LAND RENEWAL PLUS PEOPLE RENEWAL:
URBAN RENEWAL, ADULT BUSINESSES, AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN
NASHVILLE

by

LEISHA RAYELLE MEADE

(Under the Direction of Bethany Moreton)

ABSTRACT

The urban landscape of Nashville, Tennessee dramatically changed in the twentieth century. The efforts of politicians to increase tourism revenue altered the culture and economy of downtown Nashville. Under a consolidated government, local officials used the first Congressional funded urban renewal program and, later, public health policy to oust legal adult businesses. The downtown areas that were once home to pornography stores, adult theaters, and strip clubs were transformed in the push for a more family-friendly environment anchored by the rise of country music.

INDEX WORDS: urban renewal, public health, pornography, landscape, Nashville, adult capitalism
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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful fiancé, Travis Estep. You have served as an “unpaid college intern” on research trips, a chef, a counselor, and an editor throughout this whole process. I know that I would have never come this far without the endless love and understanding that you have shown me. I also dedicate this to my parents, Ray and Freda Meade, who have given unwavering support my whole life. They taught me that I could do anything I wanted as long as I was willing to put in the effort.
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Figure 1
INTRODUCTION

The success of Nashville’s downtown, as a revitalized streetscape, depended on linking tourism, history and country music, through the second half of the twentieth century. The revitalization of historic downtown, now a showplace for the city, resulted from efforts by Nashville local officials who embraced the area as an historic urban landscape with tourist appeal. The redevelopment of downtown is addressed in the following chapters as a vibrant city affected by its eccentricities and intricacies that make it a leading regional metropolis.

Originally home to printing and warehouse industries, Printer’s Alley and Broadway housed a collection of honky tonks and retail establishments in the 1960s that catered to musicians and fans of the Grand Ole Opry. The honky tonks provided a place for the performers to mingle, drink and play with their fans and fellow musicians. When the Opry left the Ryman in 1974 for Opryland 12 miles outside of Nashville’s center city, these downtown areas experienced subsequent change with neglected storefronts, adult movie theatres, pornography shops, and live adult entertainment. The area retained its seedy reputation until urban renewal initiatives embraced Nashville and enabled the city to strengthen its positive association with country music.

While the Opry’s departure from the Ryman promulgated downtown’s decline, the area’s renewal and change in reputation resulted from its individual
significance to Nashville and American culture. As a place that offered more than leisure, music, and drinking, downtown evolved to become a major tourist attraction where one experienced all types of music. It was the city’s direct connection to country music that enabled its renaissance to be more than a collection of bars in historic buildings.

This thesis traces the efforts of local officials to develop Nashville into a modern urban city and tourist destination. These endeavors can be traced in the local newspapers articles and local government records. Nashville’s urban development in the twentieth century centered on country music tourism providing a framework for sustainable economic growth. This alteration of the landscape of downtown Nashville was influenced by a variety of disparate issues including: public policies, cultural identities, the development of postwar ideologies of progress and social relations, the connections between national and local politics, and adult businesses, and public health. These topics have not been linked together before but it is the intersection of these topics that distinguishes this thesis. Through an examination of the urban renewal process and cultural productions designed to promote the city to outsiders, this thesis reveals the connection to public history that officials would like to sever and the future they hoped to construct. In their attempts to rehabilitate the city’s image, city leaders learned that they possessed the power to transform the urban landscape.
Urban Renewal in Postwar America

Urban renewal typically refers to a period between 1949 and 1974 when there was a massive national effort to remove blighted properties and poverty from areas surrounding central business districts. Policy makers argued that the removal of blighted properties and the redevelopment of slum areas would help cities become more economically viable. The redevelopment would generate an economic engine through attracting middle-income residents to the city.¹ This idealistic philosophy became common in America by the end of World War I but did not become a real force in government until Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal policies of the 1930s. It would remain prevalent in public policy circles through the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations.²

Urban renewal, officially launched with the passage of the federal Housing Act of 1949, was national in scope. This act, along with subsequent housing acts, provided billions in federal resources to local authorities to redevelop areas deemed blighted.³ The act that established urban renewal was a complex piece of legislation created in hopes of eliminating slums and so-called blighted areas, reviving downtown business districts, and providing a decent home for every

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³ See Eric Avila and Mark H. Rose, “Race, Culture, Politics, and Urban Renewal,” *Journal of Urban History* 35 (2009), 335-47; Ashley Foard and Hilbert Fefferman, “Federal Urban Renewal Legislation,” in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed. J. Q. Wilson. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966); Although some scholars argue that redevelopment efforts to bolster the nation’s cities began before the 1940s, it was not until the end of the 1940s that a federal and local infrastructure was ready, and more importantly funded, to stimulate massive urban redevelopment across America. See also Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Urban Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 83.
American family. Specifically, it gave cities the power of eminent domain to clear slums. Federal subsidies assisted local redevelopment agencies in clearing land, but the Act did not specify what should happen with land once cleared. After demolition, cities were free to then turn around and sell cleared land at bargain prices to private developers.

