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Consolidation: Race, politics, and suburbanization in the Newport News-Warwick merger

David Le Moal

Consolidation: Race, Politics, and Suburbanization in the Newport News-Warwick Merger

David Le Moal

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FACULTY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair: Dr. Steven Reich

Committee Readers:
Dr. Evan Friss
Dr. Phillip Herrington

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Abstract

The Hampton Roads area of Virginia changed dramatically during the 20th century as it transformed from rural farmland to suburban sprawl. Two cities in the region, Newport News and Warwick, employed a policy known as consolidation. While many cities throughout the United States utilized consolidation in the post-war era, the merging of Newport News and Warwick illustrates how consolidations manipulated and altered the landscape of the city. The modern city of Newport News is split between a large, prosperous, suburban area mainly populated by whites, and a small urban, declining, urban area mainly populated by blacks. The Newport News/Warwick consolidation illuminates the policies of white flight and suburbanization.

The first chapter explores the history of Newport News and Warwick and the move towards consolidation. While Warwick had been a rural county for centuries, Newport News became an established city in 1896. During the post-war era, problems arose between the two polities. Newport News began to suffer from overcrowding, while Warwick was politically and economically weak. At first, Warwick opposed merging with Newport News, even establishing itself as a city. Eventually, the civic leaders of the two cities realized that they needed each other. The second chapter delves into the consolidation effort between Newport News and Warwick. While the majority of people from both cities approved the merger, the rural white population of Warwick and the urban black population of Newport News opposed consolidation as a threat to their political power. Ultimately, the pro-consolidation forces won, and the two cities merged. The third chapter analyzes the immediate effects from the consolidation. While the white population left the former Newport News area, the black population were forced to stay within the confines of the old city. The black population moved into public housing, and the former

Newport News area suffered from a lack of city benefits. By contrast the former Warwick area

grew in both population and power, until the old county became the dominant section of the city.

The forth chapter explains modern day Newport News, a city that is still divided into two

separate areas.

Introduction

One day, I was writing down notes for this thesis in the archive of the Newport News

Public Library. Suddenly, an older man asked me what I was working on. When I responded the

consolidation of Newport News and Warwick, he began recollecting about his teenage years.

After consolidation occurred, students found themselves having to change schools, and this man

was no exception. As a member of some sports team, he began telling his coach about his woes

of moving to a new school, noting that he thought the girls in his new schools were not as

attractive as the ones in his old school. When he finally asked what job the coach had, he found

out that the coach was the principal of the exact school he had just criticized.

This anecdote, in its own way, illustrates the dramatic transformation of Newport News,

and by extension the Hampton Roads area, occurring in the second half of the 20th century. From

the beginning of British colonialization in the early 17th century, the Hampton Roads area was

mainly rural farmland, filled with ample room for agriculture.[1] The cities of the Hampton Roads

area before the 20th century were small in population and size. The towns of the Lower

Peninsula—Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Hampton—had fallen from their colonial prominence

into irrelevancy by the late 19th century. Norfolk, the only major city of note, was located on the

other side of Hampton Roads. Yet, the 20th century brought new changes that transformed the

Hampton Roads from a provincial backwater to an influential region in the country. The

previously mentioned towns of the Lower Peninsula, particularly Williamsburg, grew

tremendously from promoting its grand historical past. Virginia Beach grew from a small village

to Virginia's largest city due to both selling itself as a beach destination, and due to a political

trend called consolidation. Norfolk, already a large city, grew in significance and prestige as one

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[1] David G. Temple, *Merger Politics: Local Government Consolidation in Tidewater Virginia*, (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1972), 7.

of the busiest ports in the world, as well as the host to both the U.S Atlantic Fleet and the NATO Supreme Allied Command.[2] However, the greatest change that occurred in the Hampton Roads area arguably came from Newport News and Warwick County. At the turn of the century, Warwick County and Newport News greatly differed from one another, as Newport News quickly urbanized immediately after its founding, while Warwick County had remained a rural community since its founding centuries ago. Newport News and Warwick's population and economy grew due to the two World Wars, and this demographic shift would lead to monumental change in the area. The once unimportant former Warwick area became the politically prominent section of the city; by contrast, the former Newport News area fell into urban decay and poverty. The consolidation movement in Newport News and Warwick brings forth a larger story of societal change occurring in the South during the 20th century, and the boundaries of racial segregation shifted and the transformation of citizens use of urban and residential space.

In order to understand the Newport News-Warwick merger, a definition of the term consolidation must be included. Municipal consolidation is when administrative polities are united into a single polity. Although the concept of annexation is similar to consolidation, in the case of the former one municipality—usually a city—take over and incorporates another municipality—usually a county—into its own. By contrast, consolidation implies that both municipalities jointly agreed to merge into a singular unit. Many counties and cities have merged together throughout American history; arguably the most famous municipal consolidation was between the five boroughs that make up New York City. However, many of the consolidations and annexation occurred in the post-World War II era, due to the rise of suburbs and the push for

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[2] Jeffrey Lynn Littlejohn, *Brown v. Board of Education: Its Impact on Public Schools*, ed. Dora N. Byrne, (New York: Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Funds, 2005), 160.

white flight. Although these factors occurred all over the United States, the trend of municipal consolidation occurred primarily in the South.[3] The South, which became an attractive area to establish businesses during the postwar era, sought to expand its white population in order to prevent African Americans from taking power in the city. Virginia, like many other states in the South, promoted consolidation as a key aspect of postwar politics.

Virginia's system of annexation and consolidation occurred because of the state's unique municipal system. All cities in Virginia are independent cities, which means that the cities are not administered by the counties in which they are located. This system of independent cities is not found anywhere else in the United States. Because of this, the policy on annexation and consolidation operated differently in the commonwealth. Annexation in Virginia meant a city and county were adversaries before a special three judge annexation court.[4] Both parties in theory must approve the proposed annexation before reaching the courts, but in reality, the court typically voted in favor of the more powerful polity. Meanwhile, Virginia law promotes consolidation, which involves negotiations, state support, and local shaping of merger laws between the two parties.[5] Consolidation is a much more common route for municipal expansion, as both parties must agree for this transaction. To this day, Virginian cities have their own government, and are separate from the county government surrounding them.[6] Richmond, the capital of Virginia, serves to illustrate the reasons for consolidation throughout the country. Richmond, like other places, needed a new tax base to successfully fund public services, and desired a connection to the suburbs of Chesterfield County.[7] However, the residents of

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[3] John V. Moeser & Dennis M. Rutledge, *The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City*, (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc, 1982), 1.
[4] Temple, 17.
[5] Temple, 24.
[6] Temple, 14.
[7] Moeser & Rutledge, 2.

Chesterfield County did not agree to being absorbed by Richmond, reflecting both the fear of loss of identity by long-time residents and fear of African Americans by the recent arrivals to the county. Nevertheless, the state government allowed the annexation of Chesterfield County, leading to the present-day boundaries of Richmond's demographics and politics. Many other modern-day American cities tell a similar story to Richmond, but the story of the Newport News-Warwick consolidation represents the changing attitudes towards race relations and the disparity between cities and suburbs occurring throughout the United States.

The first chapter explores the early history of Newport News, Warwick County, and the move towards consolidation. Newport News and Warwick County greatly differed from one another, one being an industrial city, while the other being a rural county. Nevertheless, the fate of the two polities tied deeply with one another as soon as the City of Newport News came into existence. Pre-World War II Newport News and Warwick established a few housing districts to accommodate the growing population, but the vast majority of development—particularly in Warwick—occurred during the postwar era, when a large influx of people moved into the region. Newport News, with its small geographic area, overgrown population, and an increasing black presence, sought to merge with the larger, more white area of Warwick. Newport News first tried an annexation attempt towards Warwick County in 1950, but Warwick managed to defeat their "invasion" through the courts. To prevent any future attempts, Warwick incorporated into a city, but Warwick's officials realized that the primarily rural/suburban city could not efficiently manage itself. Meanwhile, the consolidation of Hampton, Phoebus, and Elizabeth City County in 1952 became the first successful merger in Hampton Roads. Newport News saw this success and began a campaign for the consolidation of Newport News, Warwick, and Hampton. Despite a large campaign effort, the consolidation effort failed as Hampton did not wish to merge and lose

its identity. However, both Newport News and Warwick voted for consolidation, which laid the groundwork for the 1958 consolidation. The first chapter will also analyze the political establishment, racial discontent, and the creation of suburb in relation to Newport News and Warwick.

The second chapter analyzes the 1957-1958 consolidation movement in Newport News and Warwick. The civic leaders of Newport News longed for consolidation to solve the overcrowding issue, as well as to counteract the establishment of a politicized black population. Meanwhile, Warwick wished for consolidation to help Warwick's struggling economy by taking advantage of Newport News' shipyard revenue. Many people from both cities campaigned for consolidation, arguing that the merger would bring better taxes and create a more efficient government. However, both rural whites from Warwick and urban blacks from Newport News fought against consolidation, each arguing that they would lose power and identity if Newport News and Warwick merged. Regardless, the committees for consolidation met to discuss how the merger should be conducted, such as writing a charter and electing officials to run the consolidation efforts. A fire at a Warwick grocery store illustrated the ineffectiveness of the two-city system, particularly in Warwick. Finally, after a year of campaigning, election day reveled a pro-consolidation victory. This chapter will also analyze the voting breakdown in each precinct by racial population.

The third chapter analyzes the fate of the post-consolidation Newport News. The city officials of the new City of Newport News projected an outward sign of confidence in the newly consolidated city. Yet, behind the façade of optimism, the city officials fought against African Americans and the integration of the Newport News landscape. First, Newport News managed to successfully—for a time—combat school integration, but ended up failing in the long term.

However, the city officials decided to keep Newport News segregated through the use of housing and zoning. While the white Newport News citizens and businesses moved into the once Warwick area, the black Newport News citizens remained in the declining former Newport News area. African Americans moved from the decaying rowhouses of years gone by to public housing, which kept the black population in the downtown area without opportunities, turning the once prominent Newport News area into an area that few dared to venture. By contrast, the former Warwick area turned into a thriving area where the majority of Newport News citizens (as well as people from the surrounding area) worked and played, and eventually became the dominant area in the new city. In this regard, the consolidation effort was a success for the city elites who promoted the merger. This chapter will also analyze the housing deficiency in relation the racial population of each district.

The forth chapter discusses the statistics of modern-day Newport News, examining how consolidation shaped the difference between the former Newport News and Warwick. Modern Newport News is still split between the former Warwick area and the former Newport News area. While Warwick does have some economically disadvantage areas, much of the area consists of middle-class suburbs and shopping malls. In contrast to this image of prosperity, downtown Newport News suffers from crime and lack of development for those who remain the area. While Newport News' population as a whole has ebbed and flowed, the downtown area suffered from economic decline. This difference within the city manifests itself through the school system. A white majority school in the former Warwick area succeeds in education quality, while a black majority school in the former Newport News area is unable to obtain excellence due to their systematic poverty.

Although the story of the Newport News-Warwick consolidation resembles many of the other consolidation movements in the postwar United States, the merger between the two cities can yield knowledge about the time period in Hampton Roads, the South, and the United States. The consolidation movement of Newport News and Warwick exemplified the shifting societal landscape of the United States, as segregation between whites and blacks changed from one of separated lives to one of separated landscapes. As more white people moved away from the city, suburbs needed to be built, causing formerly rural landscapes of Warwick to become invested in the interests of the city. Business gravitated towards the suburbs alongside the white residents, as there were more opportunities—as well as more parking spaces—than in the city. With the removal of both a large percentage of residents and businesses, the formerly prosperous City of Newport News (now referred to as downtown Newport News) fell into economic collapse. While the white population could leave for the suburbs, the black populations remained stuck in the city, changing a once integrated landscape (if not an integrated society) to one of a segregated landscape (if not a segregated society). Coupled with the economic decline of the downtown area, the black population became trapped in poverty, and the former Newport News area became a byword for crime, drunkenness, and drug use. Meanwhile, the consolidation of both Newport News and Warwick meant that the former Warwick area now could have say in Newport News politics. Contrast to the former Newport News area, Warwick's economy boomed, as new suburbs and shopping malls were built the growing population. Overall, the Consolidation of Newport News and Warwick reflected the suburbanization of the United States, as well as illustrating the shifting racialization of urban areas.

Chapter One

The road to consolidation began with the establishment of the City of Newport News and its relation to Warwick County. From its founding in the 17th century, Warwick relied on seafood and agriculture as its main source of economic prosperity, which kept Warwick rural throughout the centuries.[1] Native citizen Henry Garnett remembered that Warwick was just a laid-back county, "where everybody smoked in the courtroom and a clerk was always chewing tobacco."[2] By contrast, Newport News came around the turn of the 20th century due to Collis P. Huntington establishing the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company in order to expand his railroad empire. The rapid development of Newport News ensured the population growth of the new city and made this sliver of Warwick County urbanized as an industrial center. The population growth in the Lower Peninsula corralled into a 4-square mile region surrounding the shipyards. In 1896, the state of Virginia recognized Newport News as an independent city, thus breaking off from Warwick County. Newport News instantly became the largest city in the Lower Peninsula at that time.[3] Although early Newport News was a rough, crude area with few amenities, by the late 1930s the city housed a thriving downtown with movie theaters, shops, restaurants, and multiple businesses. Despite the rapid growth of the city, not everyone could enjoy all that Newport News had to offer, nor could they choose where to live. As a Southern city, Newport News enforced segregation in the urban landscape. The African American population of Newport News lived in the areas below Hampton Avenue.[4] By contrast, the white population of Newport News resided exclusively on Washington Avenue, 600-800 Jefferson

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[1] *Warwick: A City and It's Government*, (Warwick: The City of Warwick, 1956), 10.

[2] Jeff Long, "Crossing into City Life," *Daily Press*, July 1, 1958.

[3] Long.

