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Policy Title: City of Castle Pines Annexation Policy

Type of Policy: Legislative

Adopting Resolution: Resolution 26-xx

Adoption Date:

Effective Date:

Policy Custodian: Department of Community Development

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guiding principles and evaluation criteria for annexation requests submitted by property owners.

B. Policy Statement

The City recognizes that thoughtful, strategic, and fiscally responsible annexations of land can provide lasting public benefits; however, preservation of Castle Pines' identity, fiscal health, natural environment, and quality of life shall remain the City's highest priorities. Annexation shall occur only when proposals clearly demonstrate that they strengthen the community.

Annexation is a discretionary legislative decision of the City Council. Nothing contained in this policy creates a right to annexation, nor shall satisfaction of these criteria obligate the City Council to approve an annexation petition.

C. Guiding Principles

The City shall only consider annexation proposals that demonstrate the following principles:

1. Advances the long-term vision of Castle Pines.
2. Protects the City's character.
3. Preserves significant natural resources.
4. Demonstrates a positive long-term fiscal outcome.
5. Does not reduce existing levels of public service.
6. Provides measurable public benefits that exceed those typically required of development under existing City regulations, to current residents.
7. Is supported by a transparent public process.

D. General Policy Direction

The City shall take a cautious approach toward annexation.

1. The City Council shall exercise its sole legislative discretion in the annexation of lands to the City.
2. The City will consider annexation requests on a case-by-case basis, rather than encourage growth broadly.
3. The City requires annexation requests to be submitted with an application for initial zoning.
4. The burden of proof rests entirely on the applicant to demonstrate that annexation serves the public interest.
5. An applicant shall bear the full cost of expenses incurred by the City in processing an annexation request.

E. Eligibility

The City will give preferences to annexations that are:

1. Supportive of long-term Comprehensive Plan goals.
2. Consistent with the City's Three-Mile Plan.
3. Not solely residential.
4. Contiguous to existing City limits.
5. Non-contiguous (serial annexation) where a major public benefit exists.
6. Flagpole pattern only when found to:
 - a. Preserve significant open space.
 - b. Support major public infrastructure.
 - c. Demonstrates a substantial public benefit.

F. Public Benefits

Every annexation shall provide identifiable and meaningful public benefits. Examples include:

1. Open space preservation
2. Wildlife habitat protection
3. Trail connections
4. Parkland
5. Transportation improvements
6. Local-serving commercial development
7. Enhanced fiscal sustainability
8. Public facilities

G. Open Space

Open space preservation should:

1. Comprise no less than 30% of the gross site area, unless unique site characteristics justify a different amount.
2. Preserve significant natural features.
3. Protect wildlife habitat.
4. Maintain drainage corridors.
5. Provide trail connections.
6. Establish buffers between development and existing neighborhoods.

H. Community Character

Development should reinforce the character of Castle Pines.

1. Development should demonstrate compatibility with:
 - a. Existing neighborhoods
 - b. Architectural character
 - c. Building scale
 - d. Lot and open space patterns
 - e. Building height
 - f. Setbacks
2. Residential density should be compatible with adjacent development.
3. Single-family low-density residential is preferred. Medium-density and high-density residential development, including multifamily and affordable dwelling units, may be considered when site and architectural design standards demonstrate that they reinforce the community character.

I. Infrastructure

No annexation will be approved unless the applicant demonstrates adequate capacity for:

1. Water (legally available, sustainable, and permanent water supply)
2. Wastewater
3. Transportation
4. Police
5. Fire
6. Utilities
7. Schools
8. Parks
9. Stormwater

J. Fiscal Impact

An independent fiscal impact analysis shall be completed by the City, and paid for by the applicant, demonstrating:

1. Positive municipal revenues evaluated over a 20-year horizon, recognizing both capital and long-term operating costs.
2. All public infrastructure, such as roads, parks, including physical improvements, stormwater, water, and sewer is fully funded through the proposed development.
3. Sustainable maintenance obligations.
4. No unreasonable burden on existing taxpayers.
5. Adequate funding for municipal services.

Projects with long-term negative fiscal impacts will not be approved.

K. Public Engagement

Public engagement shall be required.

1. Applicants shall:
 - a. Create a project website.
 - b. Conduct one neighborhood meeting before submitting the annexation request.
 - c. Conduct one neighborhood meeting at the time of the application for initial zoning.
 - d. Hold other neighborhood meetings, as necessary, to communicate major changes to the annexation request.
 - e. Provide a summary of all public engagement activities.
2. The City shall also:
 - a. Conduct required public hearings.
 - b. Provide online project information.

- c. Provide public comment opportunities.

L. Findings Required

Before approving any annexation, City Council should find that:

1. The annexation complies with Colorado law.
2. The annexation advances the Comprehensive Plan.
3. Public benefits are demonstrated.
4. Infrastructure capacity exists or will be provided.
5. The annexation represents a net long-term public benefit to the City as a whole.
6. Community character is reinforced.
7. Environmental impacts are minimized.
8. Public outreach requirements have been satisfied.
9. The annexation is in the best interests of Castle Pines.

M. Implementation

City staff shall prepare the necessary procedural and checklist documents to assist applicants in processing an annexation request.