Federal resources heavily underwrote development costs and enticed real estate developers to design and construct new housing towers, university and hospital buildings, large commercial spaces, and convention centers in central city areas across the country. Between 1950 and 1974, urban renewal was associated with bulldozing an estimated 2,500 neighborhoods in 993 cities. In these 2,500 redeveloped neighborhoods, an estimated 400,000 residential units were demolished. Urban renewal histories have typically focused on large urban areas such as New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Chicago. None of these historians have focused on urban redevelopment motivated by growing tourism and desire to remove adult businesses from the urban area. Few have even considered a

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southern urban area besides Atlanta. Even though it was granted the first federally funded urban renewal project, Nashville has not been included in the existing literature on urban renewal. For the most part, studies, which started surfacing soon after nationwide urban renewal programs began, have been critical of urban renewal for two reasons. First, some argue failure was a product of the implementation—that slum clearance did not adequately accommodate the existing residents and that urban renewal disproportionately affected poor and black neighborhoods. This approach implies the renewal schemes might have been more successful had they been implemented in a more sensitive, and equitable manner. Second, some have perceived the success or failure of urban renewal projects primarily in terms of design.

An example of a critique primarily addressing the design of public housing is housing advocate Catherine Bauer's critical essay on public housing published in *Architectural Forum* in 1957 titled “The Dreary Dead-Lock of Public Housing.” Bauer argued that “the bare bones of oversimplified New Deal theory have never been decently covered with the solid flesh of present-day reality,” and that the practice of constructing high-rise public low-income housing not only was undesirable to those it was intended to house, but also had an overly “institutional” feel. Bauer rejects the narrow options provided by the policies of the federal government – institutional public housing for “slum dwellers,” suburban homes for the “middle class,” –arguing, “The kind of home best suited to a given American family can never be decided by officials. Their highest

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responsibility, rather, is to make sure that public policies keep the “effective market” broad enough to provide some real selection at all economic and social levels.”

Jane Jacobs argued in her 1961 work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* that large-scale renewal projects were inherently disruptive of urban neighborhoods. Jacobs’ work has inspired many others, including Oscar Newman whose *Defensible Space* argued high-rise housing projects were, by nature, unsafe due to their designs, which frequently contained dark, windowless hallways, elevators, and stairways. However, the design-based critiques of urban renewal seem insufficient in the case of Nashville, since it was not the site of high-rise low-income housing.

Some urban renewal studies argue that the problems of “slums” and “blight” were not moral, mystical, or cultural problems, but simply an economic one: people live in housing they can afford. When World War II had ended, the public housing maintained by the government was deactivated, as more and more veterans took advantage of the easy credit to build or purchase new, single-family homes. Meanwhile, instead of providing financial resources to

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poor and African American residents so that they would have the same autonomy to build or purchase housing as white suburbanites, government officials would raze many minority urban communities, giving them two housing options: high-rise low income public housing, or what little was available on a “free market,” which, unlike newly developed suburban communities, did not enjoy the benefits of easy access to loans for repairs or new construction. In his book, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York*, Samuel Zipp stated

Urban renewal was initially thought of as a way to offset the deleterious effects of decentralization, an attempt to keep investment, wealth, and the middle class downtown. But urban renewal exacerbated the process of deindustrialization and decentralization, replacing factories and warehouses with apartment towers, university buildings, hospital complexes, and cultural institutions. It also heightened and perpetuated the emerging social and class divisions, renovating and upscaling some formerly downtrodden neighborhoods, but displacing poor populations into nearby slums or into public housing, thereby reinforcing the racial segregation and ghetto boundaries that clearance had hoped to disperse.\(^\text{12}\)

Urban renewal policies were largely unsuccessful because they failed to conceive the problem of “slums” and “blight” beyond simplistic aesthetic and cultural prejudices. Cities would not be able to eliminate their poor black residents simply through constructing new public housing, or by the forced removal of them from their homes. In fact, the solution to the “blight” that so plagued the planners of the 1940s could only have been broad and redistributive policies addressing the root cause of deteriorated housing conditions: the poverty of the residents.

\(^{12}\) Zipp, *Manhattan Projects*, 27
The solution to the crisis of adequate housing and the deterioration of older neighborhoods in American cities was not massive destruction and rebuilding, but the application of what Jacobs would call “gradual money.”

Perhaps an approach similar to that used in the overwhelmingly successful development of the suburbs: the heavy involvement of government in concert with the “free market,” might have worked. In that model the federal government insured home mortgages, encouraged banks to reduce the cost of purchasing a home, and spread out mortgage payments over long periods of time so that purchasing a home became accessible even to those of modest means.