[4] Jack Stodghill, *The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins' Newport News, 1925-1965*, (Sarasota, First Edition Design Publication, Inc, 2015), 44.

Avenue, and Marshall Avenue.[5] Although segregation deliberately restricted racial interactions, people of separate races did have a space to interact with each other. Contrasting the segregation that would occur in the post-Civil Rights era, the areas of Downtown Newport News and the East End became a racially diverse landscape, as white and blacks occasionally lived and worked in the same area.

As both black and white people moved into Newport News to find economic opportunities, developers in Warwick County constructed neighborhoods to house the new arrivals. The first two neighborhoods built in Newport News, North End and East End, were established almost immediately after the founding of the city.[6] As more people moved into the Lower Peninsula, it became apparent that the city could not adequately house the population who worked in Newport News. Some changes occurred during World War I, as the first wave of people moved to the city in order to keep up with wartime demands for battleships and training grounds. The U.S Government established Hilton Village, located outside Newport News proper, during World War I to accommodate the influx of people moving into the region for war work. Once the war ended, Hilton converted into residential housing for commuters; Hilton became the only suburb in Warwick County before World War II.[7] The development of Hilton Village reflected the trends of Warwick County in the first half of the 20th century. The area in Warwick near Newport News became developed to accommodate the region's growing population, while most other areas of Warwick remained rural.[8] Yet, the brewing storm across the sea transformed the Lower Peninsula in ways unforeseeable in just a few brief years.

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[5] Sabine Hirschauer, "A Look at 50 Years of Warwick, NN Merger," *Daily Press*, June 29, 2008.
[6] Newport News City, "History of Consolidation," accessed November 27, 2017, https://www.nngov.com/282/History-of-Consolidation
[7] Newport News City, https://www.nngov.com/282/History-of-Consolidation.
[8] Susan Hayden, "City Prepares to Celebrate Anniversary of Consolidation," File at Main Street Library, Folder Peninsula-Consolidation of NN+Warwick—News Articles

When the United States joined World War II, the Lower Peninsula experienced a huge population boom that altered the societal landscape of both Virginia and the Hampton Roads area. During World War II, civilian and military agencies worked with Norfolk, Portsmouth and Newport News to build up the cities' infrastructure, resulting in a rising population, and soon enough, a greater demand for new housing. By 1945, the Hampton Roads area was the largest military center in the world, and the Newport News shipyard became one of the most important shipyards in the United States.[9] The newfound importance on the world stage enhanced Newport News' prestige, to the consternation of the other large Hampton Roads cities. Norfolk, for centuries the dominant city of Hampton Roads through its ports and Naval Station, now found itself competing with Newport News for economic dominance of the region.[10] The Hampton Roads area became Virginia's largest metropolitan center. The Hampton Roads region followed a general regional trend, as Virginia's population began to change from primarily rural to primarily urban around the 1950s.[11] Due to the changing societal landscape, the economy and identity of Virginia reshaped itself to reflect the United States transformation as a world power. Following World War II, the economy of the Commonwealth of Virginia began to diversify from an agricultural economy to an industrial one.[12] Warwick County became one of the most notable places where the urbanization shift occurred. Warwick County relied less on fishing and farming that dominated its economy for centuries and replaced it with military activities and bedroom

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[9] James T. Sparrow, "A Nation in Motion: Norfolk, The Pentagon, and the Nationalization of the Metropolitan South: 1941-1953," In Matthew D. Lassiter & Joseph Crespino (ed.), *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 171.

[10] Merger, 50.

[11] J. Harvie Wilkinson III, *Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics: 1945-1965*, (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1968), 157.

[12] Wilkinson III, 163.

communities.[13] Newport News and Warwick County felt the transformation of the Hampton

Roads area greatly, soon altering the identity of the two polities.

Much of the transformation of the Lower Peninsula occurred through the population

boom between Newport News and Warwick County. The most notable sign of population

explosion occurred in both Newport News and Warwick; Newport News experienced a 72.2%

percent growth between 1940 and 1945, while Warwick County's population grew from 9,248 to

33,959, or almost 400%.[14] Warwick, with a large amount of available land, soon became a prime

real estate location, and the population of Warwick grew further as people moved away from the

overcrowded Newport News. Furthermore, the taxes were lower in the surrounding counties,

which further enticed the citizens of Newport News to move.[15] The huge shift in population

greatly transformed Warwick from a rural landscape to a suburban one. Within ten years, the

number of inhabitants in Warwick reached 49,326.[16] To accommodate the new residents of the

area, bedroom communities, such as Brandon Heights, Warwick on the James, Hidenwood,

Beaconsdale, and Riverside were built in Warwick during the Post-WWII boom.[17] Warwick's

newfound interdependent connection with Newport News transformed the county into a major

player in the Lower Peninsula. While Warwick's influence in the local politics grew, people

noted that Newport News "residence properties are deteriorating and depreciating in value."[18]

Newport News suffered from overcrowding while Warwick held endless possibilities due to the

modern, clean, and spacious suburbs. However, the Newport News shipyard and other businesses

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[13] Warwick City, 10.

[14] Newport News City, "Newport News Celebrates 50 years of Consolidation 1958-2008", (Newport News: City of Newport News, 2008).

[15] Parker Rouse, "Newport News City Manager J.C Biggins Left his Mark on Town," *Daily Press*, July 5, 1987.

[16] Newport News City.

[17] Newport News City, https://www.nngov.com/282/History-of-Consolidation.

[18] "Resolution Authorizing Annexation Against Warwick County," *Daily Press*, May 17, 1949. In Jack Stodghill, *The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins' Newport News, 1925-1965, (Sarasota: First Edition Design Publication, Inc, 2015), 126.*

were still in Newport News. The vast majority of people moving into Warwick commuted to

Newport News for work, as few people established businesses in Warwick.

Any mention of Virginia during the 1950s-1960s would be incomplete without discussing

the Byrd Organization. Although the Byrd Organization controlled Virginia's politics, its

influence was limited to varying degrees, as sections of Virginia did not support the state

Democratic party. The Byrd Machine controlled Virginia's Democratic Party and ran on a

platform of small government and fiscal conservatism. Although Republicans and non-

organization Democrats could run for offices, the Byrd Machine effectively ruled Virginia for

eighty years. The Byrd Organization controlled the state government due to a limited electorate,

the separations of cities and counties (a policy that encouraged annexation and consolidation),

and a lack of political opposition.[19] Due to this policy, Virginia promoted fiscally and socially

conservative policies, which served the interests of the Machine's supporter base to the detriment

of those opposed to its rule. The people who supported the Byrd Machine were the wealthy white

elite of the Southside region, whose counties had black majorities, as well as, to a lesser extent,

those of the Shenandoah Valley region. One political observer noted "political power [in

Virginia] has been closely held by a small group of leaders who themselves and their

predecessors have subverted democratic institutions and deprived most Virginians a voice in

their government."[20] Besides the political aspect, the Byrd Organization also shaped the society

of Virginia. The Byrd Machine practiced gentlemanly discrimination of African Americans,

urban dwellers, and poor whites, as the political elites discouraged race baiting in favor of muted

apathy towards the lesser classes. To prevent any changes in the political system, the Byrd

Organization placed political and societal control to wealthy landowners who made up the voting

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[19] Temple, 176.
[20] Moeser & Rutledge, 5.

and operational population of the Machine.[21] The policies enacted by the Byrd Organization upheld these beliefs, doing little to benefit groups whose beliefs contradicted those of the Machine. Yet, the urban entities could oppose the Byrd Machine on a political level.

Although the Machine's control over Virginia was not total and absolute, it's influence could be felt in Virginian politics. Newport News, as with the majority of both Hampton Roads and other urban areas in Virginia, was not a Byrd stronghold.[22] The Byrd Machine felt antipathy towards urban areas, as they held different values from the Machines' rural strongholds. During state elections, Newport News gave anti-organization Democrats slim majorities, reflecting on the general Anti-Byrd sentiments. On the state level, Hampton Roads and the Byrd Organization differed in policies such as road construction and liquor laws.[23] Organized labor served as another reason for weakness in Byrd Organization support. While unions were strong in the Hampton Roads and Southwest areas of Virginia, they played a small role elsewhere as the Byrd Machine vehemently opposed unions as a threat to its existence.[24] On the national level, the citizens of Hampton Roads oftentimes supported the Democratic Party's policies, while the Byrd Organization silently supported the Republican Party. Although the Byrd Organization played little role in the Hampton Roads mergers, the presence of the Organization indirectly impacted local governmental policies. The limited electorate became one of the most obvious symbols of Byrd Machine control over Virginia, even in places that did not support the Machine. The total of votes counted in Newport News vote in the 1956 elections were 11,000, compared to the city's total population of 42,358; only 3,000 of the 18,300 African Americans were able to

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[21] Moeser & Rutledge, 6.
[22] James W. Ely, JR, *The Crisis of Conservative Virginia: The Byrd Organization and the Politics of Massive Resistance*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 21.
[23] Wilkinson III, 190.
[24] Ely JR, 24.

vote.[25] Furthermore, Norfolk, despite not being a strong base for the Byrd Organization, firmly enacted Massive Resistance (forced school segregation), a tactic created by the Organization to prevent Brown v Board of Education from being implemented. The influence of the Byrd Machine remained strongly felt throughout the rapidly changing Virginia.

As Newport News expanded in population, it became apparent to the local government that the small size of the city would cause issues. For many years, the local governmental leaders of the Lower Peninsula considered combating the issues of overcrowding in Newport News by consolidating several "governmental units of the Lower Peninsula into a single government entity."[26] In the years before World War II, Newport News annexed some small territory from its neighbors. One notable example occurred in 1938, when Newport News unsuccessfully tried to take urbanized land from neighboring Elizabeth City County. In reaction, the state of Virginia passed the Massenburg Anti-Annexation Act, which specifically blocked Newport News from expanding its boundaries, and more generally declared annexation unconstitutional.[27] The resolution of the act prevented Newport News from encroaching on neighboring territories for the short term. Nevertheless, Newport News' size could not keep up with the population growth, and overcrowding plagued the city.[28] The efforts in further Newport News expansion received push back from the surrounding governmental entities, as they fought to preserve their political identity. The period during and after World War II saw the mass movement of people towards Newport News and the surrounding area, which permanently transformed the societal makeup of the Lower Peninsula. Nevertheless, the civic and government leaders of the Lower Peninsula

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[25] "Increase of Colored Population Causes Fear," *New Journal and Guide* (1916-2003), May 17, 1956. (ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Norfolk Journal and Guide, p. B4).

[26] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, "**Report** of **Study** Committee of the Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia on Consolidation of Local Government," (Newport News, May 19, 1949), 1.

[27] Stodghill, 55.

[28] Stodghill, 47.

began serious efforts at consolidation after 1945.[29] The local government officials played a large

role (or in many cases, the only role) throughout the consolidation effort in the Hampton Roads

area. Several important officials from both Newport News and Warwick County involved

themselves in the annexation and consolidation efforts. For instance, both J. C Biggins and

George Abernathy were involved with the Lower Peninsula Planning Commission in the

1940s.[30] Much like their counterparts in the rest of Virginia, the civic leaders of Newport News'

aspirations towards consolidation signified a reaction to the changing landscape of the United

States.

  The local government of Newport News had many reasons for wanting to merge the

cities and counties of the Lower Peninsula. The overarching reason for the future attempts at

merger stemmed from the increase of people that occurred both during and after World War II.

Newport News, being a small city, could not keep up with the population growth, and would-be

residents of Newport News instead moved to the suburbs within the counties of the Lower

Peninsula. Furthermore, Newport News sought to keep its prestige as a major industrial city,

which meant economic domination of the region. Although the shipyard would remain and

continue to provide jobs, city officials feared that the rising suburbs would weaken Newport

News's recently gained influence and prestige over both Hampton Roads and the United States.

Additionally, city officials in the Lower Peninsula questioned the existence of multiple cities and

counties as opposed to a single unified polity that could rival Norfolk. For the majority of

government officials, consolidation would improve Newport News (and by extension the rest of

the Lower Peninsula) by creating unified laws and services, as well as balance the residential and

business districts to generate prosperity. Other people, such as civic-minded businessmen,

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[29] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 1.
[30] Stodghill, 71.

supported consolidation from the beginning as a way to both improve the city and to greatly expand their business. The government and businessmen of Newport News-Warwick held similar values to their counterparts elsewhere in Hampton Roads. This drive for the expansion of Newport News became the overarching factor in local politics in the following decade.

Not everyone in Newport News desired the expansion of Newport News, as the consolidation was seen as a ploy to continue discrimination of minorities. The fight for civil rights caused a reactionary response in the South, as the majority of the white population fought against African American desegregation. The Newport News-Warwick merger exhibited the reaction against African American participation by being the only merger in the Hampton Roads area were whites pushed consolidation to prevent African Americans from getting government control over the city.[31] The civic elite of Hampton Roads knew that Newport News had the largest population of African Americans in the region. In 1950, the African American population in Newport News was 18,300 (or 43.3% of the City's population), while the African American population in Warwick was 12,435 (or 31% of the County's population).[32] For comparison, the percentage of black residents of neighboring cities and counties included Hampton with 37.2%, Norfolk with 29.7%, York County with 26.2%, and Elizabeth City County with 20.5%.[33] Newport News had the largest population of African Americans in the Hampton Roads area, nearly half of the population, while Warwick County's (at a distant third place) population of blacks did not seem as obvious a threat. The number of students served as another example of the disparity between Newport News and Warwick. Newport News public school enrollment was 9,016, with 4,294 white and 4,722 black students; meanwhile, Warwick public school enrollment

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[31] Temple, 10.
[32] Temple, 10.
[33] Wilkinson III, 115.

was 10,587, with 7,500 white and 3,087 black students.[34] The number of white students in

Warwick would certainly change over time as more white people moved en masse into Warwick.

