

# The Consolidation of Nashville- Davidson County

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# Abstract and Thesis

- Because of significant growth in Nashville after World War II, the city was pressured to reform its government. Generally, attempts at consolidation were not successful, but after one failed attempt, the Nashville-Davidson Co. metropolitan charter was passed by majority vote. What, if anything, distinguished Nashville from cities that failed repeatedly?
- Ultimately, the rapid growth of the population, the political platforms of the city and county governments, and the annexations of Mayor West led to the success of the consolidation of the Nashville Metropolitan area.

# Context and Introduction

- Discussion of consolidation began to emerge c. 1950
- County Judge Beverly Briley (el. 1950); Mayor Ben West (el. 1951)
- Political tension throughout the Nashville area
- In 1956 the “Plan for Metropolitan Government” was published
- The first attempt in 1958 failed to pass the charter; the second edition was passed in 1962
- Dissatisfaction with Metro among rural communities

# Pre-Consolidation Problems

- Population increased from 257,000 to 320,000 from 1940-50
- City of Nashville forced to grow to service suburbs
- By the time of West's election, consolidation was being considered as a solution
- Plan of Metropolitan Government introduced in 1956
- County residents resistant to merger

# Pull of Politics

- West and Briley frequently disagreed
- Judge Briley's push for consolidation v. Mayor West's preference of annexation
- Growing disapproval of West prior to 1962



# Mayor West and Annexation

- Mayor West annexed several suburbs immediately following the defeated vote
- Areas on the outside of the municipal area could chose annexation or consolidation; more for Metro
- Annexation removed original “no” voters into the city; became “yes” voters



# Drawing Conclusions

- Nashville's successful merger was dependent on the rapid increase in population and Mayor West's attempts to thwart consolidation
- It is important to be mindful of the often nonobvious causes that influence the development of our nation
- Key Sources: *Nashville Metro* by Brett Hawkins; Rogers & Lipsey – “Metropolitan Reform”