Similar credit for new construction or repairs in black neighborhoods was almost never available. The work of Kenneth Jackson and others has highlighted the now widely condemned practice of “red-lining,” where entire neighborhoods and districts are prohibited from loan consideration by federal agencies. Hence what was at work was not primarily an issue of “the free market,” but rather the moralizing eye of a colonizer who sought to control and dictate how a minority community ought to live. This imperialistic attitude towards the city’s black community imposed upon their neighborhoods a type of city most neither wanted nor desired. It was automobile-based, a landscape of malls, shopping centers, and single-family homes, built at a heavy cost: the physical destruction of their homes, businesses, and the intangible destruction of a social network of relationships. Although various urban renewal campaigners framed their propositions in a language free of overt racial and ethnic antagonisms, the vision

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13 Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities.*
they proposed resulted in a public manifestation of a racialized agenda to further marginalize people of color in the city.

In the mid-twentieth century, the city of Nashville embarked on one of the nation’s premier postwar urban renewal programs. City officials in Nashville had drafted visions for the future of the city, but in the postwar period for the first time their plans, funding, and a political will would come together with unprecedented results. Already aware of the growth of suburban communities, city leaders saw federal urban renewal dollars as a means to reinforce property values downtown by clearing dilapidated housing, expanding the Vanderbilt campus, constructing new facilities for the city’s hospitals, in addition to expanding the highway system within the city. Perhaps in no other U.S. city in the postwar period were the ideas of planners so fully realized. City officials spent millions building new infrastructure and facilities, and the city of Nashville Planning department was renowned nationwide only to be forgotten in the current academic literature.

**Adult Businesses and Liberalizing Obscenity Legislation**

Urban renewal is not the only change that affected the growth and types of businesses in the U.S. during the second half of the twentieth century. The changing obscenity laws influenced the types of businesses located in urban areas. Adult businesses and entertainment have long been part of American culture and history. Most of the histories about urban sexuality in twentieth century America cover either specifically pornography or prostitution. Studies looking at the variety of adult businesses including adult theaters, sex stores, and
strip clubs are not prominent or frequent. While this thesis acknowledges the existence of prostitution in downtown Nashville, it focuses on the legal adult businesses. However, an historical examination of prostitution provides a foundation for understanding the economic factors and community perception of public sexuality.

Few historians considered prostitution an important topic before 1980, and studies of the subject commonly played to the sensational and salacious. Some important scholarship concentrated on social movements and campaigns to control or abolish prostitution. Other serious works focused on cities with red-light districts, emphasizing the most visible and elite forms of prostitution. Prostitution was also at looked at in monographs about crime, deviancy, hospitals, and public hygiene. However, other forms of public sexuality—adult stores, strip clubs, adult theaters, etc.—were left out of the majority of works.


The bulk of research examines the social structure and organization of commercial sex, using methods of social and women’s history. More recently, historians have been influenced by cultural and literary studies and have examined the symbolic and broad meanings of prostitution. Indeed, prostitutes are considered “fallen women” only in the context of their symbolic representation. Historians increasingly focus on the daily lives of prostitutes and the structural forces shaping their behavior, taking an empathetic view of prostitutes and situating commercial sex within the world of work and working-class culture.

Prostitutes were ordinary young females confronting limited possibilities and making rational and sometimes desperate choices. At the very least, these recent examinations move prostitution away from its sole association with deviancy and crime. More profoundly, integration has replaced marginalization as historians now include prostitutes in larger historical and national narratives. Yet new interpretations of prostitution hardly undermine traditional historical understanding. More often than not, historians of commercial sex argue on behalf of a broader conception of political, social, and cultural history.

Commercial sex assumed new forms after 1800. As urban capitalism generated new middle and mobile working classes, men delayed marriage and patronized prostitutes in increasing numbers. Industrialization and economic transformations created a ready supply of migratory, independent, low-wage-

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18 Stansell, City of Women, 110.
earning women, many of whom viewed prostitution as a viable economic alternative to poverty. Not only were these male and female subcultures unprecedented in scope, but they found themselves embedded in popular, modern, consumer cultures that tolerated new behaviors of sexual expression and purchase.\textsuperscript{20} Commercial sex was increasingly structured by the market, the state, and institutions that ensured commercial efficiency and publicity. In addition, the new structures of prostitution are attributed, at least in part, to modernity. Even while prostitution was ubiquitous in earlier societies, modern capitalism widened the gap between rich and poor and generated new cultural patterns. After 1860, the modernity of urban life undermined earlier elements of regulation and rendered methods of supervision obsolete. By introducing new images, practices, and anxieties, modernity necessitated changes in the system.\textsuperscript{21}

Prostitution is a vehicle to integrate gender into political and economic history. Historians examine prostitution as both urban and national phenomena. They offer detailed social profiles of regulated or registered prostitutes. Blair, Hill, and Rosen are, perhaps, the best in showing how women controlled certain forms of prostitution and carved out autonomous social spaces.\textsuperscript{22} Stansell wrote, “We are still too much influenced by the Victorians’ view of prostitution as utter degradation to accept easily any interpretation that stresses the opportunities

\textsuperscript{20} Stansell, \textit{City of Women}.
\textsuperscript{21} Rosen, \textit{The Lost Sisterhood}, xiii.
\textsuperscript{22} Blair, \textit{I’ve Got to Make my Livin’}, 4; Hill, \textit{Their Sister’s Keepers}, 2; Rosen, \textit{The Lost Sisterhood}. 
commercial sex provided to women rather than the victimization it entailed.”