As the white population of Newport News fled the city, the black population gained more control

of both the city, and more importantly, the city's government. Despite this, the people advocating

for the merger did not emphasize the racial issues in their discussions and debates. Exhibiting

general Virginian distaste towards overt race-baiting, pro-consolidation politicians coated their

antipathy toward the rights of African Americans in vague metaphors that suggested positive

trends of social improvements. Unlike the other consolidations of the Hampton Roads area,

which only focused on expanding their city, Newport News attempts at annexation and

consolidation revolved around preserving white control over the city.

Figure I: Estimated Income from Local Sources 1948-1949[35]

	Newport News	Warwick
Taxes	$1,789,696	$382,100
Garbage Collection		$64,412
License	$283,986	$9,720
Fees	$187,723	$15,360
Miscellaneous	$32,036	$1,500
Special Revenue	$173,059	
Total	**$2,466,502**	**$473,096**

Figure II: Estimated Income from Certain State Services 1948-1949[36]

	Newport News	Warwick
School Funds	$367,555	$216,196
Welfare Funds	$154,743	$29,511
Health Funds	$26,562	$1,400
Mosquito Control		$3,707
Tax Returns	$97,052	$26,751
Total	**$585,914**	**$277,565**

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[34] Bureau of Public Administration, *City of Consolidation in the Lower Peninsula*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1956), 2:2.
[35] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 32.
[36] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 32.

Figure III: The Statement of Assessable Properties[37]

	Newport News	Warwick
Total Real Estate	$42,045,279	$10,627,780
Total Assessable Properties	$55,067,574	$15,318,265

As shown in Figure I, the highest total estimated income from local sources came from Newport News, while Warwick County came at a distant 3rd place. To compare the two political entities, the thesis will examine the same situation of the surrounding cities, towns, and counties. The total estimated income from local services in other Lower Peninsula polities were Elizabeth City County ($719,114), Hampton ($249,770), and Phoebus ($96,139).[38] Newport News, which had the largest population and industrial base at the time, could collect a larger amount of revenue than the surrounding areas, and thus the city could spend more on its citizens in relation to population. By contrast, Warwick County, still a primarily rural area despite the recent suburban growth, could not collect as much revenue from taxes; in other words, Warwick could not adequately spend as much as Newport News on its citizens. Figure II further illustrates the disparity between Newport News, ranked with having the highest total estimated income, and Warwick, which was ranked at showing a distant 3rd place in the region. For comparison, the total estimated income from certain state services in other polities were Elizabeth City County ($353,421), Hampton ($60,929), and Phoebus ($26,560).[39] The Net Total Income (including the above mentioned and federal income) were Newport News ($3,252,526) and Warwick ($1,013,709), illustrating the amount of money Newport News spent compared to their neighbors.[40] The summary of estimated budget was for Newport News $2,001,483.68, Warwick

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[37] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 44.
[38] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 32.
[39] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 32.
[40] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 35.

$429,657.57. Overall, Newport News could spend more for their citizens due to the income derived from its citizens and properties than Warwick was able to do.

The first attempt of Newport News to annex Warwick County occurred in 1950. Newport News civic leaders argued that "the credit of the City will be improved and extended by annexation."[41] The city leaders felt that the annexation would benefit both Newport News and Warwick County for different reasons. Newport News pushed for the annexation of the developed portion of Warwick County, which housed the newly built suburbs of those who worked in the city but lived in the county.[42] The politicians fought for the partial annexation of Warwick County because they desired to expand their territory and prevent future overcrowding. Furthermore, many people of Newport News preferred a city controlled by whites, something which Warwick could provide. However, Newport News had other reasons besides continuing discrimination of African Americans for annexation. Indeed, the people in the pro-annexation camp mainly stressed improved services and unity in the region that merging the cities of the Lower Peninsula would bring.[43] Although the people of Warwick County did not voice much support to the annexation attempt, the theorists suggested reasons that Warwick would be favorably inclined to support the combining of the polities. At the time, Warwick County relied on Newport News municipal services to provide their own citizens water, electricity, and many people argued that it would be a great advantage for Warwick to directly access the services.[44] Annexing the two cities meant allowing the city tax revenue to help fund the growth of the rural, county areas, which provided more land for the city to house its population; in return, the citizens of Warwick could take advantage of business taxes for a higher income. However, Newport

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[41] Stodghill, 126.
[42] Stodghill, 55.
[43] Temple, 50.
[44] Stodhill, 126.

News ignored the fundamental flaw in the attempted annexation by not considering Warwick County's opinion on their political future.

While the City of Newport News pushed hard for uniting both city and county, the people of Warwick County never supported the annexation process and felt that Newport News planned to take over the area. As per Virginia law, the process of annexation had to be heard in a special court where the judge and jury determined if the annexation passed or failed. Newport News did everything in its power to make sure the annexation happened. As Warwick County did not have enough land to qualify for being annexed, Newport News and the nearby York County agreed to give away some of the latter's land to Warwick. Despite Newport News' machinations, Warwick County successfully fought against Newport News' first attempt at annexation. Warwick argued that the Massenburg Act prevented Newport News from annexing the proposed urbanized territory.[45] Furthermore, the land that Warwick received from York County was not enough for Newport News to be eligible to annex Warwick County. The Virginia Courts foiled Newport News' annexation scheme, but lessons were learned from this failed attempt at municipal expansion. The Newport News officials learned that future attempts at merging needed the participation of both political entities in order to reach their goals, and future mergers involving consolidation as the path to enlarge cities.

The first successful consolidation in the Hampton Roads region occurred in 1952 and involved Hampton, Elizabeth City County, and Phoebus, all of which neighbored both Newport News and Warwick. The consolidation of these three political entities set the precedent for all subsequent consolidations in the Hampton Roads region. As mentioned previously, Elizabeth City County had the second highest estimated income from services in the Lower Peninsula

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[45] Stodghill, 60.

(after Newport News), as well as the lowest black population. By contrast, the small town of Phoebus, which had the smallest estimated income from services, felt it would be beneficial to combine with a larger political entity in order to compete economically with Hampton and Newport News. The civic and government leaders of Phoebus and Elizabeth City County met together and agreed to consolidate. Originally, Phoebus and Elizabeth City County considered merging without the City of Hampton, but Hampton's business leaders put pressure on the City Council to include the city in consolidation.[46] The citizens of Hampton feared that its small size and population in comparison to its immediate neighbors would prevent the city from being able to compete with the surrounding area. To avoid this fate, the civic and government leaders of Hampton included themselves into the proposed merger. Similar to most other consolidations in the region, but unlike the Newport News-Warwick Consolidation, neither Elizabeth City County, Phoebus, nor Hampton conducted campaigns for or against the merger, and no significant critical opposition voiced concerns about the proposed merger.[47] Unlike the later Newport News-Warwick Consolidation, the orchestrators of the merger believed that consolidation was merely a business matter, important for the government and business elites only rather than an issue for the general public. The consolidation of Hampton, Phoebus, and Elizabeth County ended up being the model for mergers elsewhere in Hampton Roads. Finally, the governments of the three entities officially declared unification, and they became the greatly expanded City of Hampton.

In order to prevent future attempts of annexation from Newport News, Warwick took dramatic actions preserve its independence. The residents of Warwick County, particularly the long-time residents, feared the loss of Warwick's identity and recognized the weakness of counties in an increasingly urbanized society. Unlike a county, a city could not annex another

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[46] Temple, 54.
[47] Temple, 68.

city in Virginia, which made petitioning the state to become a city an attractive idea for the citizens of Warwick. In 1952, the State Government of Virginia granted Warwick County the charter to became the City of Warwick.[48] To combat another annexation attempt, the county's government leaders quickly planned an election to vote for the incorporation into the City of Warwick. The election for whether or not the County of Warwick would become a city was held on July 10th, 1952.[49] The people of Warwick held sentiments similar to those of Warwick's politicians. The people of Warwick voted for converting the county into a city by a large majority of 2,516 to 523.[50] The numbers given do not suggest the percentage of longtime Warwick residents versus the percentage of recent arrivals to Warwick who voted, so it is unknown who supported the incorporation of the Warwick as a city. When Warwick chartered to become City of the First Class, it became both the largest city in Virginia by size and 7th in population; the population would most likely increase as more people moved into the new city.[51] The government leader hastily converted the existing governmental structure of Warwick into one that would more efficiently run the former county as a city. Thirty days after June 16th, 1952, the government of Warwick County ceased to exist, and Warwick officially became a city.[52] Ironically, the transformation of Warwick into a city quickened the demise of Warwick as a political entity and played into the hands of Newport News desires.

Despite laudatory phrases and goals for the new city, it quickly became apparent that the City of Warwick could not effectively function. J. Clyde Morris, the new City Manager of

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[48] Milton Esterow, "2 Virginian Cities Merging Tuesday," June 29, 1958, File at Main Street Library, Folder Newport News—History Consolidation 1956-1958.
[49] Frank Armisted, "Circuit Court of the County of Warwick, the 16th Day of June, 1952," File at Main Street Library, Folder Warwick City Planning Commission.
[50] Warwick City, 39.
[51] "The New in '52: A Report to the People," File in Main Street Library, Folder Warwick City Planning Commission.
[52] Armisted.

Warwick, stressed the need for public schools, sound budgets, and city infrastructure in order for the new city to prosper. Morris emphasized the desired direction of the new city's government by stating "we may now plan for the proper development of our new city on a sound, conservative, yet progressive basis…I am happy to report that the changes does not reflect any increased expenditures that are not offset by increased revenue from state sources."[53] The quote reflects the typical government mindset of Virginia politics during that time, as the trend of fiscal conservatism remained strong due to the Byrd Organization influence in Virginian politics. Warwick politicians reorganized and created new bureaucracies to handle the activities of the new city; the financial affairs of the City of Warwick were organized under the commissioner of the Revenue, the Office of the Treasurer, and the Office of the Director of Finances.[54]

Nevertheless, Warwick could not succeed in preventing the intrusion of Newport News for several reasons. First, despite the efforts of reorganizing the government, Warwick City still mainly operated as a county, as it could not successfully proved services due to its small budget. What once worked in a lowly populated county proved inefficient as the local government could not keep up with the demands of a highly populated city.[55] Furthermore, Warwick still relied on the Newport News Water and Light Company to take care of basic services, as well as the police and fire departments to deal with emergencies instead of their own largely ineffectual departments. Finally, the vast majority of the population relied on Newport News financially and economically, as there were more jobs in Newport News; by contrast, Warwick remained a primarily rural and suburban area, and thus had a weaker tax base. The mood against merging

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[53] The New in '52.
[54] Warwick City, 1.
[55] Joseph T. Buxton, telephone interview by author, March 01, 2018.

with Newport News gradually gave way as the realities of managing a city challenged the notion of total Warwick independence.

In 1956, a mere four years after fighting to stand alone, the cities of Newport News, Warwick, and Hampton attempted consolidation. A pro-consolidation advertisement entitled "Why Consolidate" for the proposed Newport News-Warwick-Hampton merger brought up several reasons for why the pro-consolidation forces sought consolidation. The first argument presented contended that the three cities were geographically and culturally tied to one another, as the three cities relied on each other (but particularly on Newport News) for their economy. In particular, the Newport News Drydock and Shipyard relied on employees who resided outside the city of Newport News; thus, merging the three cities meant that the Lower Peninsula could take advantage of the favorable business taxes of Newport News. Once the three cities became one large, populous city, more investment would turn the area into a prestigious and economically powerful area that would rival Norfolk and Richmond. The proposed consolidation could also bring economic returns for the citizens, such as helping the average citizen receive better returns on taxes. The more residential areas (particularly Warwick) could not collect sufficient tax revenue to provide enough spending on their citizens. However, with business paying a large amount of the local, state, and federal taxes, more money could be spent on both the upkeep of the city and the well-being of the citizens. Finally, the merging of the three cities would create more uniform government services. As the three cities bordered each other, it made little sense for the existence of three different sets of laws and governments in a region so closely connected. The advertisement expounded that the Lower Peninsula would be run much more efficiently as one major city, as opposed to three smaller ones. The tri-city consolidation attempt

received most support from the business community, as the merger would bring profits for both the city, the citizens, and the businessmen.[56]

Besides all the positive benefits that the pro-consolidation forces promoted, the merger had another, more insidious advantage that never made itself spoken. J.B Woodward, member of the Citizen's Consolidation Committee, is reported to have said "Unless Consolidation is accomplished, the Newport News government may in a few years be in the hands of "persons ill fitted and out of harmony with those in Hampton and Warwick."[57] Those who could read between the polished, polite lines noted that the subtle remarks were in reference to the estimated increased African American presence in Newport News. While the white population of Newport News moved into the suburbs, the black population, limited by both their economic and racial status, remained in the city. Increasingly the majority of Newport News, the African American population demanded more representation in order to benefit the often-marginalized people by gaining a voice in the local government. The white population understood that a politicalized black population threatened the delicate social order of Newport News and the South and looked for ways of preserving their "natural" rights. The politicians of Newport News decided to push for consolidation in order to counterweigh the African American political force by creating a larger white population within the city. As expected, the larger white population appeared in the suburban area of the City of Warwick and the former Elizabeth City County area of Hampton. On the other hand, some people in Warwick viewed the potential merger with the black-dominated districts as tantamount to racial integration and refused to consider consolidation.

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[56] Joint Citizen Committee for Overall Consolidation, "Why Consolidate?" File at Main Street Library, Folder Newport News History Consolidation 1956-1958.
[57] *New Journal and Guide*, B4.

Nevertheless, the politicians of the area believed that a highly-coded reference to the black threat would unite the voters for consolidation.

