



Town of Wickenburg

ANNEXATION STRATEGY



Introduction

Annexation is the process by which the Town of Wickenburg may assume jurisdiction over unincorporated territory that is contiguous to its existing municipal boundaries. When strategically pursued, annexation has the potential to expand the Town's service area and increase public revenues through sales tax, bed tax, property tax, and various state-shared revenues. These additional funds support essential municipal services such as public safety, libraries, and parks and recreation—ensuring that service levels are maintained or enhanced as the community grows.

Purpose

The purpose of this annexation strategy is to identify, prioritize, and prepare for future annexations that are beneficial to the Town of Wickenburg. This strategy will serve as the guiding framework for the Town's annexation policy, as established in Section 2-7 of the Town Code. It provides a structured approach for evaluating annexation proposals and ensuring alignment with the long-term interests of the community.

The Town of Wickenburg 2045 General Plan underscores the importance of updating annexation procedures to establish a transparent and effective framework for both proactive and responsive annexation efforts. This strategy outlines key criteria and procedural considerations, including the Town's capacity to provide high-quality services in a cost-effective manner, anticipated fiscal and economic impacts, preservation of open space, and land use compatibility with Wickenburg's existing development patterns and community character.

Although the annexation process is governed by Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS § 9-471), this strategy establishes a local decision-making framework to guide staff and Town Council in evaluating annexation proposals. Adoption of the strategy via resolution provides consistent direction for future annexation decisions.

Legal Requirements

Annexations must comply with the requirements set forth in Arizona Revised Statutes Title 9, Section 471. Key provisions include:

- The annexed area must be contiguous to existing Town boundaries for at least 300 feet.
- The annexation area must maintain a minimum width of 200 feet, excluding roads.
- The annexation length cannot exceed twice the width of the contiguous boundary.
- Petitions in support of annexation must be signed by:
 - Property owners representing more than 50% of the land area; and
 - Owners representing more than 50% of the assessed property valuation within the annexation area.

- Annexation of federal land is permitted and does not require federal approval.
- Annexation of State Trust Land requires State Selection Board approval, which necessitates a Pre-Annexation and Development Agreement.



Criteria of Annexation Strategy

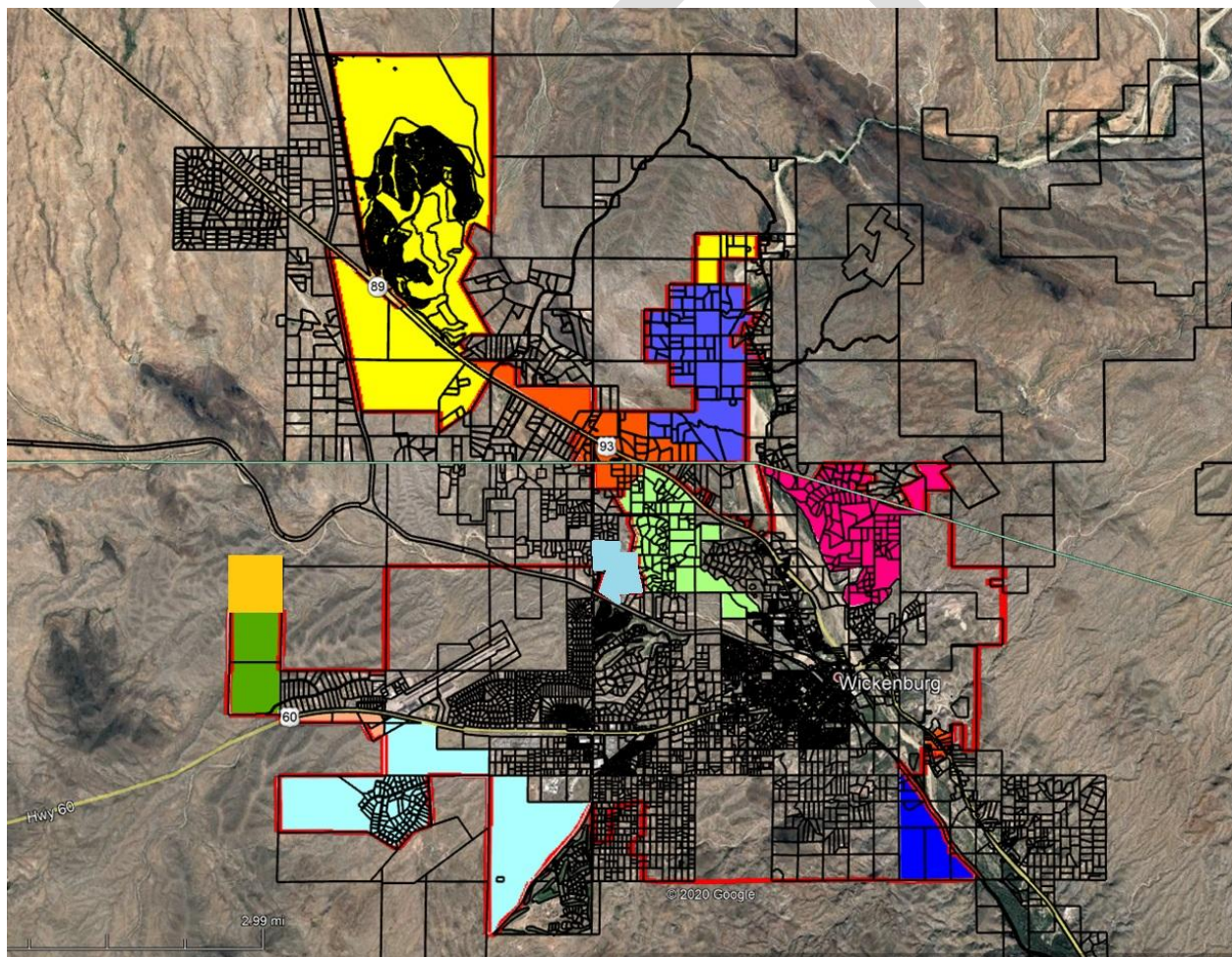
In any annexation decision, the consequences and costs of providing services to the proposed annexation area must be evaluated and considered. A plan or procedure is required by law to be in place prior to adoption of the annexation ordinance to prove the annexed territory with appropriate levels of infrastructure and services to serve anticipated new development in the annexed area within ten (10) years of completion of the annexation. While the annexation of new territory may mean additional state-shared revenue, the additional revenue to be gained must be considered in light of the necessary expenditures to provide services to the annexed area. For instance, if the town were to annex right-of-way, we must consider the long-term costs associated with the new maintenance responsibilities.