Most historians note the amount of money that prostitutes could make. Prostitutes found themselves as active agents in an informal economic structure, where the “sex economy was one of the largest sectors (and perhaps the most visible) of the illicit urban informal economy.”

Prostitution is a political economy written with women’s words—or labor history. Prostitutes took advantage of opportunities within an informal economy to exploit certain physical and social spaces available to them. Most historians do not see prostitution as an economic and capitalist system. Social, cultural, and political historians have taken up research on prostitution, while economic historians still lack a focus on the subject. Prostitution (and all public sexuality) has a clear relationship with capitalism especially through a Marxist perspective.

One of Karl Marx’s great insights was that human nature is shaped by society and thus changes historically. From this point of view, sexuality can be understood as something that is social and historical. Marxists argue that the economy is the most important social force shaping the human society. Every society is organized around a specific economic system. From this perspective, a particular type of economy shapes a specific sexual culture and requires an analysis of the relationship between capitalism and sexuality.

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23 Stansell, *City of Women*, 191.
24 This is considering prostitutes that work as individuals, whether that is on their own or through a more organized system, not those women who were forced to perform sexual acts while someone else collected their pay.
26 For Marxist approaches to sexuality, see Reimut Reiche, *Sexuality and Class Struggle* (London: New Left Books, 1979); John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Powers of*
A capitalist economy is oriented toward profit and economic growth. Marx believed that profit is based on exploiting labor and growth occurs by reinvesting profits back into an enterprise. Marxists distinguish two phases of capitalist development in the United States - market and corporate. Throughout the nineteenth century, a market-based capitalism was dominant; since the early twentieth century, capitalism has been affected by large corporations. The social organization of modern sexuality reflects this development of capitalism.²⁷

In the market capitalism phase, the primary economic challenge is to produce enough goods to meet the needs of the entire population. The answer to the problem of production is discipline. In order for capitalism to thrive, a disciplined labor force must be created. Anything that interferes with maximizing production, such as emotional or erotic feeling, is a hindrance to efficient production. In short, in the market economy of the nineteenth century, capitalists tried to desexualize laborers and shape their bodies and physical movements to the machinery of production.²⁸

In a market economy, therefore, a self-conscious personality type is important. This kind of person is performance-orientated and holds control over emotions and sensual desires. To this type of person, sexual impulses and desires are potentially disruptive; sexuality needs to be controllable because it is

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about business. Accordingly, in market economies the pressures of industrial production shape a sexual culture that values self-control and the avoidance of sensual pleasure. Eroticism and pleasure are viewed as dangerous by the capitalist institution.\textsuperscript{29}

The labor process shapes the family by making workers into children producers. Sexuality is valued only if it is confined to marriage and its aim are to create a family during market capitalism. The definition of legitimate sex is narrowed to intercourse for the purpose of procreation. The procreative sexual ethic reflects capitalism’s need for a larger, mobile supply of laborers.\textsuperscript{30}

In the market economies of the nineteenth century, a sexual culture took shape that associated sex with marriage and children. Only genital-centered, procreation-orientated sex in marriage was acceptable. Sex orientated to pleasure, sex outside marriage, autoerotic sex, sex in public, non-heterosexual sex, and non-genital sex were unacceptable and deviant. These forms of sexuality were at odds with capitalism’s need for disciplined, work-orientated, and productive workers.\textsuperscript{31}

Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, capitalism shifted from a market to a corporate economy. The huge corporation replaced the small business as the major economic institution. This development brought about changes in modern sexual culture. Rosen states, “Like many other elements of
the American economy…the business of prostitution during this period was in a state of transition.”

By the early twentieth century, new technologies and a scientific approach to the labor process solved the problem of producing enough goods and services. Capitalism had to address the issue of how goods being produced would be consumed.

Marxists would argue that the new consumer economy weakened the Victorian culture and its emphasis on privacy, self-control, and the desexualization of the body. Whereas Victorians wished to keep sex a private matter, consumer capitalism brought sexuality into the public world of commerce. In order to create higher levels of consumption, advertising gained a new importance. Sex is now used to sell commodities; the result is that images and talk of sex are public.

