

City Status Frequently Asked Questions

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Welcome to our FAQ page about Taber’s exploration into becoming a city. As we move forward in our public engagement process, we understand that you may have many questions. This document is designed to provide you with answers and information on various topics related to the potential transition.

Please note that this FAQ page is constantly being updated as we receive new questions from the public. We encourage you to check back regularly for the latest information and updates.

If you have a question that is not addressed here, please feel free to contact us at city@taber.ca, and we may add them to the document. Thank you for your interest!

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GENERAL- “WHY?”

Q: What is the official date for Taber’s transition to city status?

A: If the decision is made to transition to a city, Taber could potentially become a city in 2025. But this is dependent on public feedback, demonstrated support from the community, Council deliberations, and the support of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who also must be satisfied that the community is in support of the decision.

Q: Why is Taber exploring a transition from a town to a city?

A: The exploration reflects Taber's growth in population, economic development, and infrastructure, aligning with provincial requirements for city status. Transitioning to city status can significantly boost economic development in several ways:

- **Attracting Businesses and Investments:** City status often attracts new businesses and investments, as companies look for stable and growing markets. This can lead to job creation, increased commercial activities, and a broader economic base.
- **Enhanced Infrastructure:** The transition may bring increased funding for infrastructure projects, such as roads, public transportation, and utilities. Improved infrastructure supports local businesses and makes the area more attractive to potential investors and new residents.
- **Access to Grants and Funding:** Cities often have access to a wider range of provincial and federal grants and funding opportunities, which can be used for community development projects, enhancing public services, and supporting economic growth initiatives.
- **Boosting Tourism:** As a city, Taber can enhance its tourism marketing efforts to attract more visitors to local attractions, festivals, and events. Increased tourism can provide a significant boost to the local economy through spending on accommodations, dining, and entertainment.
- **Improving Public Services:** The transition can lead to enhancements in public services such as healthcare, education, and recreation, making Taber a more

attractive place to live and work. Although many of these services are in Provincial jurisdiction (healthcare and education), having city status can grant us a louder voice to improve these services at the provincial level. Better services can retain existing residents and attract new ones, further driving economic growth.

- **Increased Real Estate Development:** City status can stimulate real estate development, both residential and commercial. This can lead to a more dynamic real estate market, providing more housing options and commercial spaces, and increasing property values.
- **Enhanced Regional Influence:** As a city, Taber could have a stronger voice in regional planning and development discussions, allowing it to advocate more effectively for its needs and priorities. Being located between two cities along Highway Three sometimes means we're the forgotten municipality. But city status could elevate our voices and allow us to collaborate more often with Lethbridge and Medicine Hat on regional economic development initiatives that benefit all three of us.

Q: Isn't there a population requirement to becoming a city? Doesn't it have to be 10,000 people? Has Taber reached that?

A: The Government of Alberta removed the 10,000-population threshold a few years ago, so any sized municipality could technically become a city.

That being said, the 2021 Federal Census had our population at 8,862, so we were only 1,138 people away three years ago. With the influx of immigration to our community and an already increasing population, the municipal government believes it is incredibly likely that we have reached the 10,000 threshold or are already over it.

Q: How many cities does Alberta have?

A: There are nineteen cities in Alberta. If we were to be the next city, Taber would be the 20th:

1. Calgary (pop 1.3 million)
2. Edmonton (pop 1 million)
3. Red Deer (pop 100k)
4. Lethbridge (pop 98k)
5. Airdrie (pop 74k)

6. St. Albert (pop 68k)
7. Grande Prairie (64k)
8. Medicine Hat (63k)
9. Spruce Grove (37k)
10. Leduc (34k)
11. Fort Saskatchewan (27k)
12. Chestermere (22k)
13. Beaumont (20k) < Beaumont became the 19th Albertan city in 2019
14. Lloydminster (19k)
15. Camrose (18k)
16. Cold Lake (15k)
17. Brooks (14k)
18. Lacombe (13k)
19. Wetaskiwin (12k)

Q: The population of Wetaskiwin is 12k, and we're below that. Why does Taber want to be a city when our population is still hovering around 10k? What's the point of being Alberta's smallest city?

A: Besides what was mentioned earlier, right now is a perfect time for us in Taber.

With Taber being part of the Canadian Premier Food Corridor, which is seeing a boost in agricultural production, and with more immigrants and skilled workers coming here, becoming a city would make us more appealing to new businesses, workers, and markets. Being a city helps us attract more attention for economic growth, showing businesses and investors that Taber is ready for business.

