Bibliography – City-County Consolidation

1 – Books

Books on City-County Consolidation in General


This book contains the following chapters:


This chapter, by one of the co-editors, previews the individual chapters that follow and shows how those chapters are interconnected.


The authors place city-county consolidation proposals in the tradition of reform of local government structure, with the goal of improving efficiency and effectiveness and perhaps achieving cost savings. They also point out the changing nature of the justifications given for consolidation.


The author sets out the benefits that proponents argue will follow from city-county consolidation and asserts that most studies show the benefits are not realized. He suggests that major reason is the various compromises that proponents must make in order to create a government that will be approved by the voters.


The author argues that centralization of government increases transactions costs – both within the government and between the government and citizens. This increase of transaction costs may help explain the antipathy many voters have for consolidation.


The author reviews existing academic theories on why city-county consolidation does or does not succeed and suggests a new approach.


The chapter summarizes the results of a survey sent to officials in 33 communities that held city-county consolidation referendums between 1987 and 1999. The surveys covered arguments used for and against consolidation, the groups active in the process, elements of the proposed charters, and rules governing the referendum.

The authors examine the transitional phase of a consolidation of twelve municipalities in Ontario, Canada. Because the consolidation was mandated by the provincial government, the authors are particularly interested in whether there were particular aspects of the transition traceable to the top-down character of the merger.


Using the same surveys described in the chapter by Carr and Sneed, the authors examine the arguments made by community leaders on both sides of consolidation referendums, attempting to discover any underlying patterns.


The author examines the incentives that cause groups to seek city-county consolidation, and other local boundary changes.

In addition, three chapters examine alternatives to city-county consolidation:


This book uses comparative case studies to investigate whether successful city-county consolidations deliver on the promises made by proponents during the referendum campaigns. Each of nine consolidated city-counties is compared with a comparable county and city in the same state. The nine consolidated governments, and the comparison governments, are:

- Nashville-Davidson county, Tennessee – compared with Knoxville and Knox county.
- Virginia Beach, Virginia – compared with Richmond.
- Jacksonville-Duval county, Florida – compared with Tampa and Hillsborough county.
- Carson City-Ormsby county, Nevada – compared with several Nevada counties.
- Lexington-Fayette county, Kentucky – compared with Louisville and Jefferson county.
- Butte-Silver Bow county, Montana – compared with Bozeman and Gallatin county.
- Lynchburg-Moore county, Tennessee – compared with Decatur and Meigs county.
- Athens-Clarke county, Georgia – compared with Gainesville and Hall county.
- Kansas City-Wyandotte county, Kansas – compared with Topeka and Shawnee county.

In a final chapter the editors summarize the findings as a whole:
- Consolidated governments cannot be shown to have improved the efficiency of government.
- Consolidated governments probably have improved local economies.
- Consolidated governments usually have delivered on other specific promises.

   Based mainly on an extensive study of the successful consolidation effort in Jacksonville and Duval county, Florida, and a contemporaneous unsuccessful effort in Tampa and Hillsborough county, Florida, the authors develop and explain their theory of what is necessary for a successful city-county consolidation referendum. Very briefly, they suggest three stages:
   - Broad evidence that a local government is confronting very serious problems and inadequately dealing with them.
   - A loss in confidence in the government by various elites whose support is necessary to the government.
   - Some kind of galvanizing event or set of events that accelerates the move toward consolidation.

Case Studies and Histories

   A history of Jacksonville from the 1950s – before, during, and after consolidation.

   A case study of the successful effort in Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge parish, Louisiana.

   A case study of the successful effort in Nashville and Davidson county, Tennessee.

   The book examines a variety of new ways to govern metropolitan areas. The first three of nine chapters examine city-county consolidations in Nashville-Davidson county, Jacksonville-Duval county, and Indianapolis-Marion county. Each chapter reviews the politics leading up to the successful consolidation effort and the resulting structure of the merged government.

   Twelve case studies of city-county consolidation efforts (plus one study of a city-city consolidation effort). Seven of the efforts were successful – Jacksonville-Duval county, Florida;
Columbus-Muscogee county, Georgia; Athens-Clarke county, Georgia; Lafayette-Lafayette parish, Louisiana; Augusta-Richmond county, Georgia; Kansas City-Wyandotte county, Kansas; and Louisville-Jefferson county, Kentucky. Five of the efforts were not – Tallahassee-Leon county, Florida; Sacramento-Sacramento county, California; Des Moines-Polk county, Iowa; Wilmington-New Hanover county, North Carolina; and Knoxville-Knox county, Tennessee.


A case study of the successful effort in Lexington and Fayette county, Kentucky. The author is both an academic political scientist and the chair of the merger commission.


A case study of the successful effort in Jackson and Duval county, Florida.


A case study of the formation of city-county consolidation in Indianapolis-Marion county, Indiana, and an examination of the performance of the government over its first 15 years.


A case study of four governmental consolidations in southeastern Virginia, from 1952 to 1963. Three of the four were city-county consolidations; all four resulted in consolidated city governments.

