is a full-service provider with a current fiscal year budget of \$132 million total. The City has been financially stable throughout its history. The State of South Carolina requires the City to have a balanced budget each year. The City has a General Obligation Bond Rating of A1 by Moody's Investors Service and AA- by Standard and Poors.

Recent improvements include major new storm water drainage systems, underground utilities, new roads, expanded recreation centers and other infrastructure projects designed to keep Myrtle Beach attractive and competitive. The City's political and administrative structure provides the means by which these and other projects can be properly supported. The expansion of the City limits through annexation allows the City to maintain, broaden and support the intensive infrastructure necessary to sustain an excellent quality of life that all of the City's residents may enjoy.

Our Mission

"Myrtle Beach seeks to be the premier resort community on the East Coast by providing facilities and services necessary to enable a high quality of life for the community's residents and visitors."

The City of Myrtle Beach has 790 employees dedicated to the principle of "First In Service." Our organization prides itself on serving the community and many of our employees spend their entire careers with the City.

Our Philosophy

We believe that the employees of the City are collectively among the most talented and dedicated to be found in any work force. Through the efforts of these employees, the City of

Myrtle Beach serves the public in an outstanding manner, providing needed services efficiently and courteously.

We believe that we can learn from the collective experiences of this work force to focus our efforts, provide even better service to the public, and improve the satisfaction experienced by all employees for the contributions they make.

Our Core Values are:

- S**afety – Comes First
- E**xcellence – Constantly Improving
- R**espect – For Ourselves and Others
- V**alue – The Individual and the Organization
- I**ntegrity – Fairness and Honesty
- C**ommunication and Courtesy – To All
- E**ducation – Knowledge to Help

Residents and guests have come to expect a high level of service, and the City’s 790 staff members frequently exceed expectations for efficiency, promptness, courtesy and dedication to duty. We take the “*first in service*” philosophy seriously.

What is Annexation?

While annexation may sound like a complicated, technical term, its meaning is really quite simple. It is simply the official joining together of what is already connected. Annexation is the process used by a City to add land that borders its jurisdiction in order to extend its services, laws, and voting privileges and better meet the needs of residents living in the annexed area.

The South Carolina General Assembly provides for annexation by petition as described in the Code of Laws for the State of South Carolina. The Legislature sets out the responsibility and authority of municipalities, and annexation of contiguous property is permitted.

Why is Annexation Important?

Annexation is critical to the long-term health of a community. People living in an urban setting need services and facilities beyond those provided by state and county governments. Like many cities, Myrtle Beach has pockets of unincorporated areas within the City limits. These may be pockets of one or two homes, or other larger areas. All of these areas create inefficiencies and inequities in the delivery of services to businesses and residents. Services such as sewer service, garbage collection, law enforcement, recreational services and code enforcement suffer from inefficiency when these pockets of unincorporated area exist within the City’s service area.

Annexation promotes fairness by requiring that those who reap the benefits afforded by the presence of a City and who use the services provided by a City to share in the costs of operating the City.

Cities cannot remain strong or provide essential services unless their boundaries are cohesive and the City periodically extends to areas that are developing as urban.

Other reasons why annexation is important include:

- **Its Best for the Community**

It is important for the City to respond to pressures of growth by ensuring urban development is comprehensively planned, serviced, and appropriately located. Annexation ensures quality growth within the City limits while reducing the potential of urban sprawl. Annexation of undeveloped land where growth will occur allows the City to properly plan the area and provide adequate roads, parks, and open space.

- **Community Unification**

We are truly one community. Economic and social issues affect everybody in Myrtle Beach. Whether your home or business is technically part of the City of Myrtle Beach, or sits just outside the City limits, we are all part of the same community. By annexing, you will contribute to and have a voice in shaping the City's future. You can help keep the City of Myrtle Beach a great place to live, work, and play.

What are the Advantages of Annexation?

The City of Myrtle Beach is pleased to have this opportunity to share with you some of the benefits annexation can provide to you. While no means complete, this overview is intended to acquaint you with the City, its governance, and to highlight programs and services provided by the various City departments.

- **Increased Fire Protection with a Class 1 ISO Rated Fire Department**

The Fire Department is proud to have a Class 1 Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, the best in the nation. ISO provides a public classification system based on a ten point scale – 1 being excellent and 10 indicating that the fire coverage does not meet ISO's minimum standard. Nationally, the Myrtle Beach Fire Department is one of only 51 departments to obtain a Class 1 rating. In South Carolina, only 3 departments have a Class 1 rating, but the Myrtle Beach Fire Department is the only one that has a full Class 1 rating for all of its coverage areas. This rating may help you receive a discount on your homeowner's insurance premiums. Contact your insurance agent.