The commercialization of sex challenged Victorian culture in another way: capitalism placed a new value on sex as a source of pleasure. As sex was used to sell commodities and sex businesses flourished (pornography, sex toys, etc.), sex was no longer just a procreative or loving act but a form of pleasure and self-expression. Gilfoyle notes, “Urban sexuality was increasingly expressed and restructured to appeal to a male consumer world of entertainment, goods, newspapers, and advertisements.” From a Marxist perspective, business

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34 Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 82.
36 Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 18.
owners want one thing: to make money by selling their goods. If sex can be marketed as pleasure or championed as an authentic form of self-expression or identity, then sex becomes a valuable marketing resource.\(^{37}\)

Some have emphasized the role of sexual fantasy in marketing goods. To understand this dynamic one would need to grasp a change in the nature of commodities. Gilfoyle argues, “[C]ommercialization transformed activities and behavior with little material “value” into objects with exchange value.”\(^{38}\) Use value is related to a commodity’s functionality, whereas exchange value concerns its measurable price. Capitalism tries to produce commodities that people want. The commodity is not just a material object; it carries social meaning as a marker of class or cultural identity. The symbolic aspect of goods creates enormous marketing potential. One’s sense of self becomes rightly connected to the goods we buy. Businesses deliberately market goods and services by selling fantasies of beauty, sexual effectiveness, romance, and social power. In short, corporate capitalism creates a highly seductive and sexualized world in which impulsions are key.\(^{39}\)

A consumer-orientated economy has decisively shaped contemporary patterns of sexuality. Consumer capitalism promotes a view of sex as natural, brings sex into the public arena, creates new sex industries, and champions sexual choice and pleasure. A capitalist sexual culture makes sex more open


\(^{38}\) Ibid.

and acceptable solely so that sex can be used to sell goods, to attach the individual to consumerism, and to turn people’s attention to personal fulfillment rather than class inequality and political action.40

Another social theory besides Marxism that has resulted in considerable social change is feminism, which provided the ideas and inspiration for the women’s movement. According to feminists, sexuality is a product of men’s power, and sex is a means by which men control women. To the extent that men have the power to define what is sexual, they have the power to define women’s sexuality in a way that gives them control over women. In male-dominated America, “normal” women are supposed to be inclined toward vaginal intercourse with the ultimate aim of procreation. In fact, several historians argue that men and male control enter prostitution only after the state does. They deemphasize the importance of pimps, arguing that nineteenth-century prostitutes enjoyed considerable autonomy in their lives and labors.41 Only with greater police harassment after 1890 did pimps and male dominance of commercial sex appear.42

Prostitution is no longer treated as an isolated phenomenon but as a portal to wider historical trends. Few subjects have moved so dramatically from the margins to the center of historical study as prostitution. A wide variety of interpretive categories now incorporate prostitution in historical narratives: a

40 Ibid
41 Rosen, The Lost Sisterhood, 70.
source of urban pleasure, an entrepreneurial profession, a site of moral danger
and physical disease, a painful economic option for women and their families, a
marker for national decay, a component of national identity, and the embodiment
of modernity. Recent examinations employ commercial sex as a vehicle to not
only explore sexuality and gender but the evolution of state power and modernity
in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Prostitution exposes ambitions by the
state to extend government authority into new realms of urban or national life.
Prostitution is an ever-evolving research topic because it lies at the crossroads of
many historical perspectives and theories.

Besides the already mentioned lack of inclusion of other adult businesses,
these works have a few weaknesses in their discussions. Women prostitutes
were the focus for these works, while male prostitutes only made a few
appearances in this literature. One notable exception is Barry Reay’s New York
Hustlers: Masculinity and Sex in Modern America. Race is also an aspect that
does not receive the necessary attention from many of these works. Cynthia Blair
seeks to change that problem with her book, I’ve Got to Make my Livin’: Black
Women’s Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago. Moreover, while these
works occasionally touch on the subject of diseases and state regulation, they do
not specifically look at the power of public health and how it is used to regulate
public sexuality. By contrast, my work on Nashville highlights the ways in which

43 Barry Reay, New York Hustlers: Masculinity and Sex in Modern America (Manchester
University Press, 2010). Reay focuses on the mid-twentieth century, so there is still a lack of
significant literature on male sex workers in earlier eras.
44 Blair, I’ve got to Make my Livin’. See also Rosen, Lost Sisterhood, 80.
public health can be used to regulate or even eliminate adult businesses in ways that traditional legal means could not.

In terms of history of sex in an urban environment, if historians do not focus on prostitution, they turn their attention to pornography and obscenity laws. While works like Carolyn Bronstein’s *Battling Pornography: The Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976-1986* and Edward Donnerstein, Daniel Linz, and Steven Penrod’s *The Question of Pornography: Research Findings and Policy Implications* focus on ideological aspects of the legal and moral issues of pornography, my research examines how the urban landscape of downtown Nashville physically changed due to these aspects.