2 – Articles in Books


The author focuses on whether political consolidation leads to a loss of political access to local government, comparing Nashville-Davidson county, Tennessee and metropolitan governments in the Toronto area and in Dade county, Florida. The study suggests that consolidation actually improves rather than constrains political access.

This chapter is a short review of the creation and performance of consolidated government in Jacksonville-Duval county Florida.

3 – Articles in Academic Journals

Pros and cons of city-county consolidation

This article examines and summarizes arguments that governmental consolidation should help a metropolitan area secure economic development.

The article examines the argument that consolidated governments will create efficiencies through economies of scale and concludes that the increasing size of the government bureaucracy in consolidations makes such economies of scale unlikely.

This article reviews the general literature on the proponents and opponents of city-county consolidation and then applies the findings to an unsuccessful referendum in Knoxville and Knox county in November 1996.

The author compares a proposed (and ultimately successful) city-county consolidation in Louisville and Jefferson county, Kentucky, with existing cooperative arrangements, and suggests the existing arrangements were preferable.

Factors leading to consolidation efforts

Using surveys distributed to county officials in 25 communities holding consolidation referendums between 1987 and 1997, the authors describe the groups commonly involved in consolidation efforts, either as proponents or opponents.

The authors find some support for the suggestion that the presence of a university with a public administration faculty in a county increases the chances for putting city-county consolidation on the local political agenda.


The authors argue that city-county consolidation is “primarily a vehicle for transferring wealth” from the suburbs to the central city.


The article argues that any attempt to explain efforts at boundary changes, including city-county consolidations, must take into account the private interests of political and civil leaders, of local businesses, and of residents.


The author notes that most consolidation efforts have been in the South, although more recently the West has become more active. He seeks to explain the regional character of interest in consolidation, concludes that regional factors are changing and that consolidation will be even less likely to be successful in the future, and urges reformers to look to alternative kinds of reforms.


The author describes the continuing efforts of the main newspaper in Charlotte and Mecklenburg county, North Carolina, to place city-county consolidation on the local political agenda and to encourage its passage.


Relying on interviews with participants in the recent consolidation efforts in Jacksonville-Duval county and Tampa-Hillsborough county, Florida, the authors examine the attitudes held by civic elites toward proposed consolidation.

**Consolidation referendum successes and failures**

The article compares voter attitudes in Nashville-Davidson county, Tennessee, and Tallahassee-Leon county, Florida, and examines factors that affect how citizens vote in consolidation referendums.


Relying on interviews undertaken in Indianapolis, the authors examine why some civic elites come to oppose city-county consolidation.


Defining “consolidation elites” as the leading proponents and opponents of consolidation, the article explores the differences in attitudes toward consolidation exhibited by the two sides. The authors rely on a survey in two Georgia counties that had recently held referendums on consolidation.


The author compares the process by which Nashville and Davidson county, Tennessee, recently consolidated, and the structure of the resulting consolidated government, with earlier consolidations.


The author examines consolidation referenda from 1945 to 1964 in order to determine the factors that explain voter patterns.


Using a comparative study of Jacksonville-Duval county and Tampa-Hillsborough county, Florida, the authors examine the role of civil elites in consolidation referendums.


The authors reevaluate the theory of successful city-county consolidation proposed in a 1974 book, looking at nine proposals, especially two in Tallahassee and Leon county, Florida. They find that the theory stands up well.

The article investigates the factors that have been important to voters in city-county consolidation referendums.


The authors investigate consolidation in Kansas City and Wyandotte county, Kansas, and why the referendum was successful. They attribute the success to the citizenry’s desire for budgetary accountability and the proposed charter’s successful response to that desire.


The authors suggest a new model for predicting success in city-county consolidation efforts: civic elites develop a new vision for economic development, decide the current government cannot achieve the vision, and convince voters that approving consolidation will improve local economic development.

This article generated a response from Richard C. Feiock, Jered B. Carr, and Linda S. Johnson, and a reply to the response by Leland and Thurmaier. This colloquy is found in *Public Administration Review*, Volume 66, No. 2 (March-April 2006), pp. 274-280.


Reviewing all city-county consolidation referenda between 1945 and 1970, the authors examine the relative importance of political factors and of social factors in determining voter positions in favor of or against consolidation.


The article summarizes the efforts at metropolitan reorganization, especially city-county consolidation, between 1946 and 1974, looking especially at the processes followed and at the factors leading to success or failure.


The author suggests that, to the average voter, governmental consolidation will not create any lasting noticeable change.


The author examines a number of then-recent reorganization proposals, including several proposed city-county consolidations, and speculates as to why some were successful and others not.

Reviewing the academic literature, the author describes the political forces that led to successful city-county consolidation in Jacksonville, Florida, and then reviews perceptions of the effect of consolidation.

The effects of consolidation


This article uses time-series analysis to try to determine if the consolidation of Jacksonville and Duval county led to any reduction in property taxes or in expenditures. The authors concluded that there was no reduction; rather, if anything, taxes and expenditures increased after consolidation.