When the 1956 tri-city merger effort came to a vote, the unexpected results illustrated the divide in public support for consolidation. Election day revealed a loss for the consolidation effort; Newport News and Warwick voted for the proposed consolidation but Hampton overwhelmingly voted against the proposal. There were two groups in the City of Hampton that strongly battled the merger. First, the citizens of Phoebus in general fervently opposed consolidation with Newport News or Warwick.[58] Phoebus wanted to keep the identity of Hampton—and in extension Phoebus—separate from Newport News. The second group who opposed consolidation were the bankers of Hampton, as they did not aspire to establish branch offices outside the Hampton area.[59] Hampton, the oldest continuous city in English speaking the United States, considered themselves true Southerners and Virginians. By contrast, Newport News, an industrial city founded by Northern money around 60 years earlier, seemed too crass to represent the historic Southern area.[60] Besides Hampton, the general African American population of the three cities voted heavily against the consolidation. All of the African American districts voted against consolidation, such as Pembroke District (in Hampton) For 46 Against 343, Jefferson Park (in Warwick bordering Newport News) For 88 Against 423, Second Ward: Second Precinct (Newport News) For 166 Against 426. Second Ward: Third Precinct (Newport News) For 124 Against 279.[61] In every studied black precinct, the number of those who voted for consolidation dwarfed that of those against the proposal. As shown in the

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[58] Ritchie, 2017.
[59] Buxton, 2018.
[60] Long.
[61] "Peninsula Colored Voters For Ike, Against Merger," *New Journal and Guide* (1916-2003): November 10, 1956. (ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide).

numbers, consolidation did not support the interests of the black population, as it denied them any opportunity in government participation. The final opponent of the tri-city merger was the economic rival in the Hampton Roads region, Norfolk. Norfolk, the larger and more dominant city in the area, objected the proposed name of the new city—the City of Hampton Roads—as it took prestige and competition away from Norfolk. The representative from Norfolk influenced the General Assembly to forbid the use of the name, and the Assembly passed a law preventing the name. Instead, the Assembly offered the generic, nondescript name of Port City, which the pro-consolidation forces declined.[62] With that, the tri-city consolidation effort came to an ignoble end. Ironically, the failure of the 1956 Consolidation attempt allowed for the future consolidation of Newport News and Warwick.

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[62] Buxton, 2018.

Chapter Two

The timing seemed right for a merger between Newport News and Warwick, as both

cities had problems that consolidation could theoretically fix. Almost immediately after the

failed tri-city consolidation, Newport News and Warwick both began efforts into consolidating

the two cities together. Unlike in previous years, Newport News and Warwick both agreed that

consolidation would solve the major issues of each city. Considering that both cities voted for

consolidation in the most recent merger attempt, voting for consolidation again seemed a simple

process. Newport News had no room to accommodate a growing population, while Warwick

suffered from higher taxes and increasing debts.[1] The population trends for the region reflected

the overcrowding of Newport News. Between 1950 to 1955, Newport News' population grew by

around 5,000 people, while Warwick's population grew by around 20,000.[2] As a result,

Warwick's population would overtake Newport News' in the near future. Although this would

relieve overcrowding, it also meant that Newport News would lose a significant portion of its

population and could not collect residential taxes. Furthermore, Newport News did not wish for a

sizeable African American population to dominate the city, and sought the whiter Warwick

population to counteract the soon to be blacker Newport News. Besides overcrowding and its

discontent, the pro-consolidation forces in Newport News also proposed that the merger would

provide a uniform level of service and a sound government able to cope with urban development

in the region. To reflect the Lower Peninsula's growing national importance, policymakers

argued that the region should be run in an efficient manner. The people involved in the

consolidation proposals argued that the current system of multiple "separate governments in a

relatively small area was illogical, wasteful, and incongruous; only a larger government would

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[1] Esterow.
[2] Bureau of Public Administration.

be efficient."[3] Of course, Newport News, the financial and industrial center of the Lower Peninsula, would still control the city in the new boundaries after consolidation. Yet, for the merger to succeed, the issues of the city that once fought against annexation must be made apparent.

Regardless of previous antagonism towards annexation, Warwick also desired consolidation. Newport News continued to serve as an industrial area despite the recent mass exodus to the suburbs, while Warwick became a residential area with only a few small businesses.[4] Thus, the citizens of Warwick (particularly the newcomers) relied on Newport News for employment. Due to the rural and residential aspects of the city, Warwick could not spend as much on its citizens as could Newport News. The total expenditure of Newport News was $6,152,007 or $122.64 per capita, while the total expenditures of Warwick was $4,079,680 or $61.90 per capita.[5] Similarly, the total revenue of Newport News was $6,173,147 or $123.07 per capita, while the total revenue of Warwick was $4,928,421 or $74.79 per capita.[6] Similarly, Warwick could not collect as much taxes from its people and property as Newport News, due to the latter city's industrial tax base. Newport News had a real estate tax of $3.00 for each $100 of assessed valuation; by contrast, Warwick only had a real estate tax of $2.80.[7] Likewise, Newport News had a personal property tax of $3.25 per $100 of assessed valuation, while in Warwick the number was $3.30.[8] Finally, Warwick's politicians noticed Warwick could not handle financial issues as well as Newport News, and frequently suffered in providing quality services to its

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[3] The Lower Peninsula Planning Commission of Virginia, 6.
[4] "News Service Notes Peninsula Merger," June 30, 1958, File at Main Street Library, Newport News Consolidation News Archive.
[5] Bureau of Public Administration, 1:22.
[6] Bureau of Public Administration, 1:53.
[7] Esterow.
[8] Gene Littwin, "New City in Strong Financial Position," *Daily Press* July 01,1958.

citizens. For example, George T. Abernathy, the mayor of Warwick, urged consolidation as a means of having better schools.[9] Warwick schools suffered from poor funding due to the little revenue the city could collect. Warwick spent $219.22 per pupil (the lowest in Virginia) in comparison to $269.04 per pupil in Newport News.[10] From an economic standpoint, Warwick saw the advantages of merging with Newport News, and the efforts of consolidation began.

As both sides firmly supported the proposed merger, effort went underway to unite the citizens of Newport News and Warwick both politically and geographically. J. B. Woodward Jr (Warwick) and Dr. Russell Buxton (Newport News) spearheaded the consolidation movement, which soon attracted more people to the cause. The story of both leaders of the consolidation movement deserves mentioning. Woodward once fought against the 1950 annexation attempt of Warwick, but now inspired Warwick to consolidate with Newport News.[11] Woodward, and presumably many other Warwick residents, believed that the consolidation of Newport News and Warwick benefited the area more than annexation. Meanwhile, colleagues recruited Buxton to leave his hospital management job to serve in the local government.[12] Citizens from both cities quickly established Committee which either supported or opposed consolidation to most effectively promote their cause. The two cities differed in the official consolidation organizations; Warwick's side had a three-man committee organized, while Newport News used the City Council to run consolidation efforts. Unlike other Tidewater consolidation attempts, the Newport News-Warwick merger movement involved citizen participation. In fact, the citizens of Warwick, rather than the politicians, spearheaded the pro-consolidation movement on their

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[9] Hayden.
[10] Temple, 95.
[11] "3 VA Cities to Vote on Merger," *Harrisonburg Daily News Records*, August 30, 1956, Found on News Archive.
[12] Buxton, 2018.

side.[13] The Warwick citizens strongly supported consolidation due to their connection to Newport News. In fact, Warwick, rather than Newport News, established the first consolidation committee named The Warwick Citizens Committee for Overall Consolidation.[14] Warwick support for a potential merger with Newport News illustrated itself with the establishing of another pro-consolidation committee within the city. Besides the committees, people placed their support for or against consolidation through citizen activism and active campaigning. Unlike the previous annexation attempt in 1950, both sides willingly promoted ideas that would unite the two cities.

Although the average citizen strongly supported consolidation for the most part, merging Newport News and Warwick required the backing from the politicians and important businessmen of the cities. To the elites of the two cities, consolidation seemed a likely prospect, or at least one that would be of great advantage to them. The elites of the cities participated in committee meetings to plan the potential consolidation to suit both themselves and the city. For example, Fred W. Bateman was the Chairman of the Warwick Pro-Consolidation Committee, whose members included B.E Rhodes and Glenn E. Sparks Jr, the Warwick City Attorney.[15] Committee undertakings also transpired in Newport News. Mayor Robert B. Smith was Chairman of the Newport News Pro-Consolidation Committee.[16] The important players of the Newport News Pro-Consolidation Committee were Vice-Mayor Marvin M. Murchinson, Councilman William C. Bowen, and Alfred M. Monfalcone.[17] Other people could participate in

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[13] Temple, 45.
[14] Temple, 59.
[15] John Greiff, "Consolidation Backers Not Quitting Type," File at Main Street Library, Folder Peninsula-Consolidation of NN + Warwick News Articles.
[16] Greiff.
[17] "Consolidation Units to Work Out Plan," File at Main Street Library, Newport News Consolidation News Articles.

Pro-Consolidation activities in ways besides committee work, and many important people lent

their support for the movement. O.J. Brittingham, a member of the Warwick school board, gave

his support for Consolidation.[18] However, all the work involved in the two cities would fail if

consolidation did not have state backing. Fortunately, consolidation support reached through the

state government, as local delegate Lewis McMurran "introduced legislation necessary to

facilitate the consolidation of Warwick and Newport News [in the House of Delegates]."[19] The

people involved in the pro-consolidation camp, whether politicians and civic leaders or ordinary

citizens, began to formulate the goals that would make consolidation a desirable objective for the

two cities.

Now with the machinery established for promoting consolidation, the people needed to

establish tangible benefits that the proposed merger could bring. The Newport News-Warwick

Consolidation had the most extensive campaign in the region both for and against the merger,

with both sides focusing on local authority, services, taxes, schools, and citizens access to their

government.[20] The Pro-consolidation people promoted these certain benefits rather than grander

municipal planning or regional influence. Thus, the varying Pro-consolidation committees

avoided identifying merging with one or a few economic benefits, nor did they argue that

merging would reduce taxes or government expenditures.[21] Fearing the failure of previous

consolidation schemes, the pro-consolidation forces discouraged exact promises. In particular,

they understood that consolidation often did not bring about lower taxes. However, the people in

support of the merger contended that industrial taxes would benefit the residential section of the

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[18] Hayden.

[19] "Lewis A. McMurran," File at Main Street Library, File McMurran, Lewis A. (Virginia Delegate).

[20] Temple, 69.

[21] Temple, 96.

consolidated city, as well as a single regional government would effectively manage the area.[22]

This balance between the practical and the theoretical exemplified the methods the pro-consolidation forces used to promote the Newport News/Warwick merger. Warwick in particular needed to be sold on the idea of consolidation, owing to the rejection of annexation a little over five years earlier. The pro-consolidation forces put forth that the benefit for Warwick would be shared debt by the citizens of the entire area, industrial revenue would reach Warwick, and Warwick's citizens would have a voice in the affairs of the entire area.[23] The foundation for pro-consolidation's policies was brought forth to the public sphere, but some people found flaws in their arguments.

Although the interviewees believed that there was no anti-consolidation movement during the Newport News-Warwick movement, some people disdained the merger attempt and fought hard to oppose consolidation. Newport News, unlike many other Tidewater mergers, did have strong opposition to the merger.[24] There were two main groups critical of the consolidation; rural Warwick citizens and urban African Americans. Most of the merger opposition came from Warwick as the people residing in the rural areas feared the impact of consolidation.[25] The politicians and citizens who opposed the consolidation effort campaigned using the same methods that their pro-consolidation counterparts did. In these campaigns, the anti-consolidation forces argued that taxes would increase, the school system would fall apart, and nothing would be done to improve Warwick.[26] Much like their adversaries, the people against the merger used tangible goals to argue against consolidation. For example, the anti-consolidation supporters

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[22] Esterow.

[23] *Fact About Consolidation…Why We Should Get Together*, (Newport News: Union Label, 1957).

[24] Temple, 71.

[25] Hayden.

[26] Temple, 94.

brought forth the idea that a larger government prevented wider citizen participation as well as a

lack of faith on the efficiency and economics of consolidation.[27] However, campaigners against

consolidation also used more theoretical consequences if the efforts at consolidation succeeded.

The rural Warwick citizens feared the loss of Warwick's identity as a result of Newport News

expansion. Warwick had existed for centuries as its own political entity, and thus had over time

developed an identity far removed from Newport News or the recent suburban arrivals. The

longtime residents fought to preserve Warwick from complete domination by Newport News.

Several important officials gave their support in the anti-consolidation efforts. Former Warwick

Clerk of Court George S. DeShazar was against Consolidation and was chairman of Warwick

Citizen Committee Against Consolidation.[28] Henry Garnett, the Warwick Commonwealth

Attorney, also vehemently opposed consolidation. In an interview he gave years later, Garnett

emphasized how the anti-consolidation movement vigorously fought the merger attempt,

remembering that "We really did fight it. I made speech after speech against it."[29] The long-time

citizens of Warwick were not the only people opposed to Consolidation, but the white rural

residences of Warwick would not have seen the black urban residents as their compatriots.

The black population of Newport News also opposed consolidation, but they found

themselves silenced by the institutionalized racism of the time. While the pro-consolidation

forces praised the value of merging the two cities, it was generally understood that the benefits

would only affect the white population. Consolidation served a darker purpose alongside

generating new revenue, as the city planners used the merger attempt to maintain the status quo

of white elitism.[30] The pro-consolidation people avoided explicitly referencing the racial tensions

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[27] Bureau of Public Administration.
[28] Hayden.
[29] Long.
[30] Moeser & Rutledge, 1.

in society, but undertones of racial tensions permeated throughout the campaign. Warwick emphasized the race issue more than Newport News during the campaigns. Warwick mainly feared that the *Adkins v School Board of the City of Newport News*, a school desegregation case, would apply to them after consolidation.[31] The pro-consolidation forces in Newport News also subtly underlined the discontent with African Americans, fighting for the white population to always keep political power away from their black counterparts. The people organizing the pro-consolidation movement pushed aside African Americans and did not seek their opinions; in fact, no African Americans served on pro-consolidation committees. The white city leaders wrote off the black population's concerns as trivial and contrary to the goals of consolidation. Thus, African Americans fought against the consolidation efforts in order to protect the rights of their community. This disapproval of consolidation by African Americas did have basis in recent history, as all the black districts in the tri-city consolidation attempt voted against merging with Warwick and Hampton. The African American population and remained resolute in their attempts to preserve their rights to participate in civic society, and understood that the pro-consolidation forces secretly campaigned to remove any attempt of a black voice in the government.