The Fire Department strives to provide the highest quality fire and life safety service for all of our residents and visitors, through Emergency Medical Services (EMS), hazardous materials response, high angle rescues, confined space response, and excellent fire suppression and protection services from six strategically placed fire stations. Response time is approximately 3-5 minutes. Fire prevention and public education are established priorities. As a "First Responder" on medical calls, nearly all of the City's firefighters are EMT or Paramedic certified. Firefighters operate state-of-the-art fire engines, ladder trucks, rescue vehicles, squad and Advanced Life Support-equipped (ALS) ambulances. Each engine has an Automatic External Defibrillator for use on cardiac arrest patients.

If you live or have a business outside of the City, the County has responsibility for providing fire services. Horry County currently has an ISO Class Rating of 7 in its coverage area east of Conway. However, the County has contracted with the City to provide an apparatus to unincorporated areas within the City. If an incident needs more than one piece of equipment, the County sends assets from the Forestbrook or Lake Arrowhead fire stations.

- **Increased Progressive Police Protection**

The Police Department employs more than 240 officers and staff. This means more officers per square mile to provide a wide range of protection and law enforcement services and an average response time between 3-5 minutes.

The Department is committed to the Community Oriented Policing philosophy, which engenders a partnership between the officers and the neighborhood residents they serve. It emphasizes solving problems with community involvement. Community-Oriented Policing shifts the focus of the entire department from a reactive response force to a crime-prevention focus. The Department has targeted certain high-crime areas of the City with the Community-Oriented Policing force giving residents the assistance and empowerment they need to improve the quality of life within their own neighborhood. Officers concentrate on defining needs and developing innovative strategies suited to the neighborhood in order to reduce crime and the fear of crime thereby improving the quality of life in every neighborhood. Patrols are frequently provided by foot or bicycle, this allows officers to learn the neighborhoods and the people they serve.

- **Reduced Water and Sewer Rates**

The water and sewer rates are lower for residents than in unincorporated areas. Residents typically pay 50% less than non-residents. For example, an annual water and sewer bill of \$300 outside the city limits will cost \$150 within the city limits, resulting in a savings of \$150.

- **Curbside Removal of Yard Debris and Bulk Items**

Residential Collection Services include once per week curbside collection of containerized refuse, once per week of containerized small yard waste clippings and once per week collection of commingled recyclable materials. Bulky items such as furniture, appliances and miscellaneous items can be arranged for pick up.

- **Reduced participation fees at City recreation facilities**

Cultural and Leisure Services includes recreation centers, programs, a full-service library, and a beautifully designed golf course. There's something for everyone. If you enjoy baseball, softball, basketball, golfing, swimming, tennis, weight lifting, racquetball, arts & crafts, dancing, or bingo – just to name a few - then you'll find it at one of the city's recreation centers.

In all the city has four recreation centers, two indoor swimming pools, four indoor gymnasiums, two outdoor basketball courts, three weight and fitness rooms, 16 tennis courts, a skateboard park, a roller hockey rink, a golf course, a fitness trail, eight picnic shelters, 17 playgrounds and 45 landscaped parks.

Recreation programs include sports, aquatics, youth care/after-school and summer camps, special events and special population instruction, all serving a wide range of ages and abilities.

City residents receive significant fee reductions for fitness, recreational activities and instructional programs. As an example, monthly fitness membership fees for a resident cost approximately \$25 and non-residents pay approximately \$45. A greater savings occurs for youth who participate in City-sponsored sports activities - resident youth pay only \$15 while non-resident youth pay \$75.

- **Street Lighting**

The City provides street lighting service through Santee Cooper in the City.

- **Street and Right-of-Way Maintenance**

The City provides secondary streets and right-of-way maintenance that includes minor street repair, grass cutting, litter control, and intervention with the South Carolina Department of Transportation for problems with State maintained streets.

- **Street Identification**

The City installs, maintains and replaces street signs on all streets within the City.

- **Neighborhood Planning**

Working to Improve Neighborhoods (W.I.N.) is a planning program that is being used to address the problems and concerns of Myrtle Beach's neighborhoods. The purpose of W.I.N. is to ensure that neighborhoods will be protected, preserved, and kept safe, secure, and aesthetically pleasing, with well-maintained supporting facilities and with convenient connections to nearby supporting land uses.

- **A Voice in City Government**

The City considers citizen participation vital to the successful fulfillment of its mission. Citizen input is sought in order to help reveal and clarify the true needs of City customers, provide efficacious access for citizens to their local government, and allow council and staff to receive timely and insightful information regarding the potential impacts of public policy decisions upon different sectors of the community.

Service on City boards and commissions is unpaid. Volunteers devote considerable time and energy to these community activities. Members of boards and commissions are appointed by City Council, and any voting-aged resident of the City is eligible for

appointment. Sixteen standing committees, boards, or commissions serve the City. To learn more about the boards, commissions, and committees visit www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com.

