

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Introduction**

These questions highlight those that most often arise with respect to boundary extensions. If you have any further questions, please contact the City of Fort St. John at (250) 787-8150. Thank you.

### **Why is the City exploring boundary extension?**

There are two reasons why the City is exploring boundary extension:

- To respond to requests from some property owners who are currently outside of the City within the Peace River Regional District to have access to City services; and/or
- To bring in land to accommodate future growth, particularly land suitable for light industrial use.

### **How does a boundary extension get started?**

A boundary extension can be initiated in one of two ways:

- By rural property owners desiring City services and submitting a letter to the City requesting inclusion within City boundaries; or
- By the City wishing to extend its boundaries to accommodate future growth.

### **What is the process for a boundary extension?**

The process for a boundary extension is established by the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, as set out in its Municipal Boundary Extensions Process Guide and Municipal Boundary Extension Policies Guide.

The following outlines the steps that the City follows if it starts the process, as set forth by the Ministry's Guides:

- City Council approves staff to initiate the exploration of a possible boundary extension, selecting the parcels of land proposed for inclusion within City boundaries;
- Comments are gathered from a variety of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the Peace River Regional District, rural residents, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, First Nations, and others;
- An application is submitted to the Ministry, which includes a Council resolution, map of and rationale for the proposed boundary extension area, comments from stakeholders and other documentation applicable to the proposed boundary extension;
- The Minister must decide whether or not the proposed boundary application proceeds to the next step, which is to obtain comments from City residents;
- City residents' opinions, either via a referendum or the Alternative Approval Process are obtained and sent to the Ministry, along with a second Council resolution;

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- Upon review of all of the information provided for the proposed boundary extension, the Ministry will either approve or reject the application for submission to Cabinet for their consideration; and
- If Cabinet approves the application, an updated Letters Patent is sent to the City – this creates the new municipal boundaries.

### **How long does a boundary extension take?**

The length of time required for a boundary extension depends entirely on the application. If there are a large number of properties being considered in the boundary extension proposal, the process can take longer due to the information that needs to be compiled such as servicing costs, comparisons between City and rural property taxes, mapping and public consultation.

A small boundary extension application that has the support of property owners can potentially be finalized within a year from the time of initial consideration by City Council.

### **I sent my letter into the City requesting an extension to bring my property into City boundaries. Does that automatically mean that the City will be taking my land in?**

The City receives requests for boundary extension on a regular basis and there are some properties that are challenging to include. These types of challenges include:

- The presence of logistical issues, such as the City’s ability to physically supply services to an area due to service capacity or the distance to extend services;
- The land requesting inclusion would create a “doughnut hole” (land in the middle remaining within the Peace River Regional District, surrounded on all sides with City lands);
- The parcel requesting incorporation is too far away from the City’s existing boundaries; and
- The area is too developed, and retrofitting infrastructure such as roads and utilities within the area would be cost prohibitive.

### **I don’t want to be brought within the City boundaries, but could you connect my property to City water and sewer?**

The City has a long-standing policy in place that it will not provide services outside of its municipal boundaries. Thus, if services are desired, the property is required to be brought within City boundaries.

### **Will my zoning change if my property is brought into the City?**

No. The City will allocate the land use zone that most closely resembles the Peace River Regional District’s zoning.

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### **If this extension goes through, when do I get services like garbage collection?**

If the boundary extension were approved by the Provincial Government, the City and the Peace River Regional District would be responsible for implementing the transfer and coordination of services within the boundary extension area. At this time, the municipality and regional district may choose to establish a transition agreement to assist in this process.

### **Yay! My property is now within City boundaries – do I automatically get utility servicing to my property for free?**

No. This is a widely misconceived belief. The costs for providing water and sewer services to a property are the responsibility of the property owner. The City will not be paying for service extensions to newly included areas.

### **My land is used for agricultural purposes. Will I be paying more in taxes if my property is incorporated?**

No. The agricultural (Class 9) tax rate is the same for both the Peace River Regional District and the City.

### **Is there a cost to the individual property owner to submit this application to the Ministry?**

No. The costs incurred to compile a proposed boundary extension application are borne by the City.

