Land annexation in Alberta: what you need to know

Urban planning expert Sandeep Agrawal highlights the need for understanding what annexation is and how it works

By Katie Willis on November 14, 2018

As Alberta’s cities and towns continue to grow, land annexation is becoming an increasingly common reality—and one that citizens need to understand, according to urban planning expert Sandeep Agrawal.

Agrawal is the director of the University of Alberta’s newly minted School of Urban and Regional Planning and professor in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. His research on land annexation in Alberta highlights the need for more comprehensive, systematic investigation.

“Annexation is a way to change the boundaries of municipalities by incorporating land or territory that used to belong to another municipality or county,” explained Agrawal. “But it’s not something that most Albertans know much about, despite annexation being the most common and frequent form of municipal boundary adjustment.”

Some Alberta annexations have been contentious—including the annexation of parts of Leduc Country by the City of Beaumont this year, and the closely watched annexation of parts of Strathcona County by the City of Fort Saskatchewan.

So, what do people need to know about how annexation works? A number of things, said Agrawal.

“It is important to understand a few key things, as a citizen and a taxpayer. People should know how annexation could or would affect their property taxes; how it might affect the municipal services provided to them; the purpose for which annexed land would be used; and whether or not annexation creates a win-win situation for all parties involved.”

Agrawal authored a segment on annexation in the Canadian Institute of Planners’ publication, Plan Canada: Planning around the Edges.

In fall 2018, the Urban and Regional Planning Program was renamed the School of Urban and Regional Planning. “The creation of the School is a natural next step in our maturity and an important milestone,” said Agrawal. “The School brings all of our various planning degree programs and streams together under one umbrella and one cohesive identity.”

The School of Urban and Regional Planning is truly unique in its offerings, recruiting young professionals and creating opportunities to build Alberta’s pipeline to the world.

Source: Faculty of Science