- **A Voice in Land Use Planning**

Residents have ample opportunity to be fully informed about, and to fully participate in, land use decisions affecting their community and quality of life.

The City of Myrtle Beach has a duty to protect property rights, property values and the public interest through sound land use regulation to ensure local quality of life. Zoning and land use regulations allows the City to maintain appropriate growth patterns and protect property owners from harmful or undesirable uses of adjacent property.

What Is The Process For Annexation?

The Code of Laws for the State of South Carolina outlines procedures for the annexation of property. The procedure described under Section 5-2-300 states, “any area which is contiguous to a municipality may be annexed to the municipality by the filing of a petition with the council signed by all owners of the property. To begin the annexation process, you should:

1. Obtain a copy of the “Request for Annexation Application and Zoning Request Form” from the Planning Department located at 927 Broadway on the first floor of City Hall. For additional information, call 843/918-1050.
2. Requests for annexation are considered by the Planning Commission at their regularly scheduled meetings on the third (3rd) Tuesday of each month. Call 843/918-1050 for location of meeting.
3. To be placed on the Planning Commission’s agenda, the completed annexation application and zoning request form and additional materials must be submitted to the City of Myrtle Beach Planning Department by 5:00 pm, fifteen (15) business days prior to the desired Planning Commission meeting.
4. The recommendations of the Planning Commission will be forwarded to City Council for final action.
5. City Council meetings are held at 2:00 pm on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month in the courtroom of the Law Enforcement Center at 1101 Oak Street. Call 843/918-1012 to verify location of meeting.
6. Annexation requests must be considered at two regular City Council meetings.
7. Annexation evaluations and decisions are based on the following criteria:
 - The ability of the City to provide public services at a level equal to or better than that available from the current provider;

- Whether the annexation follows logical boundaries, such as streets, waterways, or substantial topographical changes;
- Whether the annexation would eliminate an irregularity or irregularities in the City's boundaries, thereby improving service delivery;
- The relative costs to serve the proposed annexation versus the revenue to be derived from the annexation.

How Can I Annex Into the City?

There are three ways to annex into the City of Myrtle Beach:

1. An individual property owner may petition the City for annexation of a specific parcel(s) as long as the property is contiguous (touches) the existing City limits line. This is the most common form of annexation into the City limits of Myrtle Beach.
2. Where multiple property owners desire to annex a contiguous large area, like a subdivision, a petition may be made by 75% of the individual property owners having title to 75% of the total assessed value of all the property in the designated annexation area.
3. In larger areas, annexation of 25% of the qualified electors in the area desiring to be annexed can petition the City council to call for an election within the area proposed area to be annexed.

How Does the City of Myrtle Beach Benefit from Annexation?

The benefits include:

- More citizens participating in municipal government
- Economy of scale in providing services
- Increased revenue sharing and revenue base to support city services
- Better planning for the urban area
- A stronger corporate community of citizens with similar needs

What Is the Role of City Administration, Staff, Planning Commission and Council in the Annexation Process?

Each of these individuals/entities has a specific role in the process of annexation. First, the Council sets the overall City goals and objectives, and the staff takes in petitions for, or initiates annexation of an area based on the City's goals and objectives. The petition is then introduced to the Planning Commission, which conducts a public hearing and considers all aspects of the annexation petition, and develops a recommendation to City Council either in support of, against, or neutral to the request. The Commission then passes the petition to City Council for consideration. The council then begins the intricate process of review involving another public hearing following the adoption of the fiscal plan. They ultimately vote to approve or deny the annexation ordinance as introduced. If annexation is approved, the action

is recorded with the County, and the appropriate City departments amend all applicable documents and notify the appropriate agencies, individuals, etc. as to the property being incorporated into the City.

Are there any Financial Impacts with Annexation?

Annexation-related costs and savings will vary among property owners, but the following should apply to most individuals:

- All annexed property owners will pay City property tax and will continue to pay the general County property tax. City vehicle taxes also will be due. Many businesses will also be responsible for paying local business license fees.
- The City property tax is deductible on federal and state tax forms for those homeowners who itemize deductions. Once you begin receiving City fire service, you may have a lower homeowners insurance rate due to the City's Insurance Services Organization (ISO) Class 1 rating, the highest classification that a municipal fire department can receive.
- Your water and sewer fees will be reduced. Corresponding county fees will go away.

Monthly Base Rates	<u>New Rate: In-City</u>	<u>Current Rate: Out-City</u>
Water	2.48	4.96
Sewer	2.34	4.68
Solid Waste Fee	18.00	25.96
Stormwater Fee	3.50	0*

*The out-of-city stormwater fee is added to your annual property tax notice.

