

handling metropolitan functions; (2) it forestalls or discourages the creation of a number of limited-purpose districts, probably with different areas of jurisdiction, different organization, and different bases of representation. The metropolitan multipurpose district provides a unit which is more responsive to the people than a multitude of individual special districts; (3) as a two-layer plan, it reserves local control over local matters while facilitating areawide control over area problems; (4) it greatly diminishes the problems of coordination among areawide functions; (5) if properly constituted, with general taxing and borrowing powers, it can overcome the financial strait-jacket of many limited-purpose districts.

However, the metropolitan multipurpose district has had very limited use, although as a proposal it has received strong backing from many quarters. The multipurpose district has less political feasibility than the limited-purpose special district, for two reasons: (1) it constitutes more of a threat to established local governments and other existing institutions, since it has the potential of exercising many functions and becoming a competitive general government; (2) as used in Seattle and recommended in most of the recent proposals, it requires favorable votes of component governing bodies and/or local electorates, whereas the special district usually is established or authorized by simple act of the State legislature.

7. ANNEXATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Annexation and consolidation are the two general ways by which municipal boundaries are adjusted. Annexation is the absorption of territory by a city. While such territory may be either incorporated or unincorporated, usually it is unincorporated territory, and smaller than the annexing city. The result is a larger and not essentially different governmental unit. Consolidation is the joining together of two or more units of government of approximately equal stature to form a new unit of government. Annexation has been used much more widely than consolidation. (City-county consolidation is discussed later as a separate reorganization approach.)

Annexation has always been the most common method for adjusting the boundaries of local governments in the urban and metropolitan areas of the United States. The Nation's great cities achieved their present size largely through this process. The period of greatest use of annexation was prior to 1900, during a time when the area around the large cities was sparsely settled. Annexation was relatively easy to achieve because it could be accomplished by special legislative act, by unilateral action of the annexing city, or by approval of a simple majority of the combined vote of the city and the territory to be annexed.

Around the turn of the century, annexation became more difficult as suburbanization grew, and residents of the fringe areas succeeded in getting changes in State constitutions and statutes to forestall absorption by their larger neighbors. Many States gave fringe area residents exclusive authority to initiate annexation proceedings, and required separate majority votes in both the annexing city and the territory to be annexed. New cities and villages gradually were incorporated around the edges of the central cities, and amendments to many State