The Town of Wickenburg Council and Staff will evaluate the following criteria to determine whether it is beneficial to annex a new area:

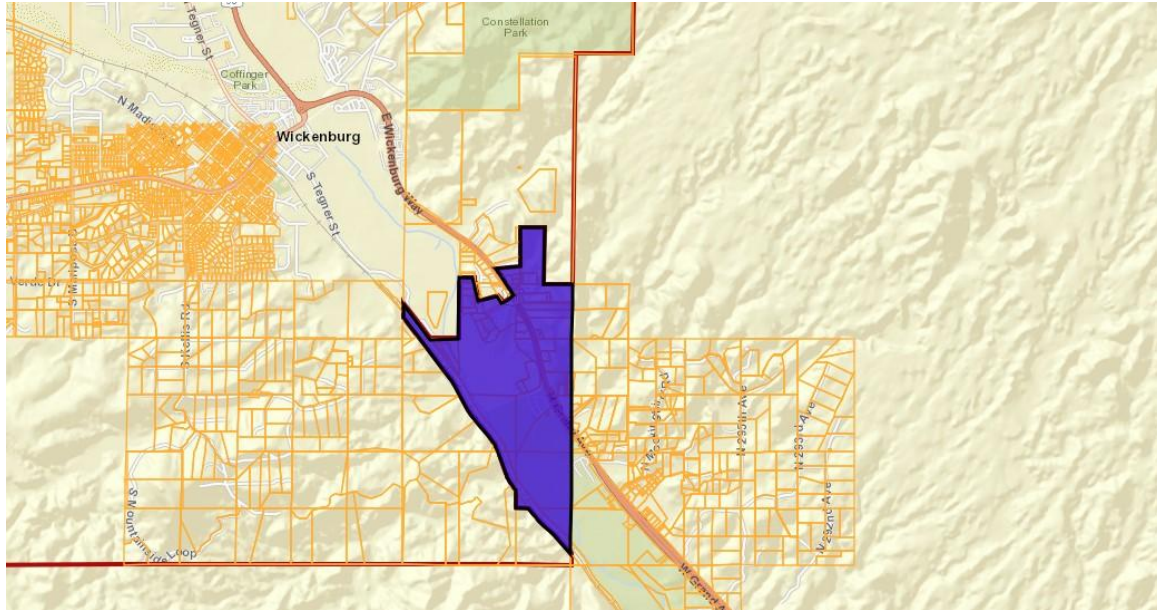
1. Ability of the Town of Wickenburg to provide basic services to the annexed area in a timely (less than 10 years) manner with acceptable revenue-to-cost ratio
2. Conduct a basic fiscal impact analysis to the Town for each annexation proposal which include cost-to-revenue ratios
3. Future annexations of the Town shall be generally consistent with the policies of the Town of Wickenburg 2045 General Plan and the adopted Strategic Plan.
4. Whether the annexation will require new infrastructure to the area such as roads and utilities.
5. Property annexed by the Town shall have existing, ordinance zoning translated to Town of Wickenburg districts in conformance with state law and to densities and land uses no greater than those permitted by the current zoning ordinance of the governing jurisdiction immediately before annexation.
6. The perceived level of support from the property owners and the necessary community engagement required for a successful annexation application.
7. Applicants must be willing to upgrade adjacent roadways to meet Town standards if they are to be dedicated to the Town.
8. Whether developed county residential subdivision should be required to upgrade their infrastructure and facilities through the use of improvement districts or other means prior to annexation.
9. Pursue the filing out and squaring off of the town limits. Strive toward a configuration for the town limits which eliminates peninsulas and yields a manageable boundary for the town.
10. Consider areas with potential of generating commercial tax revenue and/or proximity to existing infrastructure.
11. Annexation areas are encouraged to include several properties and large contiguous areas to improve service delivery and reduce service costs.
12. Consideration should be given to opportunities for new Town gateway signage and visual identification in high-visibility areas.
13. Inclusion of established commercial enterprises that contribute to the Town's tax base is encouraged.

