

HISTORY OF INDIAN LAND & THE PANHANDLE

With Indian Land and the panhandle growing so rapidly, it is now home to many newcomers from all over the country. I am constantly meeting transplants from the Midwest and Northeast. They have a lot of questions about this incorporation vote on March 27th and they don't know a lot about the history of our region. The Lancaster County panhandle is made up of several historic communities. Indian Land was Barberville, there is Pleasant Valley, Belair, Van Wyck and Osceola.

This current incorporation plan is trying to take the entire Panhandle, including 40 sq. miles of rural farmland, including all of these historic communities, and turn it into one large Town of Indian Land. The impact to the farmland alone, with the removal of state agriculture protections due to incorporation, would be devastating and accelerate the development of that rural area.

Some zoning and development history of the last 20 years in the panhandle might also put things into perspective. Especially if you're a newcomer wondering about this push to incorporate. Prior to 1998 Lancaster County was so rural that there was no Zoning. Ever since I-485 was built and Johnston Road connected to Indian Land the need for Zoning became apparent. The County adopted Ordinance No 309 in 1998 and Ordinance No 328 in 1999 to provide zoning and land development regulations. Beginning in 2002 through 2008 there were approximately 16,000 housing units approved, 3200 of these were in Sun City. There are still several thousand of these units that have not been built. That was a different time in Lancaster County. The county was reeling from the loss of its largest employer Springs Cotton Mill and unemployment was at 18%. The promise of growth, both from housing as well as commercial was looked at as a way to help the county recover. In 2008 the County was hit with the Recession and several developers went bankrupt. Several communities were left only partially built and would have to wait until the market improved a few years later before builders came in to continue these bankrupt neighborhoods. These neighborhoods included Walnut Creek (then Edenmoor) and Shelly Woods just to name two.

In 2010, after the US Census, Indian Land was declared an Urbanized area. The panhandle also got its second County Council District. The current Panhandle population is estimated at 25,178. In 2020 the panhandle will get its third County Council District.

In 2012 the County hired a Planner. Since 2012, the Council has approved less than 4,500 new housing units. For comparison, Fort Mill recently approved 2900 housing units in just one development. In 2015, the County put in place the HWY 521 Corridor Overlay District. This added to existing zoning, requiring improved signage and landscaping for better aesthetics along 521 & 160. Current enhanced architectural requirements are responsible for the more attractive appearances of recent commercial structures on both highways. Effective November 2016, the County passed the new UDO (Unified Development Ordinance). The new UDO requires greater aesthetics for development; sidewalks, trees, turning lanes etc. and helps to address growth issues in several ways. One important new rule is the mandating of new subdivisions approved after January 2015 to have private roads with HOA fees sufficient to maintain them.

No government is perfect. But the County has made significant changes for the betterment of Indian Land and the panhandle. Don't be misled by rhetoric that says our community is a disaster, or that the county doesn't care. Vote NO on March 27th.