If we stick with being a town, there's a risk that businesses and opportunities might pass us over for larger cities like Lethbridge or Medicine Hat. By aiming for city status now, during this growth phase, Taber aims to stand out among Alberta's limited number of cities, offering a competitive edge for new industries and services. This move is part of our plan to support ongoing growth and to meet the changing needs of our community.

Q: Is Council set on becoming a city? What happens if public feedback is fully against it?

A: Council is currently exploring the possibility of becoming a city, but no final decision has been made. Public feedback is crucial in this process. If there is significant opposition from the community, Council will respect that feedback and will not pursue city status further.

Answer Continued...

The Minister of Municipal Affairs also requires assurance that the community has been thoroughly engaged and demonstrates support before any decision is made. Community input and support are essential considerations throughout this exploration phase.

Q: How does City Status application work?

A: Council has to make a resolution to explore city status, and then the Municipal Government Act requires the municipality to engage with residents comprehensively (ie: more than just a survey and more than one public meeting over a few months).

Once the municipality has demonstrated that we've offered numerous methods of public feedback and engaged a large percentage of the community (there is no set percentage like a petition would have, but the municipality would like to engage the majority), depending on if the feedback is positive or otherwise neutral, we could then make an application to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Minister then has to take into consideration the feedback and decide on whether Taber becomes a city. Ultimately, it is up to the Minister to decide based on the feedback from the citizens of the municipality.

Q: Why not just have a plebiscite (vote) and be done with it?

A: Frankly put, votes are very expensive, and a plebiscite would legally have to be treated like any other election. We would have to hire trained election staff, rent the equipment necessary for voting, buy ballots, and pay for all the things we would typically buy in a regular election year. Elections typically can cost up to \$30k or more, and we expect a plebiscite would be a similar cost.

Additionally, voting may disenfranchise some of our community members who are not yet eligible to vote (permanent residents but not citizens, people who are not yet over 18, or people who do not feel comfortable voting, etc.). We want to hear as many voices of Taberites as possible- regardless of their ability to vote.

The engagement required for city status does not legally require a vote, but it does require a lot of public engagement. In order to be wise with tax dollars and still meet our legislative requirements, we've come up with other cost-effective methods to engage our community that won't cost \$30k but will hopefully get the most Taberites sharing their opinions, questions, and feedback directly to the municipality instead of just behind a voting ballot.

Also- becoming a city would be a decision the community needs to decide together. We believe it's a decision that is made personally, and we want to have those face-to-face conversations wherever possible to hear your thoughts, ideas, concerns, and questions. A

ballot and a secrecy screen don't give us that person-to-person conversation we feel this decision deserves. Your voices matter- we want to hear them directly from you.

FINANCES AND BUDGET

Q: How will the municipal budget be affected?

A: The transition to city status is expected to have little impact on the municipal budget. While there might be some small adjustments to handle the transition to being a city, the overall budget will mostly stay the same.

We'll focus on using our existing resources and municipal dollars more efficiently to support new projects and improvements. Any potential increases in funding will be carefully managed to make sure they benefit the community in a responsible way. Residents can expect a clear and sensible approach to budgeting that meets the needs of our municipality, regardless of being a city or town.

Q: But what about changing the names of signage, letterhead, logos, heraldry etc.? Isn't that going to cost the municipality?

A: The municipality has already decided that we will use up our current resources before replacing it. So, items like letterhead, etc. would only be replaced once the old stock saying "town" is completely gone. That way we're not wasting money or existing resources.

The brand-new highway signs won't have to be changed, since they only say "Taber," not "town" or "city." The granite sign in front of the Administration Building would be the only sign to be replaced, and we will put that forth in the budget.

The municipality is not considering changing our logo or going through a rebranding process. The edit to our existing logo would be minor: removing the "Town of" and just keeping "Taber." We can do that in-house at minimal cost.

Any other changes would be made as materials needed to be replaced, to reduce or eliminate any financial costs to the municipality.

Because our Heraldry was granted to us by the Canadian Heraldic Authority, it is unlikely to be changed any time soon, if at all. As it stands, there are no references to "town" on our Coat of Arms, so it's extremely likely the municipal government will keep the coat of arms as-is.

Q: Will there be any new taxes or fees? Will my taxes go up if we become a city?

A: Not directly as a result of becoming a city, no. Any new taxes or fees will be communicated to residents and implemented based on the needs of the municipality, but they would not be a result of becoming a city.