The authors describe the structure of the Unigov consolidation and then examine its effect on local politics, government finance, and government services and operations.


The authors compare economic development results in Lexington-Fayette county and Louisville-Jefferson county, Kentucky over a 50-year period. They seek to determine whether adoption of city-county consolidation in the former, or the lack of it in the latter, had any appreciable effect on economic development successes; they find no strong evidence of any positive effect.


The authors examine how successful nine consolidated governments were at attracting new industrial and commercial development and find no support for the idea that city-county consolidation enhances economic development.


The article examines the performance of the consolidated government in Jacksonville-Duval county, Florida, during its first five years, particularly looking at the new government’s responsiveness and its ability to address difficult social problems.

The author presents a challenge to city-county consolidations on the ground that they violated the federal Voting Rights Act, by diluting minority political power.


The article looks closely at the process of merging two personnel systems and the issues arising therefrom. It suggests that there were no cost savings from efficiencies because of consolidation.


This article investigates employee attitudes regarding the consolidation of Athens and Clarke county, Georgia. The discussion is based on three surveys – one at the time of consolidation, and two others at 18 and 30 months. The author finds that the employee attitudes toward consolidation are largely negative. He suggests part of the reason may be the difficulties of transitioning from two governments to one.


This article follows up on an earlier article. This one reports on a 1997 survey of employees of the Athens-Clarke county government and finds there is still strong employee dissatisfaction with consolidation. There authors suggest alternative explanations.


The authors compare Jacksonville-Duval county, Florida with other Florida counties, to determine whether city-county consolidation has a positive impact on private-sector economic development. The could find no discernible impact.


The concern of the article is regionalism, and how it is affected by city-county consolidation. It compares four counties in Georgia – two that have had successful consolidation referendums and two that were unsuccessful. Regional issues were not important in the referendum campaigns, but, at least in Athens-Clarke county, leaders believe that consolidation has made it easier for the community to address regional issues.


The authors report on two surveys of citizen satisfaction with the consolidated government in Columbus and Muscogee county, Georgia; one was taken five years after merger
and the other ten years after merger. The find a substantial majority believe that the consolidated
government was an improvement over the separate city and county governments, and that feeling
strengthened between years 5 and 10.

Gorton, Tom. “Unigov: Can a Partial Merger Be a Total Success?” Planning, Volume 44, No. 4
The author describes Unigov – the partially merged government in Indianapolis and
Marion county, Indiana – and its creation. Since Unigov became effective in the late 1960s,
there has been a turnaround in the economic vitality of Indianapolis, and it has become a city that
is among leaders in quality of life surveys. It’s not clear how much of this, however, can be
attributed to government structure.

Grant, Daniel R. “A Comparison of Predictions and Experience with Nashville ‘Metro’.” Urban
Affairs Quarterly, Volume 1, No. 1 (September 1965), pp. 34-54.
The article sets out the arguments made for and against consolidation in Nashville-
Davidson county and examines whether the predicted outcomes have been realized during the
first two years of consolidated government. The outcome is mixed.

Lyons, W.E., and David Lowery. “Governmental Fragmentation Versus Consolidation: Five
Public-Choice Myths about How to Create Informed, Involved, and Happy Citizens.”
The authors use comparative survey data from Lexington-Fayette county, Kentucky
(consolidated) and Louisville-Jefferson county, Kentucky (not consolidated) to refute arguments
that a politically fragmented metropolitan area leads to better citizenship and greater citizen
satisfaction.

Rogers, Bruce D., and C. McCurdy Lipsey. “Metropolitan Reform: Citizen Evaluations of
Performances in Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee.” Publius, Volume 4, No. 4
(Autumn 1974), pp. 19-34.
The authors report on a survey of citizens in a small town not included in the Nashville-
Davidson county merger and in a comparable neighborhood with the urban service district. The
survey shows considerably more satisfaction with local government in the small town than in the
urban service district.

Rosentraub, Mark S. “City-County Consolidation and the Rebuilding of Image: The Fiscal
Lessons from Indianapolis’s UniGov Program.” State and Local Government Review,
Volume 32, No. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 180-191.
The article describes UniGov (a partial city-county consolidation) and its role in
revitalizing downtown Indianapolis.

Savitch, H.V., and Ronald K. Vogel. “Suburbs Without A City: Power and City-County
The article is a case study of the successful consolidation effort in Louisville-Jefferson
County, Kentucky, and the effect of the consolidation on local government and local politics.

The authors review the literature on the political effects of city-county consolidation and then, using an interrupted times-series analysis applied to Jacksonville-Duval county, Florida, conclude that that particular consolidation has witnessed reduced voter participation in local elections.


The authors examine changes in governmental expenditures after consolidation, comparing Athens-Clarke county with comparable non-consolidated counties. The results are mixed – some expenditures are down, others are up – and the authors suggest the outcome depends on factors extrinsic to actual consolidation, such as charter mandates, board policy choices, and the like.