



Glendale could soon annex Loop 303 strip

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Glendale may soon grow, annexing prized land along Loop 303.

The City Council this month gave an initial nod to move forward on a request to annex 76 acres of farmland at Maryland and Sarival avenues.

Council members will consider six more proposals in June that would add nearly 1,700 acres to the city.

The seven proposals would be the city's first major annexations of property within a chunk of land the city staked claim to in 1978 through strip annexation.

All of the properties are near Loop 303. Just a two-lane highway now, the stretch of road is expected to lure major commercial developments that will require city services.

"Now they (landowners) see the time is right," city annexation coordinator Thomas Ritz said.

Councilwoman Joyce Clark expressed some concerns about the cost of providing police services so far west. But she and other council members saw value in protecting nearby Luke Air Force Base.

Along the largely agricultural acreage, F-16s from Luke streak low through the sky and tractors chug along roadways. Plowed fields, rows of flowers and houses with large yards dot the landscape.

One hand-painted wooden slab boasts "pigs for sale." Another advertises acreage for industrial use.

Development is all but ensured, for the state plans to expand Loop 303 as early as 2011. and the area along the future expressway is viewed as an employment corridor.

The kind of strip annexing that encircled the 35-square-mile swath in 1978 has since been outlawed. The move allowed Glendale to keep other cities from annexing the area without having to provide police, fire and sanitation services to properties inside the perimeter. Thus, the parcel has remained part of the county for the better part of three decades.

Glendale officials say the annexation was necessary to protect Luke from encroaching residential development.

The seven annexations now being proposed would respect noise zones and height restrictions around Luke with zoning primarily for light industrial use, city planner John Froke said.

The corridor's economic potential is such that nearby El Mirage launched an unsuccessful court fight to have the strip annexation overturned.

Froke praised previous city officials' foresight for staking their claim.

"It's a good opportunity to look at job creation and employment in that corridor," he said.

If the annexation requests move forward, development could be visible within 18 months, he said.

The City Council gave a preliminary nod this month to a 76-acre annexation at Sarival and Maryland avenues.

The six others are expected to go to council workshops in June. If the council agrees to move forward, public hearings will be scheduled. From there, council members would take a final vote in 30 to 90 days.

Reach the reporter at (602... .