Annexation History

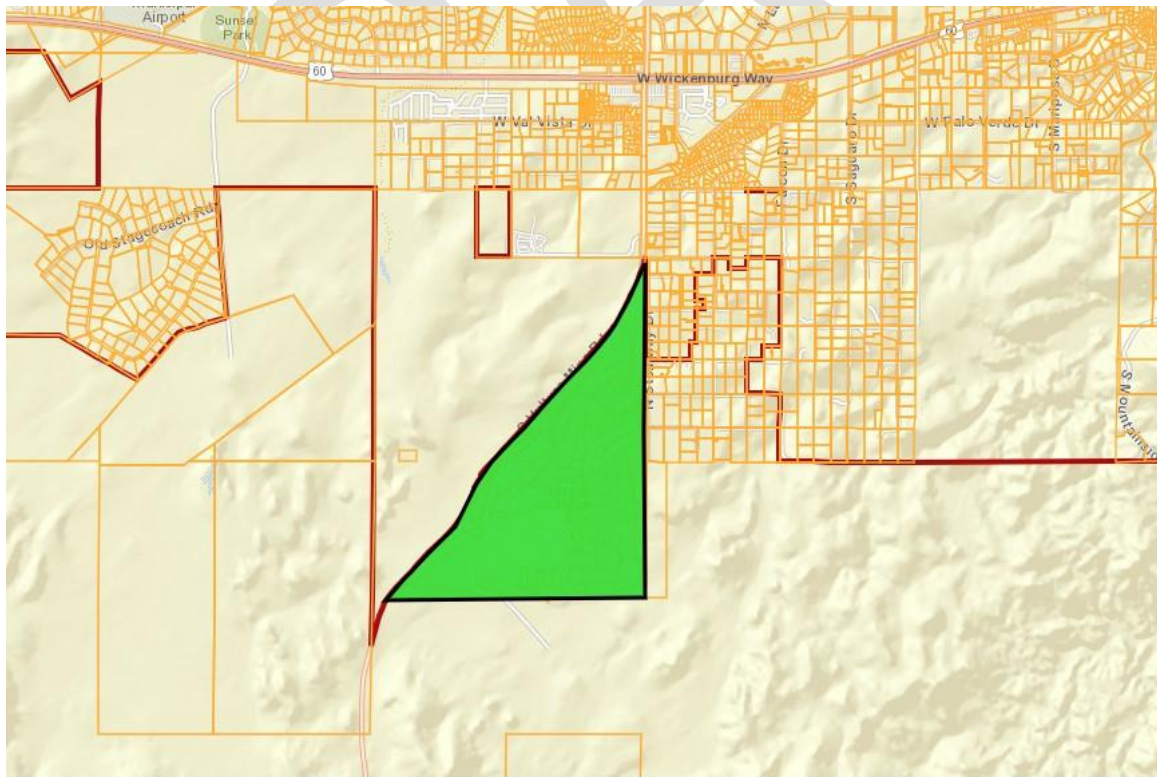
The Town of Wickenburg over the past 20 years has completed multiple annexations. The Town of Wickenburg service jurisdictional boundary has nearly double in size over the span of the past 20 years. The Town of Wickenburg has an incorporated area of 27.23 square miles while the Municipal Planning Area (MPA) is 434 square miles. While the Town is not obligated to annex all MPA land, strategic annexation within the MPA remain a long-term priority.



