

come an increasingly ineffective method for resolving discrepancies between community and municipal boundaries. Since 1955, the primary characteristic of successful annexations has been the smallness of the areas annexed.² On the average, less than one-quarter square mile of land has been acquired by municipalities with each annexation since 1955. By contrast, municipalities in other states have succeeded in annexing considerable amounts of land under annexation procedures which do not, as in Maryland, permit residents and property owners to have a controlling voice in the process.³ In Virginia, for example, annexation is today accomplished under a 1904 statute which provides for the judicial determination of proposals calling for annexation of unincorporated territory or for the consolidation of a city and a smaller municipality. The standards to be followed by the annexation court are prescribed by law. By referring questions of municipal expansion or consolidation to an impartial body rather than to the voters, the Virginia procedure has been cited by some observers as a distinctively improved process for adjusting municipal boundaries on a meaningful and timely basis.

Like incorporation, annexation as a technique for resolving major urban problems is of greater relevance in certain settings than in others. It is most often relevant in those instances in which a substantial urban fringe has developed adjacent to or surrounding a municipality which is the primary or single source of major urban services in

the area. Conversely, annexation offers little or no solution to urban service problems in situations which involve widespread and continuing urban growth, or in instances in which urban services are readily available through other governmental units or systems. In large metropolitan areas particularly, attempts to contain urban growth through annexation have done little more than bring into municipal boundaries only a relatively small part of the total urban community. In such instances, particularly when continuing urban growth can be expected, other approaches to urban service development must be considered.

COUNTY-MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION

County-municipal consolidation is the technique for geographic change most often proposed for those situations where urban growth has outraced municipal boundaries but where such urban growth is still substantially contained within the boundaries of the next larger unit of local government—the county. While consolidation may involve two or more municipalities, a municipality and a county, or all municipalities and the surrounding county, and while it may range from partial to full governmental merger, it is most often proposed as a technique for full county-municipal merger. The underlying purpose of this technique is to create a single unit of government which can provide the governmental and service needs of an emerging urban community. Two examples of the successful use of this technique are the experiences of Louisiana and Tennessee in recent years: the consolidation of Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish (county) in 1947;⁴

² For description of annexation proceedings in Maryland between 1955 and 1959, see table in J. SPENCER, *CONTEMPORARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MARYLAND* 9 (1965).

³ J. BOLLENS & H. SCHMANDT, *THE METROPOLIS: ITS PEOPLE, POLITICS AND ECONOMIC LIFE* 414 (1965).

⁴ F. CORTY, *RURAL-URBAN CONSOLIDATION: A MERGER OF GOVERNMENTS IN THE BATON ROUGE AREA* (1964).