Taxes are based on the needs of the municipality (our services, infrastructure, wants of the community, etc.). They are not based on whether we are called a town or a city. So, if taxes are changed, it is not because of our municipal status.

Q: How will city status impact grants and funding opportunities?

A: City status may open up new grants and funding opportunities for various projects and initiatives, as cities often have access to a wider range of grant opportunities.

Q: How can residents provide input on the municipal budget?

A: Residents can provide input through public consultations, surveys, and Council meetings when they are made available each year. We always welcome your feedback through the contact information found at www.taber.ca/contact.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Q: Will there be changes to the local government structure? Would you have to hire more staff?

A: Very likely, no. The municipal organizational structure will remain very similar, but there may be adjustments to better manage the needs of a city. Those changes would not happen automatically if we transitioned to a city. Any changes would be incremental over time and only in response to the changing needs of the municipality and/or community. Just because we may become a city doesn't automatically mean we will have to hire more staff.

Q: How would Council representation be affected?

A: There would be no change. We would continue to have 7 elected officials representing the community as a whole. We are not considering a "ward" system or increasing the number of councillors as part of our proposed city status.

SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Q: Will there be improvements to local infrastructure?

A: City status often brings increased grant funding and focus on infrastructure improvements, though the municipality cannot predict how much funding we would get.

Q: How will public services change with city status?

A: Our services are already serving the needs of our community. We would improve services the community would ask for improvements on, but it would not be contingent on city status. Improvements to services happen regardless of our status.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Q: How will city status impact local businesses?

A: City status can attract more businesses and investments, boosting the local economy. Additionally, as populations increase with the attractiveness of living in a city, there will be more customers for businesses.

Q: Are there incentives for new businesses to set up in the city?

A: We already have incentives for businesses!

EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE

Q: Will there be any changes in educational institutions?

A: Education is in the jurisdiction of the Government of Alberta, so whether or not Taber becomes a city, the municipal government doesn't have a say in the creation of new educational institutions. That being said, as a city we would have a much more powerful voice to the government, so we may be able to lobby more effectively.

Q: How will healthcare services be affected? Will we get more services?

A: The same answer as above. Healthcare is the jurisdiction of the Province, but the municipal government will always (regardless of status) advocate for the best healthcare possible for Taberites.

There is the chance, however, that more healthcare services would decide to set up shop in Taber (clinics, optometrists, dentists, etc.) because we are a city. But of course, that is only speculation.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Q: How will the cultural landscape of Taber change?

A: Taber has always been multicultural- from our very beginnings up to and including today. We expect that to be the same if we become a city. Regardless of what we call our community (town or city)- all of us will always be Taberites.

Q: Will there be more recreational facilities?

A: Not as a result of becoming a city. New/more/upgraded recreational facilities are a discussion every year with every budget. Becoming a city won't change that. But becoming a city may allow us to access more and bigger grants for recreation.

Q: How will city status impact local arts and entertainment?

A: The municipality always works to support and promote local arts and entertainment through various initiatives and events. That won't change with becoming a city. But as our community grows, there's likely going to be even more opportunities to engage with arts and entertainment with more community groups, businesses, events, etc.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Q: Is it true that the Town would have to take over maintenance of the highways as part of becoming a city?

A: No. There used to be that stipulation, but not anymore. The Government of Alberta will still be responsible for maintaining Highways 3, 36, and 864.

Q: Are there plans for new roads and highways?

A: For highways, no. Highways are the jurisdiction of the Province. New roads are dependent on new subdivisions, transportation master plans, industrial growth and more. That won't change with becoming a city.

Q: How will city status affect parking regulations?

A: There are no current plans to change any parking regulations.

Q: What about public transportation? Would we get any of those services?

A: There are no current plans to initiate any public transportation services. That would have to be a separate budget consideration that the public would need to have a say in before it was initiated.

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

Q: Will there be new housing developments?

A: The Town always encourages new housing developments. The municipality itself can't build them, but we are always in constant contact with developers and homebuilders to increase the number of housing units available. Becoming a city is likely to make us more attractive for a wider range of developers to build here.

Plus, we already have tax incentives for those who build new housing or legal secondary suites: www.taber.ca/residentialincentive

Q: How will city status impact real estate prices?

A: It's hard to say with certainty. City status could make our community more attractive, increasing property values and rates.

Q: Are there plans for affordable housing projects?

A: Always! That doesn't change whether we're called a city or a town. We currently have our Meadows Subdivision north on 50th Street specifically made for that purpose.