The history of obscenity laws in the United States is extensive. Histories of sexuality suggest that public sexuality always created considerable social debate, with the state often seeking to regulate ‘live’ sexual entertainment (striptease, burlesque, peep shows) or pornographic media (magazines, videos, books) to protect those individuals who might be ‘most easily’ corrupted.\(^45\) It has often been middle-class men who have legislated against and censored the ‘obscene’, arguing it is not them, but women, children and the uncivilized classes they are seeking to protect.\(^46\) The first federal law restricting obscene material was the Comstock Act. Passed in 1873, this act restricted the trade, possession, manufacture, and distribution of “obscene” materials and materials of an


“immoral nature,” including information on contraception and abortion. The ability of the government to regulate such material went unquestioned until in Roth v. United States in 1957 when the Supreme Court considered the constitutionality of legislation that made punishable the mailing of obscene, lewd, lascivious, or filthy materials. The issue was not whether Congress had the authority to regulate the mail, since the court recognized this right. Rather, if these laws are to be enforced, then “obscenity” must be clearly defined.

The Court offered the following definition of obscenity: “The standard for obscenity . . . is whether, to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interest.” What was “obscene” was determined by the definition, since obscenity is not something objective that is discovered in the natural order of things; it is a cultural judgment. The problems the Roth decision created were numerous. One of the most common was the fact that the justices had to assess each “obscene” work to see if it was truly obscene. The Court held that to be classified as obscene, materials must be “utterly without redeeming social importance.” However, is anything without any redeeming social importance? Is this even determinable? Obviously, people do find importance and value in some works others might deem obscene, and they produce, distribute, and/or consume them. The decision had its issues but it also opened

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47 For more on Anthony Comstock see Gilfoyle, City of Eros.
49 Ibid.
the door for discussion of what was appropriate and what consumers had the right to purchase. Bronstein argues the Roth case began the liberalization of obscenity laws. She states that the range of materials that was protected by free speech was enlarged.\textsuperscript{50}

In 1973, the Supreme Court revisited the issue of obscenity in \textit{Miller v. California}. In Miller, the Court, recognizing the problems with the Roth standard, offered new guidelines for the determination of obscenity. These new guidelines functioned to expand the scope of obscenity. This new standard rejected the notion that a work must be utterly without redeeming social importance and instead merely required that the work lack "serious" value. It also moved determining power to the local level. This once again allowed for an expansion of sexual materials protected by the law.\textsuperscript{51}

Even in an era of liberalizing obscenity laws and a booming pornography industry, strong resistance movements existed. Most of these movements revolved around specifically pornography. When it comes to reasons for censoring, prohibiting, or otherwise suppressing pornography, there are various rationales. Some claim that it leads to sexual violence or other forms of deviance. Others claim that pornography promotes inequality by depicting women in an unflattering light, perpetuating harmful stereotypes, and ultimately discriminating

\textsuperscript{50} Bronstein, \textit{Battling Pornography}, 66-67.
\textsuperscript{51} A turning point for publicly available sexual content was \textit{Deep Throat}. The film opened in the summer of 1972 and played at the New Mature World Theater in Times Square, a typical adult theater. Starring Linda Lovelace as Linda, and Harry Reems as her sexologist doctor, the film tells the story of a woman unable to reach sexual fulfillment, or orgasm, through sexual intercourse. In the course of her examination, she is found to have her clitoris in her throat and can only climax through the process of "deep throating," where the throat is opened in order to envelop the penis during fellatio. \textit{Deep Throat} stands out as one of the first films that intertwine a cohesive narrative with hard-core sex scenes. For more information, see Bronstein, \textit{Battling Pornography}, 63-82.
against them. Civic leaders and urban governments have tried to control adult entertainment activities with a variety of techniques, including vice and obscenity laws, licensing, zoning and land use planning powers.

Attempts to repress sexual entertainment and commerce through outright prohibition or censorship have often proved futile. The postwar transformation of San Francisco’s Tenderloin district demonstrates this by highlighting methods that owners sought to work around the controls imposed by the local government to prevent activities ‘injurious to public morals’. For example, a series of ‘topless trials’ in the late 1960s preceded the introduction of minimum clothing rules in licensed venues, with dancers forced to wear skin-colored ‘pasties’. This was short-lived, however, with the California Supreme Court ruling in 1968 that naked dancing did not violate standards of community decency. The subsequent spread of (naked) exotic dance venues through the Tenderloin and North Beach area aroused a considerable public anxiety, with over 5000 protestors participating in a Take Back the Night march in 1978. Under pressure both from women’s groups and the powerful Hotel Employers Association, the adult business zoning laws introduced by Mayor Feinstein in the late 1970s prevented the seemingly inexorable rise of peep shows and naked dancing venues – though many entrepreneurs simply transformed their premises into X-rated video-rental outlets.