Now that the idea of Consolidation reached the public's attention, the pro-consolidation committees began to plan for the successful completion of the merger. The pro-consolidation forces first worked on drafting a charter which would define the new city. Work began on January 8th, 1957, when the Warwick City Council proposed writing a new charter.[32] The council determined that the new charter would be based from the failed tri-city merger with Hampton. The Warwick council appointed a three-member charter-drafting advisory committee to write a

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[31] Temple, 95.
[32] Temple, 61.

new charter for the proposed city. Next, the politicians and civic leaders needed to determine

who would run the proposed new city. The city officers of Newport News and Warwick

bargained with each other for the new city's offices, but eventually reach a compromise by

having people from both cities serve in the new government. Unlike other Tidewater mergers,

Newport News elected their officials before the referendum. Finally, Newport News and

Warwick held Joint Planning Commission meetings before the Consolidation to develop a plan

for future development in the proposed city.[33] The heavy emphasis on planning and organizing

before the consolidation referendum represented the principals of good governance dominant in

Virginian politics, as well as the disdain of radical change in society. Nevertheless, all the

planning and compromising could go to waste, much like the previous merging attempts. The

pro-consolidation movement's goals of promoting the merger involved illuminating the dangers

if the two cities remained separated. Serendipitously, a random accident in Warwick illustrated

the weakness of the two-city system.

An unfortunate incident might have been the key factor in citizen support of the

Consolidation efforts. On the night of July 1st, 1958, a fire in Warwick at Rich's Supermarket

broke out in the middle of the night.[34] The Warwick Fire Department immediately sounded out

two alarms but could not reach the store or adequately end the inferno. Instead, the Newport

News Fire Department traveled far away to put out the fire.[35] By morning, the building and its

contents were a total loss. The fire symbolized Warwick's dependence on Newport News and

arguments began on the insufficiency of the city of Warwick. Although the newspaper article did

not mention the consolidation efforts, the author illustrated the weakness of a two-city system.

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[33] Temple, 160.

[34] Howard E. Lee, "Flame Raze Rich Mart in Warwick," *Daily Press*, July 02, 1957, Microfilm Newport News Daily Press July 1957.

[35] Lee.

Warwick simply could not function as a city due to its overwhelmingly rural nature. Since much

of the city remained distant and isolated from one another, city services could not reach all the

citizens of Warwick. Warwick could not continue to operate as an independent entity while still

relying so heavily on its neighbor. Furthermore, Warwick struggled to operate on its own,

forcing it to receive the services from Newport News while deprived of the benefits. With the

election only weeks away, the fire at Rich's Supermarket elucidated the advantage of

consolidation for both Newport News and Warwick.

Two weeks after the fire, the joint referendum for the Consolidation of Newport News

and Warwick occurred on July 16th, 1957. After the votes from both cities were tallied, the

elections results revealed that the pro-consolidation force won by 2:1.[36] The specific votes for

both cities were Newport News voted For 4,389 and Against 873, while Warwick voted For

3,938 and Against 3,253. The referendum did receive some outside publicity, as *The New York*

Times noted that the Newport News-Warwick merger was the first merger of two separate cities

since New York and Brooklyn in 1898.[37] However, the election's results encouraged greater

discussion about the voting breakdown. The 1957 population of the two cities were Warwick

(39,875) Newport News (42,358).[38] However, only 12,453 people in total cast their votes in the

referendum, which correlates to around 15% of the total population at that time. Although

Newport News had the larger population, as well as the decades-long desire to expand their

territory, more people from Warwick cast votes in the election. However, the Warwick results

were almost tied, while the Newport News votes showed a clear majority towards consolidation.

Perhaps most people in both cities did not care about consolidation or could not be bothered to

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[36] Temple, 97.
[37] "News Service Notes Peninsula Merger."
[38] Temple, 3.

vote in a local election, but there could have been underlying reasons for the small voter turnout. As mentioned before, the Byrd Organization preferred a small voting pool to preserve the prerogatives of the Organization's voter base. This policy often meant preventing not only blacks but also poor whites and city dwellers from having a voice in government. Newport News certainly fit the urban and African American criteria that the Byrd Machine so vehemently opposed. Similarly, the recent arrivals to Warwick also consisted of an urban workforce and suburban identity. By contrast, the long-time residents of Warwick maintained a rural identity that complimented the Byrd Machine ideal. However, more information on the voting breakdown illustrates the groups that supported and opposed consolidation.

Figure IV: Election Results by District[39]

Warwick				Newport News		
Precinct	For	Against		Ward:Precinct	For	Against
Stanley	7	87		1:1	218	10
Denbigh	89	253		1:2	268	13
Deep Creek	255	327		2:1	263	128
Morrison	296	160		2:2	189	153
East Morrison	408	508		2:3	141	153
Warwickshire	355	266		3:1	620	16
Hilton	517	266		3:2	118	114
River	484	169		3:3	563	41
Parkview	308	290		3:4	480	10
Jefferson Park	50	295		3:5	113	246
James Brandon	491	205		3:6	702	27
Riverside	679	380		4:1	308	12
XXXXXX	XXXX	XXXX		4:2	395	12

The housing and racial populations of precincts in both Newport News and Warwick illuminates the voter breakdown of each city. As seen in Figure IV, five precincts in Warwick

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[39] "Merged City to be States Third Largest," File at Main Street Library, Newport News Consolidation News Archive.

voted for consolidation, while seven precincts voted against; meanwhile, all but two precincts in

Newport News voted for consolidation. This paragraph will look at several precincts in each city

for analysis. Three of the precincts in Warwick that voted for consolidation (Morrison, Hilton,

and Parkview) had a large number of the population of the three districts worked in Newport

News. Morrison had a white majority of 100% of the precinct's population, while Hilton had a

white majority of 99.6% of the Precinct's population; by contrast, Parkview had a white majority

of 92.7%.[40] Although Parkview differed from the other two precincts in terms of percentage of

deficient housing, white people dominated the population of the three precincts. By contrast, the

areas in Warwick that voted against consolidation were "the Northern Precincts of Denbigh,

Stanley, Deep Creek, and East Morrison."[41] Of these precincts, only two had both a diverse

racial population. Denbigh had a white majority that was 84.7% of the precinct's population; by

contrast, Deep Creek had a white majority that was 97.2% of the precinct's population.[42]

Although both precincts had a similar percentage of deficient housing, the racial population

differed to some extent; Denbigh had a small but noticeable black population, while Deep

Creek's black population was miniscule. Another precinct of Warwick that voted against

consolidation was the predominately African American precinct of Jefferson Park.[43] Unlike the

rest of Warwick, the African American population dominated the precinct of Jefferson Park, but

they followed their black counterparts in Newport News by voting against consolidation. In

Newport News, both the predominately African American areas of the Third Ward, Fifth

Precinct the Second Ward, Third Precinct opposed consolidation.[44] However, the former ward

[40] Newport News Department of Planning, *Housing and Neighborhoods Newport News Virginia*, In Special Reports 1962-66 City of Newport News, Virginia.
[41] Hayden.
[42] Newport News Department of Planning.
[43] "Merged City to be States Third Largest."
[44] "Merged City to be States Third Largest."

precinct overwhelmingly voted against consolidation, while the latter one nearly tied between for and against. By contrast, one of the African American wards, the Second Ward, Second Precinct of the City of Newport News voted for consolidation.[45] In the coming years, the housing deficiency in the newly merged city would transform the racial space of Newport News.

Now that the people voted in favor of consolidation, the citizens needed to name the new city. The two cities held another referendum on September 10th, 1957 to decide on the name of the recently consolidated city.[46] The three names offered on the ballot were Newport News, Warwick, and Newport News-Warwick. Cerinda W. Evans, librarian emeritus of the Mariners' Museum, supported the name Newport News as the more historic and unique name, stating "Newport News is known throughout the World as the greatest and best harbor on the Atlantic Coast and as the excellent shipping terminal of the great railroad."[47] Although many people voiced Evans' sentiments, some believed that Warwick would be a more beautiful name. Nevertheless, Newport News won by an overwhelming majority, mainly due to the name's importance in the commercial world.[48] The results were Newport News with 6,980 votes, Warwick with 1,417 votes, and Newport News-Warwick with 301 votes.[49] The total votes illuminated the business sense that drove the various consolidation efforts and emphasized the superiority of the former Newport News. Now with the name for the new city, the people needed officials who could operate the two cities in an efficient manner.

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[45] "Peninsula Voters Approve Merger, Create Big City," *New Journal and Guide* (1916-2003): July 20, 1957, ProQuest Historical Newspaper: Norfolk Journal and Guide p. B5.
[46] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Governments Functioning," *Harrisonburg Daily News Record*, January 8, 1958, Found on News Archive.
[47] John Bowen, "Librarian Support Newport News Name," File at Main Street Library, Folder Newport News—History Consolidation.
[48] Temple, 100.
[49] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Governments Functioning."

Newport News and Warwick relied on councilmen to efficiently prepare the policies for the new city. During the transition period, the two cities' affairs were handled by three different city governments. Two of the governments—the Warwick and Newport News governments—handled day-to-day business of their respective city.[50] The individual city governments only existed to keep the cities running smoothly but would cease to function after June 30th of 1958 once the new city would come into existence. Meanwhile, the third government, the newly appointed consolidated city's government, held weekly meetings to iron out any problems arising from the upcoming merger.[51] The people involved in the consolidated government were the councilmen, which involved the participation of people from both cities. The simple step became somewhat challenging due to the problems arising from organizational differences of the two cities. The former city of Warwick had a ward system for electing councilmen, while the former Newport voted for their councilmen on an at-large basis.[52] Despite this, the two cities went through the election. The election for the councilmen of the merged city was held on November 5th, 1957.[53] The result of the election showed that Newport News' candidates had a clear majority over Warwick's candidates, even though the citizens of Warwick outvoted their Newport News counterparts.[54] The former Newport News area held great power in the politics of the region, as opposed to the weaker former Warwick area. In all, the new city's seven-man council was made up of four representatives from Newport News and three representatives from Warwick.[55] These men represented the commercial aspects of the consolidation, as well as the general business ethos of the region's governments. The men from Newport News were Robert

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[50] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Government Functioning."
[51] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Government Functioning."
[52] Temple, 114.
[53] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Governments Functioning."
[54] Temple, 118.
[55] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Governments Functioning."

Smith, Marvin Murchinson, Alfred Monfalcone, and William Bowen, while the men from Warwick were Paul S. Ward, Fred J. Christie, and O.J Brittingham.[56] These seven councilmen ran the consolidated government through compromise and conservatism.

Before the new city could officially merge on July 1st 1958, the people responsible for the consolidation needed to organize the government of the consolidated city. The consolidated government had their work cut out for them. As Newport News and Warwick had different ways of conducting business, the consolidated government needed to organize the new city in the most efficient way possible. Paul Ward described the process of the post-referendum debates, noting "we had every ordinance that the City of Warwick and the City of Newport News had. And we had to go over them and pick out the ones we want."[57] The consolidated government needed to combine the fiscal years. However, the two cities' fiscal years started on different dates, as Warwick's fiscal year began on July 1st, while Newport News started on January 1st.[58] Eventually, the consolidated government decided to follow Warwick's fiscal year. The consolidated government also held long discussions over adopting the Newport News or Warwick pension plan, which ultimately ended in Newport News' favor.[59] Finally, the new city required placing both the Newport News and Warwick politicians and bureaucrats within the consolidated city. The consolidated government spent around $2,000 towards remodeling the Newport News city government offices in order to accommodate Warwick and other changes of local government in order to accommodate Warwick's government officials.[60] The new city also needed the elected official to run the consolidated city. The two cities held elections on April 8th,

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[56] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Governments Functioning."
[57] Long.
[58] Temple, 120.
[59] Temple, 121.
[60] Elmer Curran, "Present, Past NN Councilmen Honor Biggins on Anniversary," *Daily Press*, July 01, 1958.

1958 to name the constitutional officers of the merged city: they were the Commonwealth

Attorney, City Sergeant, Commissioner of the Revenue, and City Treasurer.[61] The results of that

election illustrate the consolidated government's policy of keeping both the old Newport News

and Warwick officials to run the new city. The old Newport News City Manager Joseph C.

Biggins retained his position for the new city.[62] Yet, Newport News and Warwick would

radically change in ways the pro-consolidation movement could not even imagine.

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[61] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Governments Functioning."
[62] Temple, 121.

Chapter Three

The day finally came for the official merging of Newport News and Warwick into the brand-new City of Newport News. The ceremonial consolidation of the two cities first began on the morning of July 1, 1958, at the Downtown Courthouse, where O.J Brittingham accepted his position as the first mayor of the new City of Newport News.[1] After that, the organizers moved the rest of the ceremony to the Virginia War Museum, where people saw the soon-to-be Governor J. Lindsay Almond speak at the transitional ceremony.[2] After that, the big moment arrived. Mrs. Homer L. Ferguson of Warwick and Mrs. P.W. Hiden of Newport News, two prominent widows, cut a ribbon placed at the boundaries of the two cities to symbolically unite Newport News and Warwick.[3] Finally, the ceremonies ended with a parade, celebrating the successful consolidation and the triumphant beginnings of the new City of Newport News. With the consolidation of the old Newport News and Warwick now completed, the new Newport News became the largest city in Virginia by area (with 65.7 square miles), and the third largest by population.[4] People noted that the new city could potentially be larger than both Richmond and Norfolk, but only time would tell. However, citizens across the new city celebrated the successful merger without realizing how much the city would soon transform due to consolidation.