We also have the Residential Tax Incentive (mentioned above) that will assist in creating more housing units, therefore increasing affordability.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Q: Are there plans for new parks and green spaces?

A: Not at this time, no. But any new parks and green spaces would be a budget consideration regardless of our status as city or town.

Q: Will there be any changes to waste management or our garbage collection?

A: There are no plans to change our existing waste collection system.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Q: How can residents stay informed about the transition?

A: Thank you for your interest! As we explore city status, it is a requirement from the Province that the public be engaged. The municipality has created a comprehensive public engagement plan to get Taberites involved in-person and online.

So here are ways you can stay informed and participate:

- **FAQs:** Watch this document for regular updates.
- **Website:** visit www.taber.ca/city for any announcements
- **eNotifications:** subscribe to be notified of any updates, announcements, or public engagement sessions: www.taber.ca/enotification.

- **Council Livestream:** watch Council meetings to hear any discussions about city status investigations: www.taber.ca/livestream
- **Town Publications:** read the Corn Husk Chronicles and any mailers the municipality sends to the public for updates.
- **In-Person:** attend any in-person meetings the municipality hosts so we can hear your feedback!
- **Online:** participate in any online engagement (surveys, etc.) to have your say!

Q: Will there be public meetings about the transition?

A: Yes, public meetings will be held to inform residents and address their concerns. Please visit www.taber.ca/city for a list of dates and locations.

Q: How can residents provide feedback or ask questions?

A: Residents can provide feedback and ask questions through the following:

- Email: city@taber.ca
- Online form: www.taber.ca/city
- Phone: 403-223-5500
- Contacting Council members: www.taber.ca/contact

Q: How will city status impact community engagement?

A: As our municipality grows, so does the need to engage with our community. We will continue to offer a number of methods for our community to engage with their local government throughout the year for all sorts of projects, initiatives, news, and more.

EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Q: If we became a city, would there be a celebration?

A: Maybe! We do like a good party- but it depends on the public's feedback and if the Province grants us city status. But don't worry- if we did plan a party, Taberites would be the first to know.

Q: Would there be plans for a city inauguration ceremony?

A: Possibly! Becoming a city would be a momentous occasion in our history, so we would likely mark it somehow. But there's no plans yet, since we're only in the exploration and public engagement stage. We're a long way from celebrating city status yet.

FUTURE PLANS

Q: What are the long-term goals for the city?

A: The long-term goals include sustainable growth, enhanced quality of life, and becoming a key regional destination. But there will likely be new Strategic Goals and plans to be decided on at a much later date and after plenty of consultation with the public.

But regardless of town or city status, the most important goal will always be the same: that ***Taber is always a great place to grow!***

Q: How will the city plan for future growth?

A: The municipality would develop strategic plans to manage growth and ensure balanced development with our current inventory of available land.

Q: Are there plans for regional collaborations?

A: We're always collaborating with regional partners. That won't change if we become a city.

MISCELLANEOUS

Q: Will postal codes change with city status?

A: That would be in the jurisdiction of the Federal Government (Canada Post), but we don't expect to see a change in postal codes.

Q: How will city status affect tourism in Taber?

A: City status is expected to boost tourism by highlighting Taber's attractions and events. As we grow and more businesses open, there is a natural increase in tourism as well.

Q: Are there plans for a new "city hall?"

A: No.

SAFETY AND POLICING

Q: Will there be an increase in police presence? Will the Taber Police see any changes or increased staff? What about a new police station?

A: The Taber Police Service has been dedicated to serving our community for 120 years; that won't change if we become a city. An increase in policing would be a budgetary increase, so it's difficult to determine the needs of our police service in future.

There are no plans for a new police station.

But any budgetary decisions or increase in staffing will be made publicly and always with the public's safety as our first priority, and fiscal responsibility as a simultaneous priority.

Q: Can the Taber Fire Department handle serving a city? Would you have to create a new fire hall?

A: Yes, our Fire Department can handle serving a city. The Taber Fire Department has a contingent of 30 paid-on-call firefighters complimented by three fulltime staff. We expect that this current team will be more than sufficient to serve our community's needs regardless of city status.

There would be no plans for a new fire hall. The current William Ferguson Emergency Services Building was built in a location and size that had the future of our community in mind and will be more than adequate for our needs for decades to come.

Q: How would disaster response and preparedness change?

A: The municipality already has a comprehensive emergency management plan in place, and our staff take yearly training on how to respond to a wide range of emergencies.

This document is being constantly updated.

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