### **What opportunities do I have to get involved in the boundary extension process?**

There are a number of opportunities available for interested and affected property owners to get involved in the process. These include:

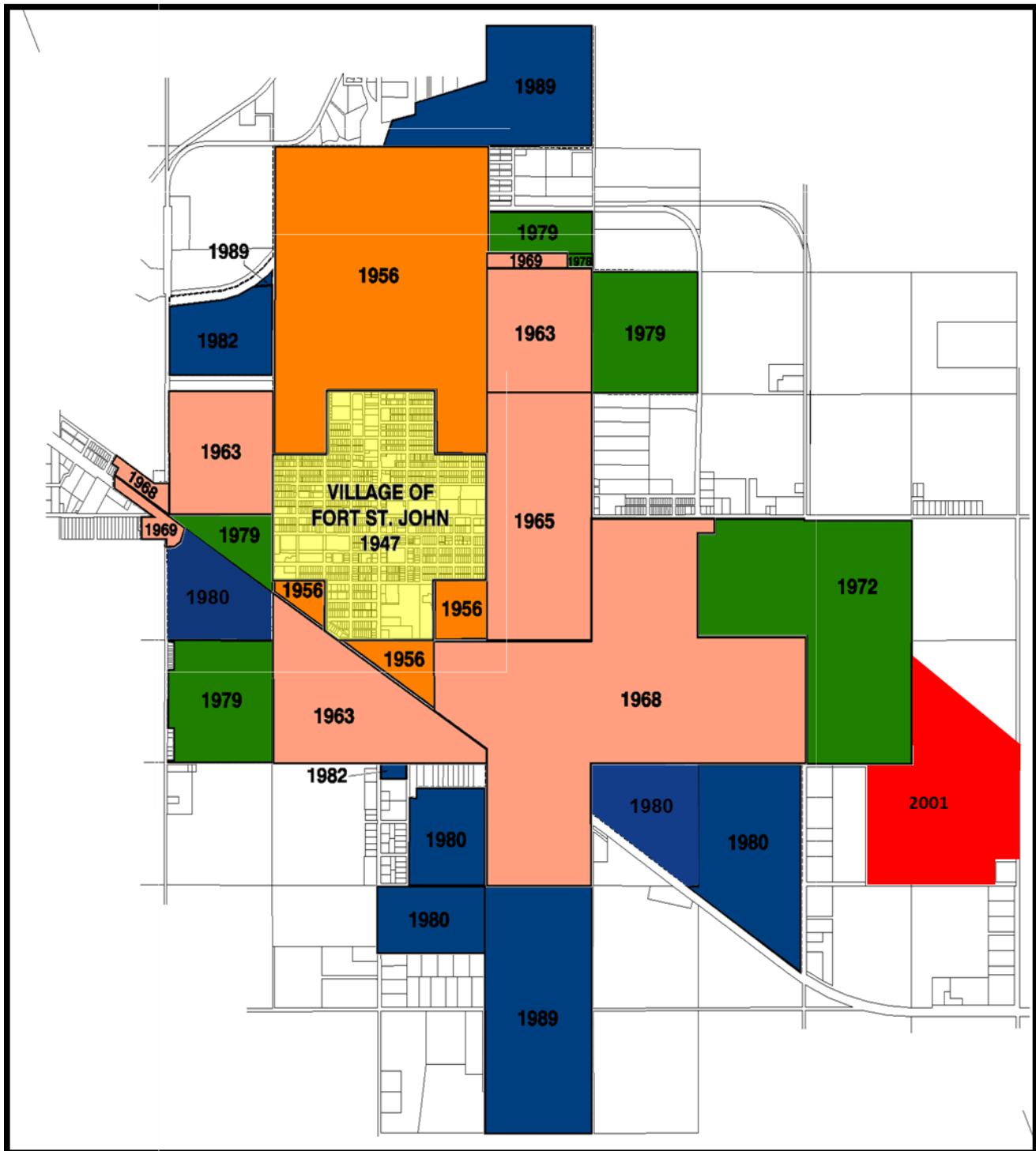
- Attendance and participation in meetings to discuss the proposed boundary extension;
- Completing surveys that will be distributed to obtain your thoughts, opinions and concerns with the proposed boundary extension;
- Reading these Frequently Asked Questions to better understand the process;
- Obtaining updated information with respect to the proposed boundary extension on the City's website, Facebook page and PlaceSpeak site; and
- Meeting with the City to discuss any concerns that you may have.

### **How many times has the City extended its boundaries, and when was the last one?**

- The map on the following page shows past boundary extensions, the years they were completed, and the lands brought within the City.
- The last extension took place in 2001 for the incorporation of the OSB Plant.

Frequently Asked Questions

History of Boundary Extensions in the City of Fort St. John



The City appreciates any and all written responses, either supporting or not supporting the City's 2013 proposed boundary extension.