The new City of Newport News started off strong due to the city's official insistence on fiscal conservatism moderate spending. The jubilant atmosphere surrounded the success of consolidation permeated through Newport News government. One newspaper wrote about the

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[1] Hayden.

[2] Newport News City, "Newport News Celebrates 50 years of Consolidation 1958-2008," (Newport News: City of Newport News, 2008).

[3] Esterow.

[4] "Newport News, Warwick Have 3 Government Functioning."

robust government of Newport News remarking that "the new city of Newport New will enter its first half year of operation in a strong financial position [due to its balanced budget]."[5] Much like elsewhere in Virginia, the political leaders of the two cities preferred a balanced budget that did not involve wasteful expenditures. Although Newport News' public debt was at $16,420,825, the city could still raise a large amount of bonds.[6] The government officials of Newport News still felt confident that the city's treasury had money set up for future endeavors to established a modern, thriving city. Besides, the budget of the new city needed to plan for future expansion; fortunately, Newport News had a $1 million school construction fund and a general fund of more than half-million dollars.[7] The new city certainly needed a strong fiscal start. One of the new city's main concerns was developing the rural areas of Warwick for business and residential purposes. Schools also became an important issue, as the combining of school systems caused problems, and both black and white schools suffered from classroom shortages.[8] Fortunately, the amount of funds versus debt inspired confidence in the success of the new city. Much like the Byrd Organization, the officials of Newport News promoted limited taxes, and the city's government was making good on its promise of a better tax rate for its citizens. Newport News financial state reflected the values of the fiscal conservativism that exemplified Virginian politics. The elite of Newport News promoted the beliefs of keeping the costs of government down, as well as keeping flexibility in the school system.[9] For beyond the ceremonies and successes though lay deeper undercurrents of racial disharmony that would transform the societal landscape of Newport News.

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[5] Littwin.
[6] Littwin.
[7] Curran.
[8] Temple, 119.
[9] Buxton, 2018.

When the new City of Newport News came into existence, the racial tensions that subtly influenced the consolidation efforts came into the forefront. The newly consolidated city hoped they could fight against school integration now that the old Newport News ceased to exist. After *Brown v Board of Education* declared school segregation unconstitutional, the black population began to demand immediate integration. However, much of the political establishment of the South, including Virginia's, strongly fought any attempts at desegregation in a policy known as Massive Resistance. Newport News, like elsewhere, became a battleground of the Civil Rights and Massive Resistance movement. The desegregation court trial for the old City of Newport News, *Adkins v. School Board of the City of Newport News*, began in 1957 when a black parent sued the School Board for non-compliance with *Brown*. Walter E. Hoffman, the presiding District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, oversaw the *Adkins* case. Hoffman originally ruled in favor of desegregating the schools, albeit through gradual integration, believing that it would not pose a challenge in Newport News.[10] This belief in quick compliance with the ruling proved to be naïve. The Newport News School Board had not developed a plan to integrate the schools, nor did they plan on doing so.[11] The Newport News government spurned the federal overtures in school integration, fearing the end of a white dominated society. At one point, Joseph C. Biggins testified in court, stating that integration would present "serious problems of economic, social, and moral aspects which would undoubtedly hurt the welfare of the entire city."[12] Like elsewhere in Virginia and the South, the local government refused to comply with Hoffman's ruling, and Newport News decided to push the consolidation angle to prevent school desegregation.

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[10] "Integration of School Ordered at Newport News," *Harrisonburg Daily News Record*, February 12, 1957, Found on News Archive.

[11] "Integration of School Ordered at Newport News."

[12] "Integration of School Ordered at Newport News."

The Newport News government argued that as the court case applied only to the former City of Newport News, the ruling of the *Adkins* case was null and void for the new City of Newport News.[13] Although Hoffman supported the legality of school integration, he personally felt no sympathy towards African Americans and their plight. As a result, Hoffman refused immediate segregation, stating that he preferred not to require integration during the school year.[14] Hoffman's preferred school integration to occur before the school year began. Nevertheless, the court ruled in favor of desegregation, and ordered ten African American students to attend the white Walter Reed Elementary School.[15] However, in order to force the City of Newport News to comply with the ruling, the Court needed to dismiss the technicality of the consolidation. The defendant's African American attorney, W. Hale Thompson, surprised the federal court by dropping the issue of consolidation and declaring a new suit.[16] For all intents and purposes, integration 1958-1959 was dead for Newport News. Judge Walter E. Hoffman played into the Newport News goals by stalling the trial, and more importantly integration, until after federal and Virginia test results were announced.[17] Hoffman gave up the *Adkins* case as the city officials refused to comply with the court. While many other places in Virginia integrated during the 1960s, Newport News only desegregated their schools in 1971. However, the city planners had found a new, more permanent way of segregating the races.

The white residents of the Newport News took full advantage of the growing suburbs due to the policies of housing segregation. Spatial segregation with regards to housing had been

[13] "Consolidation Ceremony Unites N.News—Warwick," *New Journal and Guide* (1916-2003), July 05, 1958, (ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide, p. A4).

[14] "This Is the Situation on the School Front," *New Journal and Guide* (1916-2003), September 13, 1958, (ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide, p.B1).

[15] "This is the Situation on the School Front."

[16] Matthew I Fulgham, "Birth of a New City is Top Story of 1958 for Area," File at Main Street Library, Peninsula—Consolidation of NN + Warwick—News Articles.

[17] Fulgham.

common practice for decades in cities throughout the United States. One Virginia example,

Richmond, banned interracial marriages in 1924. Since the races could not marry each other,

they also could not live together, and thus banned integrated neighborhoods in the city.[18]

However, the rise of segregated neighborhoods gained new traction in the 1950s as unscrupulous

speculators used blockbusting to continue the segregation of black and white housings. The

process of blockbusting involved speculators buying properties in borderline black-white areas,

renting or selling those properties to African Americans, persuading white families that the

neighborhood was turning into a slum, then purchasing the white homes for less than their worth

as white families moved away.[19] Those white families turned to the suburbs, which promised

clean and safe living. Oftentimes, these new suburbs were segregated in a way that excluded

African Americans. While white families now commuted to work from their modern housing,

black families remained in the city slums, or more frequently, into newly built public housing

also located within the city. Ironically, the Federal Housing Authority policy of denying African-

American access to most neighborhoods had the contradictory effect of preventing property

values from falling when white flight occurred.[20] Nevertheless, the damage was done, and cities

became racially coded bywords for crime and poverty. Newport News reflected the change

happening throughout the country regarding the racial landscape, especially as consolidation

transformed which section of the new city of Newport News held the most power.

By the time of the merger, residents of Newport News had already started their flight

away from the city, but without the barriers of a separate government, more white people moved

to the suburbs. After the consolidation of the two cities, the white residents began to abandon the

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[18] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, (New York: WW Northon & Company, Inc, 2017), 47.
[19] Rothstein, 95.
[20] Rothstein, 94.

former Newport News area of Downtown and East End to move to the former Warwick area, which had more land and modern housing.[21] This population shift greatly impacted the former area of Newport News and Warwick. During the 1960s, the power shifted from the old area of Newport News to the former area of Warwick, mainly due to the large, growing white population.[22] This population shift created a domino effect that ended the supremacy of the old area of Newport News. As mentioned before, real estate agents, referred to as "blockbusters," told the white residents of downtown to leave for better deals in the former Warwick area. As the white population moved away, the downtown area of Newport News became a predominantly black area.[23] Now that the majority of people moved away, downtown businesses also moved towards the suburbs. The downtown area also suffered from inadequate parking, which made the former Warwick area a promising place to establish offices, shops, and other buildings.[24] Although the Newport News shipyard remained in Newport News, the lack of population and business meant that the former Newport News area effectively turned into a ghost town.[25] People feared the inevitable decline of the once proud area, and several attempts were made to prevent the decline of the former Newport News. Nevertheless, the rise of shopping malls in the former Warwick area knelled the death of downtown Newport News.[26] The majority of the black population still made their homes in the downtown area but suffered from poverty due to lack of fund being spent in the area. Despite all this, the city government decided to place City Hall in the downtown region, despite the impracticality of traveling from the rising former Warwick area

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[21] Hirschauer.
[22] Temple, 166.
[23] Hirschauer.
[24] Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority, *A Report of Downtown Business Districts Newport News, Virginia*, (Richmond: Atlanta-Richmond Harland Bartholomew and Associates, 1962-66).
[25] Rouse.
[26] Beverly N. Williams, "Change Comes at High Cost," *Daily Press*, February 02, 2005.

to the declining former Newport News area.[27] Apart from the city government, the shipyard, and

public housing, the downtown area could no longer compete and fell into decline.

Figure V: Housing and Neighborhoods in Newport News[28]

Neighborhood	Total Dwelling Units	Deficient Housing Number	Deficient Housing Percentage	White Population Number	White Population Percentage	Black Population Number	Black Population Percentage
Downtown	2,271	867	38%	3,447	41.1%	5,009	58.9%
Garden Shore	2,789	118	4%	8,071	98.5%	122	1.5%
East End	6,642	2,720	41%	2,504	10.7%	20,993	89.3%
Copeland	1,440	1,046	73%	61	.8%	7,777	99.2%
Parkview	2,972	748	25%	8,812	92.7%	690	7.3%
North End	3,762	1,372	36%	8,618	99.9%	7	.1%
Sedgefield	1,735	140	8%	5,782	91%	574	9%
Hilton	1,901	48	3%	5,766	99.6%	23	.4%
Morrison	1,522	27	2%	5,207	100%	0	0%
Country Club	1,961	164	8%	6,578	94%	415	6%
Deep Creek	589	74	13%	2,012	97.2%	58	2.8%
Colony	630	102	16%	2,115	91.8%	190	8.2%
Denbigh	1,059	177	17%	2,913	84.7%	525	15.3%
Richneck-Bethel	1,288	156	12%	4,496	87%	670	13%
Fort Eustis	1,385	81	6%	8,692	85%	1,540	15%
Total	31,946	7,485	24.6%	75,124	66.1%	38,533	33.9%

Although only a couple of the neighborhoods correspond with the voting precincts

mentioned in Chapter Two, Figure V still reveals the differences in Newport News neighborhood

with regards to the racial make-up and housing quality. When Figure V references deficient

housing, it means that the housing in question has moderate or severe physical problems. The

first four Neighborhoods were in the former Newport News, while the others were in the former

Warwick. An overview of Newport News housing conducted by the Newport News Department

of Planning several years after the consolidation gives different names of precincts than those

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[27] Buxton, 2018.
[28] Newport News Department of Planning.

mentioned in Figure IV. In the former Newport News area, all but one neighborhood had a black majority; two of the neighborhoods—East End and Copeland—were overwhelmingly African American. The aforementioned black neighborhoods also had the highest percentage of deficient housing in the city. By contrast, the housing in the former Warwick areas shows considerable divergence from the generally accepted belief that more blacks in an area meant more deficient housing. Of the eleven neighborhoods in the former Warwick area, six neighborhoods match the abovementioned trend of less blight in predominately white neighborhoods: Sedgefield, Hilton, Morrison, Country Club, Denbigh, and Richneck-Bethel. Of these neighborhoods, only Denbigh and Richneck-Bethel had a noticeable (if not large) black population and housing deficiency. By contrast, Hilton and Morrison had a miniscule black and housing deficiency issues. Meanwhile, the five neighborhoods without the corresponding black population/deficient housing were Fort Eustis (which as a military base will be excluded from future discussion), Parkview, North End, Deep Creek, and Colony. These neighborhoods had over 10% deficient housing despite none of them having more than 10% of African Americans living in the neighborhoods. In fact, North End had the highest deficient housing in the former Warwick area despite having a miniscule black population. Studying the five neighborhoods listed in the previous chapter (Morrison, Hilton, Parkview, Denbigh, Deep Creek) shows that the neighborhoods closer to the old Newport News generally had a small black populations, while the neighborhoods farther away from old Newport News generally had more deficient housing. Analyzing the neighborhoods of the new City of Newport News reveals key discrepancies between the old Newport News and Warwick, as well as disprove—to a degree—the idea that a larger white population meant a smaller housing deficiency problem.

To further segregate Newport News, the city planners moved the African American population into public housing, therefore preventing them from moving away from the declining Downtown area. The process of constructing public housing began a decade before consolidation occurred with the passing of the Housing Act of 1949. This act helped cities like Newport News by allowing local governments the opportunity to demolish old buildings or rebuild or rehabilitate project areas.[29] The idea itself served a noble purpose, as booklets promoting public housing showed how they could move people—usually African Americans—from dangerous, decrepit slums to clean, modern housing. These booklets often emphasized public housing's modern amenities and ample space, made available to low-income families at an affordable price. However, like elsewhere in the United States, the city planners of Newport News used public housing to serve their own purposes. Due to the systemic poverty and lack of opportunities, African Americans made up most of the population of the areas that would soon be cleared. Similarly, African Americans vastly represented the recipients of public housing, as their economic status prevented them from moving into the suburbs. Many African American moved into public housing during the 1950s and 1960s. By 1961, public housing in Newport News comprised 1701 dwelling units, or 5.3% of the total housing in the city.[30] As more blacks moved into public housing, the downtown area living area shifted from dilapidated turn-of-the-century homes to the newer, safer modern housing. Although both the public houses and the recently abandoned white housing avoided the fate of the recently cleared out housing, the area surrounding them could not rebound from the decline of the former Newport News area. More disruption of the Downtown area occurred during the 1970s, when Newport News attempted an

[29] Newport News Planning Commission, *A Proposed General Plan for Housing and Urban Renewal Redevelopment*, *Newport News, Virginia*. In Special Reports 1962-66 City of Newport News.
[30] Newport News Planning Commission.

urban renewal plan to overhaul the 25th Avenue and Jefferson Avenue area. However, the areas

of the proposed urban renewal were in the same location as the black businesses.[31] The urban

developers destroyed businesses, but the planned redevelopment stalled as the success of the

former Warwick area proved the futility of any urban renewal in the former Newport News area.

