

## Annex?

# Spencerville might become part of Riverton

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The City of Riverton in recent months has been looking into the annexation of an unincorporated neighborhood — “Spencerville” — that lies south of Webbwood Road and west of Federal Boulevard.

The action was initiated at the request of residents, but with the 2010 U.S. Census approaching some people may wonder if the inclusion of extra households in Riverton’s official count is a motivator for city leaders to annex the subdivision.

City public works director Bill Urbigit said that is not the case.

“Certainly that is something we look at, (but) economically this will be a wash,” he said.

“There will be a few more people in Riverton bringing in more sales tax revenues, but there will be more expenses out there that will offset it. We won’t be that much ahead.”

Though it is in the city’s best interests to have more residents, Urbigit said a new neighborhood brings additional expenses from added police calls and street maintenance.

“We’ve looked at this from an economic standpoint,” he said. “We’re not going to make out like bandits by annexing these people. It’s pretty much a break-even proposition.”

With the Spencer Subdivision, for example, the city through a deal with Fremont County now will be in charge of maintaining about a mile of Webbwood Road, which city administrator Carter Napier said may cost up to \$6,000 each year.

So what is the city’s motivation to annex a neighborhood?

“I say this with all sincerity,” Urbigit said. “We’re really just nice people.”

In Spencerville, residents had asked the city to step in to help with the subdivision’s failing water system, which will be replaced with money from the city, county and residents if a majority of the neighbors agree to being annexed.

If a positive consensus is reached, the annexation process takes about six weeks, Urbigit said, starting with a public hearing at a council meeting followed by three separate votes on the ordinance at subsequent meetings.

Aside from situations where it is requested, Urbigit said the city does not seek to incorporate neighborhoods often. That is in part because state statute says the majority of property owners owning the majority of land must favor the annexation for it to happen.

“So only if they come beg us are we going to annex somebody,” Urbigit said. “We won’t force anybody into annexation.”

Cities in the past have attempted to force annexation, which Urbigit said led to the statute.

“We shouldn’t be able to just take over big chunks of land and say you’re part of our team now, and we’ll start taxing you more,” Urbigit said.

“There has to be consent. ... Life is too short to have people come to meetings and yell at you calling you names.”

The last neighborhood of residents that Urbigit recalled being annexed into the community was the A&T Mobile Home Park in northeast Riverton just south of Honor Farm Road. That was about 20 years ago, he

said.

"At the time there were, like, six people there, and now there are about 120 trailers out there," Urbigkit said.

"They had a failed sewer system and needed help desperately. They saw the writing on the wall and said 'please hook us up.'"

He said most additions to the city are done through the plat process and involve property only — not residents.