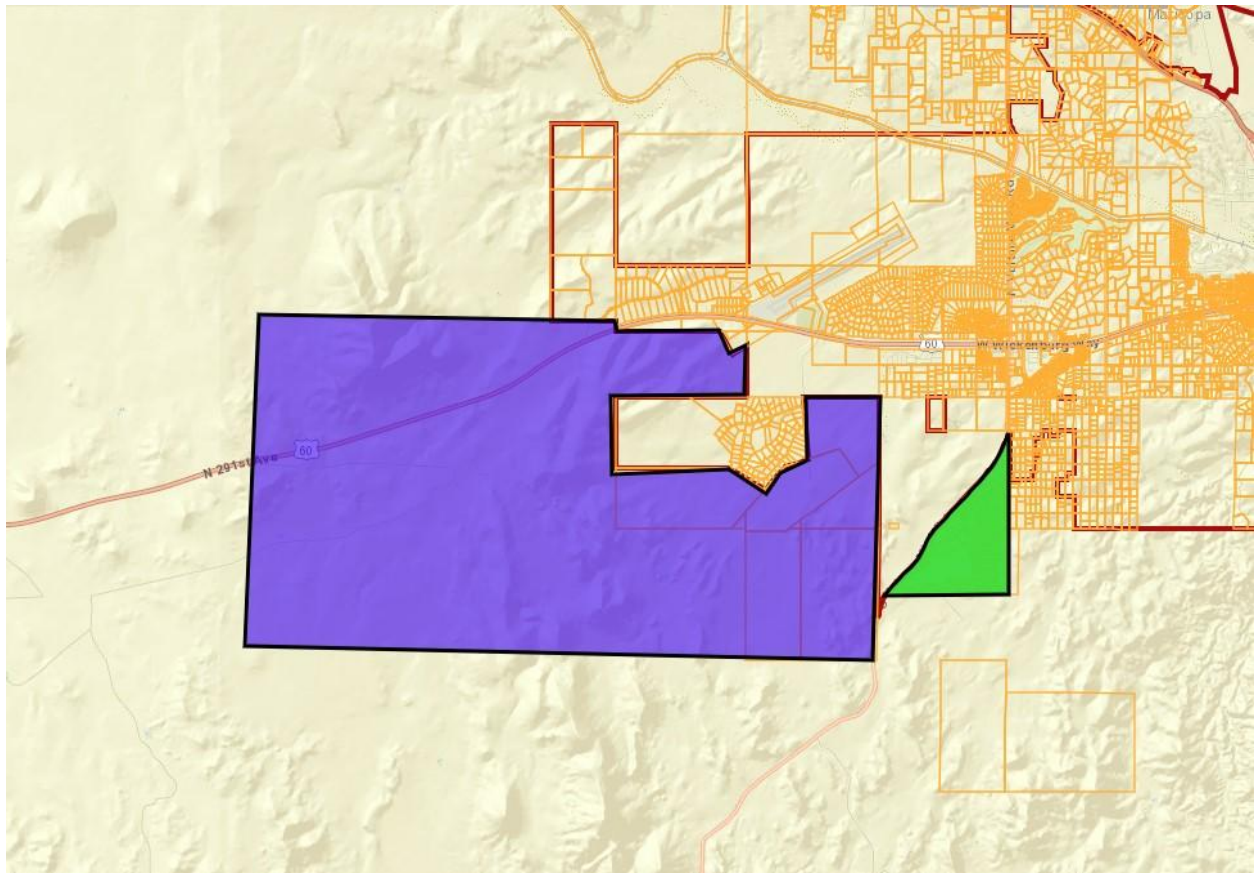
Proposed Priority Areas for Annexation



Southeast of Town along US 60



Southwest of Town at Ranch del los Caballeros



Flying E Ranch and I-11/US 60 Intersection

Pre-Annexation Agreements

The Town of Wickenburg has utilized Pre-Annexation Agreements to carry out successful annexations such as Wickenburg Ranch. This tool should be combined with Development Agreement's where a property is anticipating development. These agreements have been traditionally reserved for large residential or commercial projects. Pre-Annexation agreements are not necessary for traditional residential property owners who desire to annex into the Town as the impact to the property owner and the Town may be minimal. Staff will evaluate the application of a Pre-Annexation Agreement when necessary to attract developments into Town.

Fiscal Impacts

A fiscal impact assessment is required for each annexation proposal. This analysis will:

- Evaluate projected growth and land use;
- Measure existing and anticipated demand for Town services;
- Project revenues from property taxes, sales taxes, and other sources; and
- Estimate infrastructure and service delivery costs.

Each assessment will be tailored to the unique characteristics of the annexation area, including existing land use and potential for development.

Conclusion

This annexation strategy provides a clear, consistent, and forward-looking framework to guide the Town of Wickenburg in evaluation and pursuing annexation that support long-term community growth, fiscal stability, and quality of life by aligning annexation efforts with the Town's General Plan, infrastructure capacity, and economic development objectives. Wickenburg can ensure that future expansion are both strategic and sustainable. Adoption and implementation of this strategy will empower Town leadership and staff to make informed decisions that reflect the best interests of current and future residents, while persevering the character and integrity of the community.