Authorities have sometimes sought to prohibit the opening or continuance of sex related businesses within their jurisdiction. Officials have attempted to limit

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53 Ibid.
sexually suggestive performances to specific urban spaces. However, marking such sites off as potentially disordered or transgressive enables the state and law to identify sex-related businesses as unquestioningly deserving of regulation, allowing them to limit the visibility of such businesses. In this situation, the state upholds the liberal principle that adults have the right to consume sexual performances and materials, yet maintains its insistence that obscenity threatens public order if it becomes publicly or freely available.54

The majority of US cities, for example, have used zoning restrictions since the 1970s to prevent adult business from opening in particular neighborhoods or operating within the vicinity of residences, schools and religious facilities, characteristically pushing adult businesses towards the fringes of cities.55 Furthermore, in most instances, zoning ordinances now seek to prevent the colocation of sexually oriented businesses, with many US city ordinances prohibiting such businesses within 1000 feet of one another.56 US courts have tended to uphold such zoning ordinances on the basis that sex-related businesses may attract antisocial elements and promote neighborhood deterioration, allowing municipalities to treat sex-related businesses differently from other entertainment venues.57

As opposed to street prostitution, where the police are charged with enforcing federal and state laws, the discretionary and selective enforcement by

54 Leonard, “Pornography and Obscenity.”
56 Eric D. Kelly and Connie Cooper, Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Regulating Sex Businesses (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2000).
local officials has been the key influence on the location and viability of sex-related businesses. The local government typically regards adult entertainment as a form of business in need of particular and special attention. Moreover, given that it is about the regulation of premises, not the policing of individuals, it allows the state to sidestep questions of individual liberty and morality.

The national changes in urban renewal and obscenity legislation affected cities across the nation including Nashville. However, once Nashville is more closely analyzed, one can see that it has distinctive characteristics that influenced Nashville’s transition into an urban area centered on tourism. The city’s changing urban landscape was the product of many factors including a consolidated government, participation in large urban renewal programs, the growing country music scene, an active public health department, and motivated political leaders with new visions for Nashville.

This thesis argues that each of those components is significant in Nashville’s evolution. Chapter one gives readers a glimpse into Nashville history, including the city’s relation to public sexuality. This first chapter also includes information about Nashville’s consolidated metropolitan government. The new government structure in Nashville concentrated political power and resources, setting the stage for urban renewal and political leaders to have a stronger, quicker impact.

Chapter two discusses the impact of urban renewal programs in Nashville. It had the first federally funded urban renewal programs in the U.S. and used the experience and resources of those in power to secure funding for many projects.
The revitalization of Nashville went beyond creating new housing or urban development downtown; the city and its citizens were redefining themselves. Country music’s rising popularity forced Nashville citizens and politicians to reexamine the city’s strengths and how it wanted to be presented to the rest of the world.

Politicians, especially Mayor Richard Fulton, saw the opportunity for Nashville to grow and become something bigger than ever imaginable before. The fame from being the home of country music and revenue from tourism could give the city new life and a new purpose. However, downtown needed to go beyond renewing buildings; it needed to renew its image and association with public sexuality. The adult businesses needed to be removed in order to adhere to the wholesome image that country music evoked in the U.S. This contradicted the liberalizing of obscenity legislation that was occurring nationwide, but Fulton had a plan that would successfully eliminate adult businesses from historic downtown. His public agenda and support of new public health codes secured success for part of his vision for Nashville.

Nashville makes a compelling case study because its urban landscape was not only shaped by urban renewal and obscenity legislation happening nationwide but also its association with country music, consolidated government power, and active public leaders. Nashville, like most U.S. urban areas, changed post World War II, but Nashville completely transformed its cultural identity.
CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE STAGE

The legality and public perception of adult businesses was changing on a national level in the 1970s and 1980s. While adult businesses were legal, harsher codes at the state and local level threatened the physical existence of these stores, theaters, and clubs. This thesis examines Nashville as a case study. Although Nashville was experiencing many of the same changes in legality as other urban areas across the country, the city had its own unique factors and influences that helped transform the areas inhabited by adult entertainment. Nashville’s consolidated government, participation in urban renewal programs, connection to country music, active public health department, and motivated political leaders combined to create an urban landscape that catered to tourists and removed adult businesses.

In order to understand the intersection of urban renewal, adult businesses, and public health in Nashville in the 1970s, a history of Nashville must be examined. An account of adult businesses and public sexuality needs to be inserted into the general history where it has been all but ignored. Without a proper scrutiny of these influences, the picture of the downtown Nashville urban landscape is incomplete. Nashville’s government structure is also a key factor in the narrative. This overall history provides a basis of understanding for the focus of public health and sexuality and how they relate to the government of 1970s
and 1980s Nashville. The state of the structure and organization of downtown Nashville in the past, present, and future is dramatically influenced by this heretofore-ignored history.

Political leaders used public health and urban renewal to achieve their unstated goal of reshaping Nashville into their conception of the city. Those in power saw the fear of venereal disease as their opportunity to create a general public support and a call to arms against adult businesses (without documented evidence of causation). They had to create a seemingly wholesome environment to capitalize on country music tourism and their goal was not to completely fix the health problem but to hide it.

