



# **THE CITY OF MYRTLE BEACH GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING ANNEXATION**

*“FIRST IN SERVICE”*

October 2019

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](http://www.cityofmyrtlebeach.com).

# **The City of Myrtle Beach's Guide to Understanding Annexation**

## **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 more than 950 full-time employees, the city is a full-service provider with a 2019-20 fiscal year budget of \$202 million. The city has been financially stable throughout its history. The State of South Carolina requires the city to have a balanced budget each year.

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.

## **What is Annexation?**

Annexation may sound like a complicated, technical term, but its meaning is 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. Municipal governments typically provide a higher level of service than found in unincorporated areas.

Like many cities in South Carolina, Myrtle Beach has pockets of unincorporated land within the city limits. These may be one or two homes or larger areas. The unincorporated enclaves 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 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 remain strong and provide essential services when their boundaries are cohesive and the city periodically extends to include newly urbanizing areas.

Other reasons why annexation is important include:

- **It's 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. While no means complete, this overview is intended to acquaint you with the city and 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 Myrtle Beach 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. This rating may help you receive a discount on your homeowner's insurance premiums. Contact your insurance agent.

- **Increased Progressive Police Protection**

The Police Department employs more than 300 officers and staff. This means more officers per square mile to provide a wide range of protection and law enforcement services. Crime prevention and public safety are shared responsibilities. Community-Oriented Policing shifts the focus of the entire department from a reactive response force to a crime-prevention focus.

- **Reduced Water and Sewer Rates**

The water and sewer rates are lower for residents of the city than in unincorporated areas served by the city. Non-residents typically pay 100% more than residents. For example, an annual water and sewer bill of \$150 inside the city limits will cost \$300 outside the city limits.

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

Residential Solid Waste Services include once weekly curbside collection of household garbage, commingled recycling, yard waste and bulky junk. The city's fee-based charges for this service are typically lower than private sector rates for the same or less service in unincorporated areas.

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

Our Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism Department 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.

The city has four recreation centers, two indoor swimming pools, four indoor gymnasiums, two outdoor basketball courts, three weight/fitness rooms, 15 tennis courts, four outdoor pickleball courts, a skateboard park, a roller hockey rink, two fitness trails, six picnic shelters, 23 outdoor playing fields, 15 playgrounds and at least 33 landscaped parks, not to mention nine-and-a-half miles of beach.

City residents receive significant fee reductions for fitness, recreational activities and instructional programs. 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.

- **Street Lighting**

The city provides street lighting service on public rights-of-ways through Santee Cooper.

- **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**

The Neighborhood Services Department is committed to building healthy and vibrant neighborhoods. More than two dozen active Neighborhood Watch groups meet regularly to share information.

- **A Voice in City Government**

The city considers citizen participation as 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. A number of standing boards, commissions and committees exist. City residency is required for many of these posts, but not all. If you are interested in serving, contact the City Clerk at 843-918-1004.

- **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 management to ensure local quality of life. Zoning and land use regulations allow 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 at 921 North Oak Street in the City Services Building. For additional information, call 843-918-1050.
2. Requests for annexation are considered by the Planning Commission at its regularly scheduled meetings on the third 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, 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 10:00 a.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month in Council Chamber at the Ted C. Collins Law Enforcement Center, 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?**

Under state law, annexation into an incorporated municipality such as the City of Myrtle Beach can be accomplished in three ways:

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, such as 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, 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.

City Council begins the intricate process of review, with Council members ultimately voting to approve or deny the annexation ordinance. 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 and individuals 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.
- Once you begin receiving city fire service, you may have a lower homeowner's insurance rate due to the city's Insurance Services Organization (ISO) Class 1 rating,

the highest classification that a municipal fire department can receive. Contact your insurance agent.

- Your water and sewer fees will be reduced. Corresponding county fees will go away. Utility services may be added, including storm water management.

## Property Tax Comparison

Property owners receive only one tax bill annually, per property. When annexed into the city, your tax statement will include the additional City of Myrtle Beach real property tax assessments. Owner-occupied homes currently benefit from a tax credit provided by the Tourism Development Fee.

## Points of Particular Interest

The City of Myrtle Beach understands that misunderstandings, distortion of facts and incorrect information may circulate as part of a discussion about annexation. We would like to dispel some of the misconceptions about annexation and clarify the issues. 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. Cities typically provide a higher level of service than unincorporated areas. As the saying goes, you get what you pay for. As an area develops to municipal standards, residents may need those municipal services. The city's zoning, planning, code enforcement and other regulations also provide additional protections for property owners.

### **2. I already pay my share of city taxes whenever I shop in the city.**

The merchants in the city very much appreciate your business. However, most of the sales tax you pay on an item or service goes to other entities, including the state, the county and the school system. The city receives only a small portion of the taxes or fees on purchases.

### **3. The City of Myrtle Beach just wants to annex my property to get more tax revenues.**

Annexation does expand the municipal tax base, but it also carries with it the responsibility and accompanying cost to provide municipal services to newly annexed 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.

### **4. What influence will I have over 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 public 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, but only if your septic system is determined to be acceptable by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Property owners are encouraged to connect to the city's sanitary 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. Your county stormwater fee will be replaced by the city fee.

**8. Will I get City garbage collection right away?**

Yes, residential properties will receive garbage and recycling collection service and will have their pelicans 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, at 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. A limited number of communities in the nation have a Class 5 rating, with few having anything better than a Class 5.

## **Contact Information**

Contact the Planning Department at 843-918-1050 for more information about annexation.