

## Annexation Update!

Good news for members of the White Center and broader North Highline Communities:

On December 4, 2008, King County, the cities of Burien and Seattle, and Fire Districts 2 and 11 in King County came to agreement on a mutually developed memorandum of understanding (MOU) between these service delivery jurisdictions in North Highline, regarding proposed potential annexation boundaries for the cities of Seattle and Burien.

The MOU lays out general policy principles and specific activities that the parties agree to in support of transitioning North Highline from unincorporated to city status, and to ensure fire and life safety services are not jeopardized by any annexation proposal by either city. This is not an “Interlocal Agreement” as defined by state law nor does it allow for “annexation by interlocal agreement.” The MOU is premised on each city filing their proposals before the Washington State Boundary Review Board (where public testimony is taken) and then, if approved by the BRB, the annexation question being put before the voters of North Highline for a decision.

The main purpose of the MOU was to resolve the issues that were identified through the boundary review board process, initiated by the City of Burien this past Summer. Those identified issues were:

- Fire and Life Safety Services Protected — In the event of annexation, Burien, Seattle, King County and the Fire Districts all agree to work collaboratively to maintain the level of fire and life safety services to North Highline communities and neighborhoods of North Burien, Arbor Heights and urban unincorporated areas of South Park.
- Agreement to Burien’s Proposed Annexation Boundary through minor adjustment (see map in this post) — Many of the stated concerns with Burien’s proposed annexation boundary are resolved with a small adjustment that maintains Fire District 11’s Headquarters outside of the area to be proposed for annexation by the City of Burien.
- Agreement to coordinated phasing of Annexation Election Proposals for consideration by North Highline residents — The MOU recognizes that there is broad diversity of opinions and preferences in the North Highline communities regarding annexation to Seattle and Burien and acknowledges both cities represent reasonable governance alternatives. The MOU supports Burien’s proposal for annexation election for the southern portion of North Highline and Seattle’s proposal for an annexation election for the northern portion of North Highline.
- Agreement that both Seattle and Burien should have access to the same level of state funding if either city is able to move forward with annexation of White Center and the northern portion of Boulevard Park — Both cities acknowledge that the cost of serving this area (“Area Y”) is greater than the cost of serving the southern area proposed for annexation to Burien (“Area X”). The MOU acknowledges this through the agreement to have all parties work collaboratively

to amend the annexation state sales tax credit law so that both Burien and Seattle would have access to up to \$5 million if either annex Area Y.

The aim of the proposed MOU is to remove the obstacles that stop both Burien and Seattle from making annexation proposals to the voters of North Highline. The mediated agreement presumes the decision to annex will rest in the hands of North Highline voters.

The Memorandum of Understanding is not an Interlocal Agreement for Annexation. The Memorandum establishes the framework for how the cities of Burien and Seattle, King County and the fire districts will work together to ensure a timely transition of unincorporated North Highline area to city status.

The MOU makes all parties agree not to interfere with an annexation election attempt(s). Bullet point #9 of the MOU says “Representatives of the jurisdictions that are a party to this agreement (Seattle and Burien) commit to not interfere with each other’s annexation election attempts.

This point is intended to underscore both Burien and Seattle’s commitment to having a decision to annex based on a vote by a majority of the residents in the respective annexation area.

The Memorandum of Understanding supports legislation that provides funding parity to either Burien or Seattle if one of them annex the northern portion of the North Highline area (White Center, Top Hat, Arbor Heights, and unincorporated South Park). The \$5 million limit means Burien or Seattle will get up to \$5 million to provide municipal services to the residents in the area.

If you have questions please feel free to contact the annexation initiative at: [annexation@kingcounty.gov](mailto:annexation@kingcounty.gov). Again, all future posts and any new information regarding North Highline Annexation will be posted on King County’s website at: <http://www.metrokc.gov/annex/>.

Thank you. – King County Annexation Initiative