The promises of better city services and equally distrusted tax system touted by consolidation

never reached the African American population.

While the former Newport News area became a byword for urban blight, the former

Warwick area transformed into a modern suburban landscape. As a result of the consolidation,

Warwick had a better tax base and the Newport News Light and Water Company could provide

their services to all areas.[32] Indeed, the former Warwick area expanded in development and

prestige throughout the decades following the consolidation. As the former Newport News area

deteriorated, the Warwick area saw dramatic growth as more people moved in. Businesses also

settled in the former Warwick area where the majority of the population now lived, as well as

more parking space to accommodate the growing dependence on cars. The power base of the city

shifted throughout the city from the former Newport News area to the former Warwick area.

Thus, the policies of Newport News focused less on the declining downtown area and instead

placed more time, money, and effort on the former Warwick area. This shift transformed what

Newport News meant to the average person. As the memory of the County and City of Warwick

receded, the imagining of Newport News emphasized the suburban sprawl rather than its

predecessor's industrial roots. Although the Newport News Shipyard still played an important

role in the functioning of the city, its significance lessened in the eyes of those not immediately

involved with the industry. In fact, the former Newport News area, rather than celebrated for its

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[31] Williams.

[32] Joseph C. Ritchie, telephone interview by author, September 26, 2017.

impact on American history, became a punchline for rampant crime and drug use. In a way, this transformation was the unconscious decision of the pro-consolidation force. Although they might have not imagined the decline of the former Newport News area, they certainly desired the increasingly white Warwick areas to dominate over the black Newport News areas.

Although the former Newport News area suffered from the consolidation, the people in support of the merger celebrated the successes that consolidation brought. In 1962, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations reflected on the Newport News/Warwick Consolidation to analyze why mergers succeeded in the region. The Commission noted several reasons for the success: support from state legislators from area, use of local staff to conduct background research and develop recommendations, and conductions of public hearings.[33] All three factors most reflected how Newport News and Warwick, despite previous failures, produced an efficacious solution of both cities' problems through consolidation. The men who organized the case for Consolidation, oftentimes the political or business elite, generated the support necessary for the consolidation to succeed. For the most part, the men involved agreed on the path to end both cities' problems. The people involved perceived the various systemic problems that could destroy Newport News and Warwick unless they consolidated. Finally, the leaders of the Consolidation movement campaigned on the principle of solving problems such as better tax rates and relieving overcrowding. Cities and counties elsewhere in the Hampton Roads area noted the factors that led to the Newport News/Warwick Consolidation, and became inspired to undertake their own consolidation efforts.

The Newport News/Warwick Consolidation also greatly influenced consolidation attempts elsewhere in the region, some with a greater amount of success than others. A wave of

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[33] Temple, 172.

consolidation occurred in Hampton Roads as a result of the Newport News-Warwick Consolidation.[34] Both Norfolk and Virginia Beach, both Newport News' rivals in the Hampton Roads area, consolidated with their neighboring counties. This enabled them to greatly expand their own territories, as well as providing ample space to build their own suburbs. Unlike the Newport News/Warwick Consolidation, the consolidation attempts in Norfolk and Virginia Beach followed the Hampton/Elizabeth City County/Phoebus Consolidation model in the fact that the average citizen played little to no role in the merger. Elsewhere in Virginia, Richmond also consolidated with its neighboring county with the same urban development and race-based motives as Newport News. In the minds of the political establishment the Consolidation of Newport News and Warwick proved to be an astounding success, and one that could be replicated. However, in the three aforementioned consolidations, the consolidated cities still retained the identity of the larger metropolis, even though all three had similar imaginings of the dangerous downtown. Despite the accomplishment of the new City of Newport News, critics felt that the government of Newport News still faces inadequacies due to the neighboring independent City of Hampton. Until the 1980s, there were attempts to consolidate Newport News and Hampton, feeling that they had not achieved the promise to efficiently run the Lower Peninsula. However, people in both the government and business of both cities desired to keep the status quo, and the idea eventually faded away.[35] By this point, the consolidation mania in the Hampton Roads area had faded away, and the fate of Newport News had been set.

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[34] Buxton, 2018.
[35] Buxton, 2018,

Chapter 4

The effects of consolidation remain an unspoken presence in modern day Newport News, shaping the city to what it is today. The current per capita income in Newport News is $25,196.[1] This low-income level represents the living disparity between those of the former Warwick area and those of the former Newport News area. Due to the devastating poverty felt in the downtown area, Newport News has the third highest poverty level in the region as of 2013, with 13.8% living below the federal poverty level line.[2] By contrast, the living conditions are higher due to the influence of the economically larger former Warwick area. However, due to its connection to the shipyard and military, the city can weather crises better than elsewhere in the United States. For example, the housing market in Hampton Roads, particularly Newport News, remained stable during the 2008 housing crisis.[3] Nevertheless, the population growth is slowing in the city due to overcrowding and the persistent reputation of crime and poverty. Newport News is currently the third slowest growing city in the Hampton Roads region.[4] Today, the former Newport News area is nothing but the shipyard, empty lots, and public housing. All attempts at urban renewal for the area failed, and few people ever venture into the downtown area without good reasons. By contrast, the former Warwick area is filled with endless expanses of shopping centers and suburbs, a new one seemingly being built every day. Apart from the furthermost corners of the area, nothing exists in the modern-day city that would suggest to visitors and residence of the rural nature that once defined the Lower Peninsula.

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[1] City of Newport News Department Planning, *Newport News: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities*, August 2013, 26, https://www.nnva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1459/Trends-Challenges-and-Opportunities-PDF.
[2] City of Newport News Department Planning, 6.
[3] City of Newport News Department Planning, 26.
[4] City of Newport News Department Planning, 5.

Figure VI: Population of Newport News After Consolidation[5]

Decade	Population	Decade	Population
1960	113,662	1990	171,439
1970	138,177	2000	180,150
1980	144,903	2010	180,719

While the new City of Newport News' population went through periods of rapid growth and stagnation, the populations of the former Newport News and Warwick areas remained consistent. The largest population growth in Newport News occurred during the 1980s and 1960s respectively. The 1960s growth came almost immediately after the merging of the two cities, illustrating how the consolidation effort proved to be an attractive area to settle and raise and family for recent arrivals. The population of blacks in Newport News in 1960 was 39,060 or 34.4% of the population. While the general population of Newport News grew larger during the 1960s, the black population remained in stasis. By the 1970s, the population of blacks in Newport News was 39,208 or 28.4% of the population. Meanwhile, the population growth during the 2000s resulting in the minuscule number of 569 people moving to Newport News. Due to the overbuilt nature of city, the higher income residences of Newport News, once again, moved away to find better housing.[6] Furthermore, people moving to the area prefer to move to the more recently developed suburbs of the surrounding area. Nevertheless, the economy of the former Warwick area still thrives, and people still work, live, and play there. The former Newport News area, on the other hand, tell a different story.

In terms of population demographics, the former Warwick area is predominately white with a couple of mixed-race areas. By contrast, the downtown area, where much of the black population still lives, still suffers from the legacy of white flight and the consolidation

[5] City of Newport News Department Planning, 5.
[6] City of Newport News Department Planning, 39.

movement. The shipyard still dominates the former Newport News area, and a modernistic mixed-use building resides on Washington Avenue near the shipyard. Yet, many other portions of the downtown area remained as they were during the era of white flight. In 1970, approximately 80% of the black residents lived in the former Newport News area.[7] While the suburbs eventually opened up to African American homeowners, the legacy of consolidation meant that most African Americans lacked the opportunities to leave. The downtown area's racial associations meant that the city ignored the populaces' concerns and never fully re-developed the area, forcing the black population to live in an area without economic activities or thriving businesses. Today, the population of the old Newport News area dropped 53% from its 1950s height of 42,358 in 1950.[8] Much of the downtown area never recovered from consolidation, and the people who continue to live there could not rebound.

Modern Newport News still reflects the planning and plotting of the pro-consolidation forces sixty years earlier. The disparity between the majority black and majority white areas illustrates the impact of consolidation in Newport News. For example, two elementary schools—Hilton Elementary School and Newsome Park Elementary School—are only four miles apart from each other. However, the short distance between each other belies the extreme differences that white flight and consolidation brought. Located in Hilton, the Hilton Elementary School's, scores on Math and Reading ranks above Virginia's state average by 15%, receiving an A score.[9] By contrast, located in the downtown area, Newsome Park Elementary School's scores on Math and Reading rank below Virginia's state average by 30% with failing grades.[10] The test scores of

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[7] Virginia Advisory Committee to the U.S Commission on Civil Rights, 1.
[8] City of Newport News Department Planning, 6.
[9] Great Schools, "Hilton Elementary School," accessed December 10, 2018, https://www.greatschools.org/virginia/newport-news/1130-Hilton-Elementary-School/.
[10] Great Schools, "Newsome Park Elementary School," accessed December 10, 2018, https://www.greatschools.org/virginia/newport-news/1140-Newsome-Park-Elementary-School/.

the two schools reveal the stark difference between the former Warwick area and the former

Newport News area. Hilton Elementary School has slim white majority, and 29% percent of the

students come from low income families.[11] Although there are some problem occurring within

the Hilton Village and surrounding area, the students at Hilton will be able to succeed in life.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the primarily African American students at Newsome

Park, as 98% of the school's population come from low income families.[12] The schools, in a

way, symbolizes the landscape in which they are located. Although other districts in Newport

News have lower crime rates and a greater income increase, Hilton fared much better in the long

term than in downtown Newport News. The former Newport News area has the highest

percentage of crime in the city; apart from some area in the former Warwick area, downtown

also suffers from heavy income decrease.[13] The entire push for consolidation meant that the

people living in downtown, particularly children, have little chance to succeed in life. Downtown

Newport News, once a thriving landscape, turned into a place of violence and apathy[14]. This

became the legacy of the consolidation movement.

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[11] Great Schools, "Hilton Elementary School."
[12] Great Schools, "Newsome Park Elementary School.".
[13] Neighborhood Scout, "Newport News Demographic Data, accessed December 10, 2018, https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/va/newport-news.
[14] Detective Heather Froneberger, text message to author, November 15, 2018.

Conclusion

Consolidation's impact on the City of Newport News cannot be understated. In just a century, the area changed from a small urban city and large rural county to a primarily suburban city. Over the span of 100 years, the population and power shifted away from the former Newport News area to the former Warwick area. This change represents how the city planners strove to benefit the two cities' interests by merging into a singular city. The pro-consolidation forces in Newport News wanted to solve problems of racial imbalance and overcrowding, while Warwick's forces wanted to take advantage of Newport News' better tax deals. Although the consolidation efforts proved to be a success, it did not work entirely to the pro-consolidation forces predictions. While the white population of Newport News had already moved to the former Warwick area, the businesses only started to move once consolidation occurred. Within a decade of the merger, the power base shifted from the former Newport News area to the former Warwick area, a permanent change to the sociographic landscape. Regardless of the power shift, consolidation did successfully prevent African Americans from gaining a political foothold in the city's government. Instead of moving alongside their white counterparts to the suburbs, the black population stayed behind in the declining downtown area. Attempts at reviving the former Newport News area ended up in failure, as most residents of the city lived their lives within the former Warwick area. The fact that the former Warwick area flourished in place of the former Newport News area proved how far the pro-consolidation forces went in keeping the status quo of the city.

The first chapter reveals the political progression of the Lower Peninsula during the first half of the 20th century, particularly with regards to Newport News and Warwick. Almost overnight, the Lower Peninsula transformed from a sleepy rural community to an industrial

center. Newport News, the only city with a major industry, became the center of this transformation. Nevertheless, the city suffered from overcrowding in the post-war era, particularly with a large number of African Americans, whom the white population viewed with suspicion. Conversely, Warwick influence in the politics of the Hampton Roads area grew as the ample land and low black population meant the establishment of suburbs in a once rural area. Despite the fact that all of the new resident had a close connection to Newport News, Warwick County resented the political maneuvering of Newport News. When Newport News attempted to annex the County, Warwick struck back and successfully fought against the more powerful city. In order to combat a future annexation attempt, Warwick petitioned the state to become a city, which occurred in 1952. However, the new city suffered tremendously from a relatively weak and poor government plagued by its own non-urban existence. Meanwhile, the merger of the nearby Hampton/Elizabeth City County/Phoebus proved that consolidation could work in the Hampton Roads area. Newport News, still desperate over the population shift, jumpstarted a consolidation attempt with Warwick and Hampton. Despite active campaigning, the consolidation ended up failing due to political antagonism from Hampton, Norfolk, and the black community. Still, the societal shifts in the Lower Peninsula necessitated changes in the political landscape, and Newport News and Warwick would join forces in the consolidation movement.

The second chapter reveals details on the fears and desires of the varying demographics of both cities. Newport News wanted consolidation to end the overcrowding issues and to prevent African Americans from taking control of the city, while Warwick wanted consolidation to develop stronger finances. The average citizen from each city participated heavily in campaigning for merging the two cities, but the city elite ended up organizing and managing the consolidation efforts. Two groups actively opposed the merger: the rural whites from Warwick

and the urban blacks from Newport News. Each group saw consolidation as a threat to their identity's existence and loss of power in the local government but their voices were lost in the pro-consolidation crowd. Nevertheless, a fire of a Warwick grocery store illustrated the weakness of the two-city system, as well as the dominance of Newport News over their neighboring cities. On the referendum day, a relatively small number of people from both cities voted in the consolidation election. Those that did vote were split between the different precincts in the two cities. As expected, the predominately black areas of Newport News and the rural areas of Warwick voted against merging the two cities. By contrast, most other precincts in the two cities voted for consolidation to varying degrees. In particular, the precincts of Warwick closer to Newport News voted in favor due to the former's economic ties to the latter. Further referendums (dealing with naming the new city and electing the officials) emphasized the power of the old City of Newport News. The new city's planners brought forth issue needed to be addressed before the two cities officially merged, but some of them could only be solved once consolidation occurred.