Property Tax Comparison

Below is an example of a owner occupied property with a fair market value of \$150,000 and an assessed value of \$6,000 (150,000 x 4%):

	<u>City of Myrtle Beach – after annexation</u>		<u>Horry County – before annexation</u>	
<u>Political Subdivision</u>	<u>Mills</u>	<u>Tax</u>	<u>Mills</u>	<u>Tax</u>
City	61.4	368.40	0	0
School	135.3	811.80	135.3	811.80
County	46.3	277.80	46.3	277.80
Special District	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>22.7</u>	<u>136.20</u>
Sub-Total		1,458.00		1,225.80
Stormwater Fee		<u>0**</u>		<u>29.40</u>
Total	243	1,458.00	204.3	1,255.20

**The City's stormwater fee is added to your monthly utility bill. For a single family resident, the cost is \$3.50 per month.

Property owners receive only one tax bill annually. When annexed into the City, your tax statement will include the additional City of Myrtle Beach real property tax assessments.

Points of Particular Interest

The City of Myrtle Beach understands that with annexation there can be misunderstandings, distortion of facts and incorrect information circulating. We would like to dispel some of the misconceptions about annexation and clarify the issues. So when someone talks in support of annexation, you are likely to hear these concerns or objections:

1. If I wanted to live in the City, I would have bought in the City. I don't want or need any City services.

Non-residents do benefit from living in close proximity to the City. However, being annexed spreads the financial burden of paying for community needs among all those who benefit from them. And, as growth occurs adjacent to the City, and an area develops to municipal standards, residents may need municipal services.

2. I already pay my share of City taxes whenever I shop in the City and pay sales taxes on my purchases.

The merchants in the City very much appreciate your business. However, the State charges a sales tax of 6%, which is retained by the State. The County charges a local option sales tax of 1% that is used to pay for a specific list of road improvements. Both of these charges are countywide.

3. The City of Myrtle Beach just wants to annex my property to get more tax revenues instead of watching their spending.

Annexation does expand the municipal tax base, but it also carries with it the responsibility and accompanying cost to provide municipal services to residents. In other words, the tax base expands, but so does the cost of delivering services.

The City of Myrtle Beach has been financially stable throughout its history. The State of South Carolina requires the City to have a balanced budget each year. The City also enjoys a General Obligation Bond Rating of A1 by Moody's Investors Service and an A+ by Standard and Pools.

4. I will have little influence over what happens to my property or in my neighborhood after annexation.

When you become a resident of the City of Myrtle Beach you will have a voice in local City government. You can apply to serve on boards and commissions, vote in City elections and run for office. These avenues allow you to participate in making policies and ordinances that affect all citizens.

5. What will NOT change with annexation?

Annexation does not affect your school attendance area.

6. If I am annexed into the City, can I continue to use my septic tank?

Yes, only if your septic system is determined to be acceptable by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). However, property owners are encouraged to connect to the City's Sewer Service upon annexation.

7. I hear that City residents pay a stormwater fee. What is that?

The City charges a monthly stormwater management fee based on the amount of impervious (built-upon) area on your property. Higher levels of impervious area create greater amounts of stormwater runoff that the City is required to manage. This fee is used to improve water quality, manage drainage infrastructure, minimize flood hazards, and educate the public about the importance of managing stormwater. As a county resident, you pay this fee annually, which will be replaced by the City fee.

8. Will I get City garbage collection right away?

Yes, residential properties will receive automated garbage and recycling collection service and will have their cans delivered along with a letter and brochure explaining when service will begin, which day of the week it will take place, and the cost.

Interesting Facts About the City of Myrtle Beach

- More than 30 areas of unincorporated Horry County are completely surrounded by the City of Myrtle Beach. Some are single-family lots, while others are large tracts of many acres with multiple owners. These "doughnut holes" within the City do not receive City services and are not subject to City zoning or building regulations, although some properties within these enclaves may receive City water and/or sewer service, its double the in-City rate.
- Myrtle Beach City residents with property in the floodplain are eligible for a 25 percent reduction on their flood insurance premiums, thanks to the City's Class 5 ISO rating for flood insurance. (Residents outside the floodplain are eligible for a 10 percent premium savings on their flood insurance.) Myrtle Beach received the Class 5 rating from the Insurance Services Organization in early 2003. Only 26 communities in the nation have a Class 5 rating, and only three communities have anything better than a Class 5.
- Myrtle Beach's property tax rate of 61.4 mills for fiscal year 2006-07 is lower than the millage rates of Anderson (127), Spartanburg (103.2) Columbia (99), North Charleston (92.8), Greenville (90.9), North Augusta (81.08), Orangeburg (79), and Charleston (73.8).

Contact Information

To speak with someone regarding annexation, please contact Edna W. Wright, Growth Coordinator by calling (843) 918-2008 or by e-mailing ewright@cityofmyrtlebeach.com.