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ZIP code solution out of Mauldin's hands

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Mauldin's multiple ZIP codes could be likened to multiple personalities, and consolidating them is the necessary, if temporarily painful, solution to the city's problem, according to officials.

The multiple ZIP codes have split the city's identity, according to Mayor Don Godbey, weakening both the unity of the residents and the city's voice on the state level.

Currently, only 13,300 of Mauldin's residents live within the Mauldin ZIP code, 29662, Godbey said.

The other approximately 10,000 residents live inside the city limits, but outside its ZIP code, either in Simpsonville (29681) addresses or Greenville (29607, 29605) addresses. The solution to this growing pain -- unlike others including annexation and expanding city services -- is outside the city's control, however.

Because the solution affects so many other entities around the city, Godbey has called establishing one Mauldin ZIP code for all Mauldin residents the city's own Mt. Everest.

And this is one mountain officials intend to climb.

Changing an established ZIP code doesn't happen often, according to Harry Spratlin, the public affairs contact for the Greater South Carolina Postal District, which oversees 35 of the state's 46 counties.

According to Godbey, the time is right for Mauldin, due to the accelerated growth the city has seen in the last eight years, with no signs of slowing.

The district manager, Nicholas Rinaldi, who is the "sole authority and decision maker," according to Spratlin, reviews all requests for ZIP code changes.

Although the district understands the possible identity crisis created by municipalities' growth, it does not consider the problem a priority when reconsidering ZIP code boundaries, Spratlin said.

Any ZIP code change would be superficial, according to Spratlin -- merely moving carriers and routes from one office to another while continuing to deliver the same mail to the same houses.

This change would cause a "dramatic expense," he said, for a service that is losing 1 to 2 percent of its revenues a year to online shipping, while bearing increasing gas costs.

However, the city will be given a fair hearing.

"I'm sure there (are) a lot of issues they have I know nothing about," Spratlin said. "We'll start from scratch with the folks and deal with them in good faith."

Usually, any boundary changes result from the city's partnering with its federal representatives,

Spratlin said. Although the federal government and the postal service are technically separate entities -- the postal service has not received tax subsidies since 1982 -- federal support tends to help in these cases, Spratlin said.

That's something U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis, Mauldin's congressional representative for S.C. District 4, is happy to do.

"It's understandable that the city administration thinks it's desirable," Inglis said. "They want to give an identity to Mauldin, and that makes a lot of sense."

Taking a conservative approach, Inglis cautioned that Mauldin residents and those in the area need to be heard before the city administration submits a request for change.

"It may be more important to city officials than it is to residents," Inglis said.

Godbey, who said he understands the "emotional" nature of the change, is prepared for a negative, and perhaps vocal, response to the city's idea.

However, he maintained that changing addresses would be a temporary problem that would benefit the community of a whole.