The third chapter reveals the fate of the two old cities and how the new city became what it is today. Beneath the ballyhoo of the consolidation lay socio-political issue that city officials could now use to their advantage. While the old City of Newport News was embroiled in a school integration case, the new City of Newport News decided to fight back using the technicality that the old city went out of existence. Although the concept of different cities ultimately failed in the courts, Newport News' schools remained segregated for another decade. However, Newport News already found a more permanent measure to segregate the races. Many white residents of Newport News had moved to Warwick before the consolidation; afterward, the process of white flight expanded as there were no longer any boundaries between the two areas.

African Americans could not move into the new suburbs due to racism and poverty; instead, they were moved into public housing within the former Newport News area. While the public housing was touted as a benefit to low-income families, it forced the African American population to remain in the downtown area. Unfortunately, much like the white residents, businesses left the former Newport News area to the former Warwick area, due to the ample land for development. While the former Warwick area wealth grew, the former Newport News area became impoverished. Thus, the old Warwick area became the powerful and influential section of Newport News, while the downtown area fell into terminal decline. By building the power base in the former Warwick area, the pro-consolidation forces successfully negated the African American voice in city politics, as well as expand the territory of Newport News to prevent overcrowding.

The forth chapter illuminates the impact of consolidation on the landscape of modern-day Newport News. While Newport News does have economic success with both the shipyard and retail businesses, the city somewhat struggles with regards to the poverty level located in the former Newport News area. A majority of the former Warwick area is economically successful, with medium to low level of crime. By contrast, the downtown area is economically depressed, with high levels of crime. As per the pro-consolidation forces plans, the two sections are racially divided, with more white people living in the former Warwick area, while more black people live in the former Newport News area. Those who could depart the downtown area did so, but many people, most of them African Americans, were unable to leave. Thus, while the general population of the city grew to varying degrees, the population of the former Newport News area shrank from its pre-consolidation height. Furthermore, the school systems of the two sections differ greatly; with schools in the former Warwick area doing better than their former Newport

News counterparts. The students in the downtown area live in low-income families and rely on a poor education system that ultimately fails them.

Although the Newport News-Warwick Consolidation resembles many other consolidation efforts throughout the United States, its story still impacts the shaping of modern America. The Consolidation of Newport News and Warwick illustrates the suburbanization of the United S and the shifting racialization of urban areas. As cities became known as crime-ridden, overcrowded places, suburbs became an idyllic alternative for the urban white population. People moved into the cheap and plentiful suburban housing to get away from the stereotyped black city. Ironically, white flight emboldened the larger black population to fight for political representation. The city elite of Newport News saw this transformation of their city and began a reactionary fight to preserve white power. After a long struggle of annexation and consolidation, the two cities of Newport News and Warwick officially merged in the late 1950s. The growth in the former Warwick area continued after consolidation to the detriment of the former Newport News area. The former Warwick area became one of suburbs and strip malls, while the former Newport News area became an economically depressed region. Despite being politically joined together, the former Newport News and Warwick areas still remain two different cities.
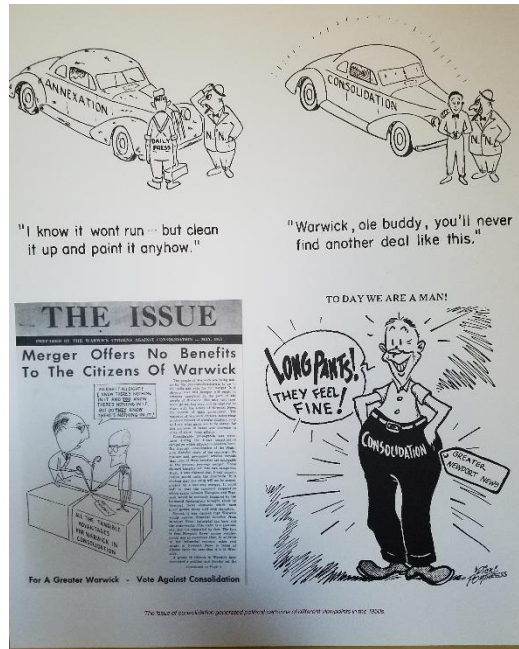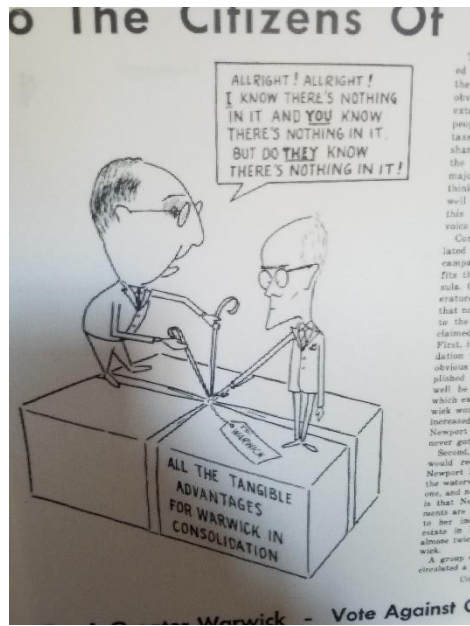
Appendix: Photos
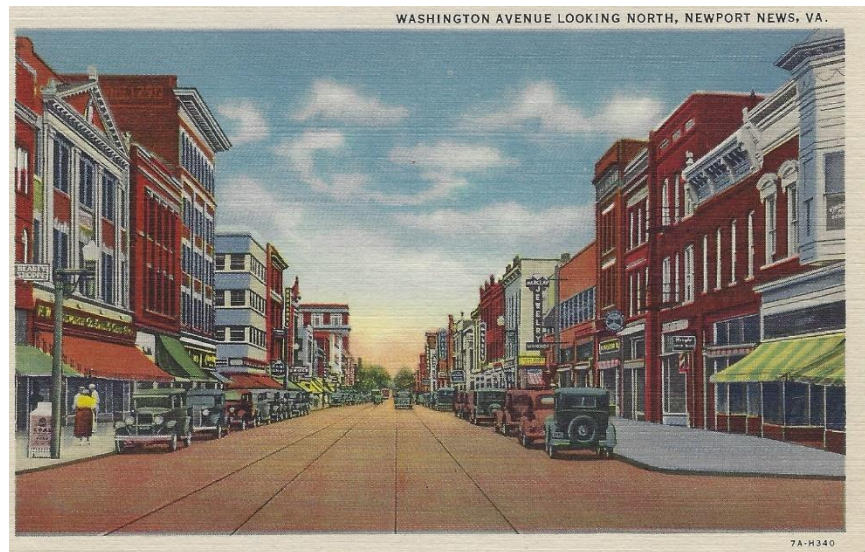
Postcard depicting the old City of Newport News.
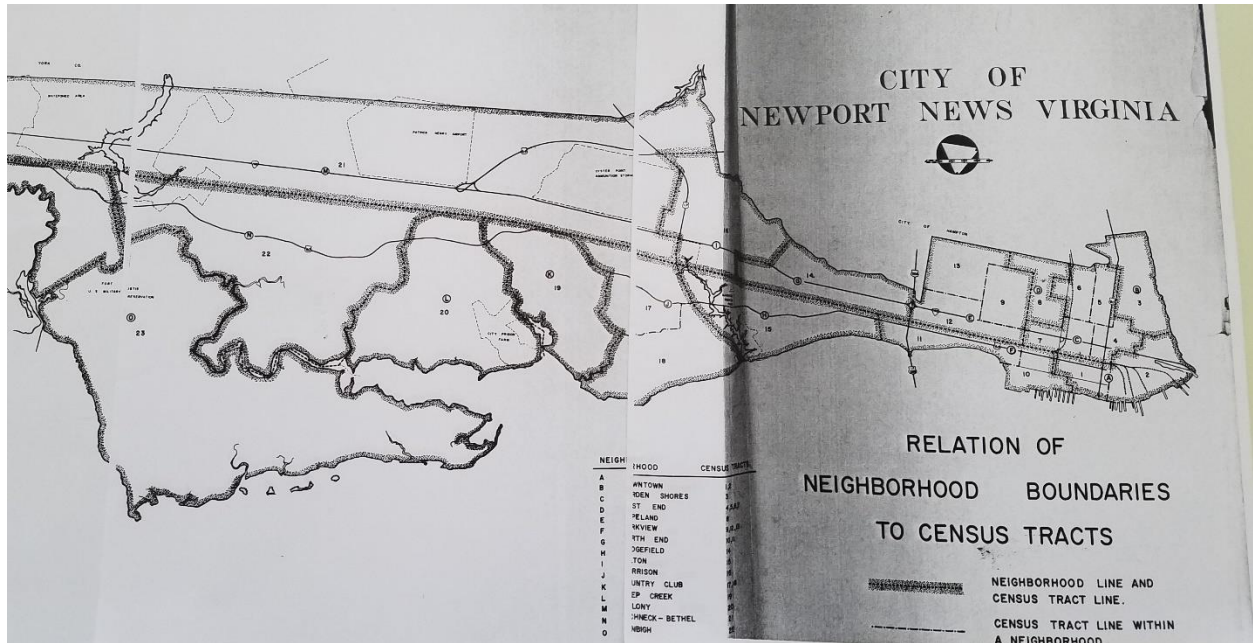Authors Collection.
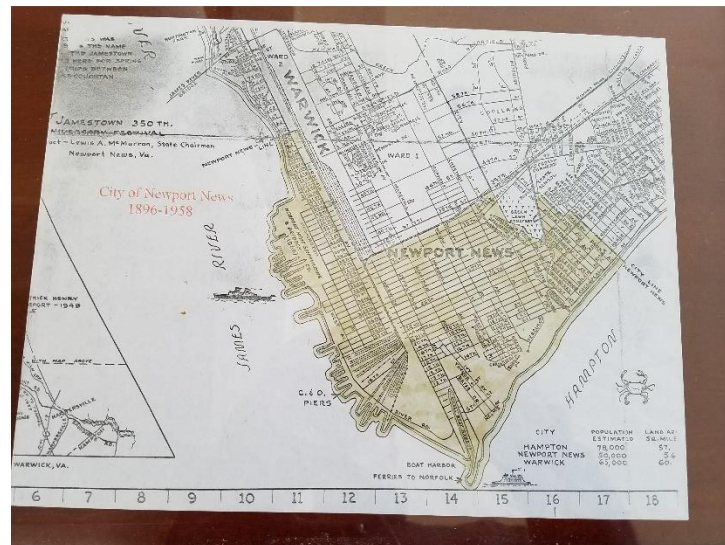
Map of the old City of Newport News.
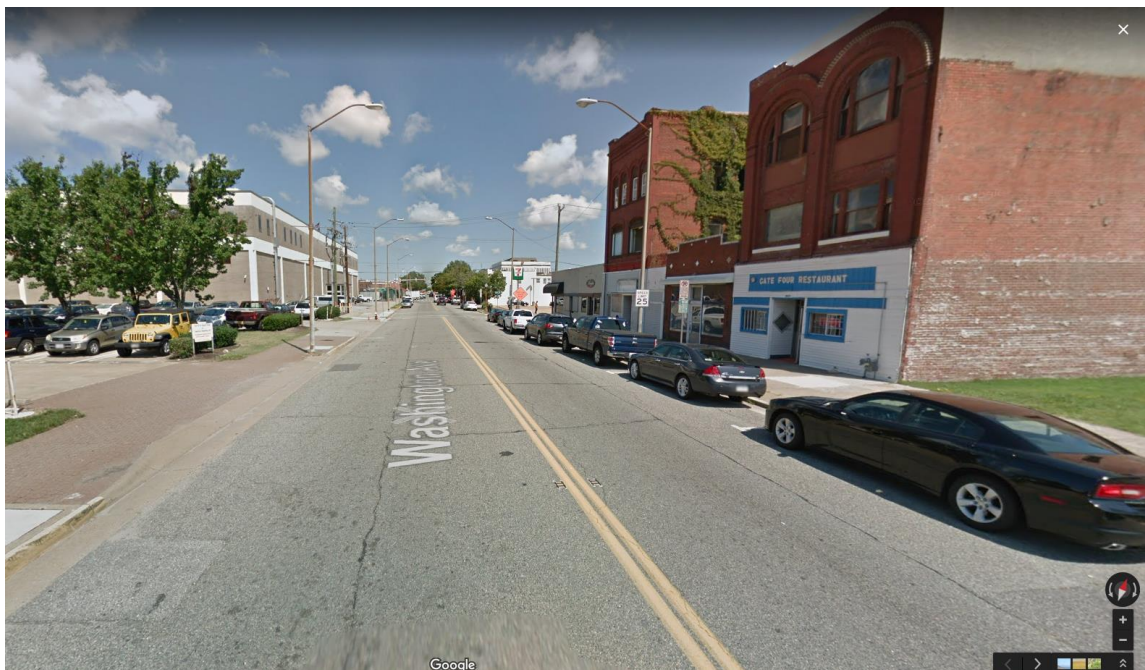Found at the Main Street Library, Newport News.

Three examples of political cartoons about Consolidation.
Found at the Old Warwick Courthouse.

Close up of a political cartoon mentioned above.

Map of Newport News Census Tracts done several years after Consolidation.
List of Districts located at Figure V.
Found at the Main Street Library, Newport News.

Modern image of Downtown Newport News.
Found on Google Maps.

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