The events in Nashville are unique because it is a location that is not necessarily seen as a hotbed of adult businesses due in part to its location in the Bible belt. Moreover, the mere existence of a long-standing adult center speaks to misconceptions in the understanding of what this area is. Currently written histories of Nashville do not take into account this sexualized connection.\(^5\) While there is sufficient information confirming the existence and influence of these adult businesses, they have not been included in the mainstream written history of Nashville. This omission has resulted in a distorted analysis of the urban landscape of downtown Nashville through time. The influences of the Metro Nashville Government’s strategy for urban renewal and the removal of downtown adult businesses completely altered the course that the city has subsequently

taken. Former Nashville mayor Richard Fulton made concerted efforts through the manipulation of public health information to recreate the actual physical place of downtown Nashville into an idealized, conceptual, largely fictional Nashville. The fact that effort was made to eliminate any traces of public sexuality from downtown by any legal means necessary shaped the modern urban landscape and public policy.

1.1 Putting the Sex into Nashville History

Las Vegas, New York, Miami, and Los Angeles come to the forefront of one’s mind when thinking about urban areas with a history of a booming adult life including strip clubs, adult stores, and even prostitution. Often overlooked in the arena of adult entertainment is Nashville, Tennessee. Nashville today is the home of the Grand Ole Opry and “clean fun,” but in reality, Nashville has a rich history intertwined with public sexuality. This element of modern Nashville can only exist through the efforts of undermining and ultimately eliminating the face of adult enterprise through urban renewal programs and public health initiatives. For this thesis, the definition of public sexuality is businesses, activities, and public areas that recognize or emphasize sexual matters or beings. While these may not have direct connection to sexual activities, they each have the potential to influence an individual sexual life through products, information, experiences, and their ability to represent the current cultural attitude toward sexuality and certain sexual activities. The public perception of these adult businesses being a
vehicle for the spread of communicable diseases and immorality is not necessarily the reality of the situation.

In 1863, Nashville became the first city in the United States to legalize prostitution. Prostitutes found a steady supply of clients among the Union and Confederate troops. The spread of venereal disease was a problem that many people in the nineteenth century found pressing. Contemporaries believed that women, these courtesans, spread sexually transmitted diseases while soldiers did not. In 1863, Lt. Col. George Spalding believed that the problem could be solved by physically moving the prostitutes out of Nashville. He ordered the prostitutes to board a ship, the Idahoe, which would head to Louisville and ideally rid Nashville of this issue. Upon the ship’s arrival at Louisville, the military and civil authorities refused to allow the boat to dock. Therefore, the Idahoe continued on to Cincinnati. There, the ship and those onboard were quarantined for two weeks and then the captain received orders to return the prostitutes to Tennessee. The Idahoe docked back in Nashville on August 4. Military officials were then forced to reexamine the situation. It was decided that regulation was the next best option for controlling these diseases. The Provost Marshall in occupied Nashville, by order of General Granger, notified all prostitutes in the city to report to his office on or before August 15. Furthermore, upon presentation of a surgeon’s certificate and payment of five dollars, they received licenses. All such women found without certificate and license, after the specified date, would be arrested and incarcerated in the workhouse for up to thirty days.59

59 See Catherine Clinton, Public Women and the Confederacy (Marquette University Press, 1999); Thomas Power Lowry, The Story the Soldiers Wouldn’t Tell: Sex in the Civil War
Through the power of public health concerns, officials regulated prostitutes and the brothel businesses during the Civil War era. Public health fear begets commercial sex regulation. This relationship between commercial sex regulation and public health exists through the manipulation and enforcement of laws, ordinances, and codes concerning communicable disease and sexually transmitted infection. Nashville’s relationship to public displays of adult sexuality did not end with the conclusion of the war. Downtown Nashville continued to have centralized adult centers as it grew into a booming urban locale. Nashville also continued to regulate sexuality and these adult businesses through the forum of public health. When consciously used by city officials, public health was still a driving force in reshaping the urban landscape into a tourist centric space over a century. This is analyzed in more depth in chapter three.

Downtown Nashville was important during the Civil War because of its proximity to the Cumberland River. The brothels settled in the smelly and dirty area closest to the river, which was undesirable for “respectable” businesses and homes. Transportation, commercialized enterprises, and industry heavily polluted the waterway. The prostitutes were also conveniently located in regards to the largest portion of their clients—the soldiers. Once the Civil War was over, the district’s association with vices did not end. Nashville continued to be a home for some prostitutes after the Civil War era but Nashville began to develop adult

centers with bars and adult entertainment into the twentieth century. The areas that housed concentrated pockets of adult businesses were in the former red-light districts.

1.2 Early Twentieth Century

As Nashville grew as an urban area, adult businesses were tolerated and even promoted because they brought visitors and revenue to the city. John Egerton, the author of *Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries 1780-1980*, stated:

> In the first decade of the twentieth century, Nashville showed some unmistakable qualities of a rising American city. Its achievements as well as its conflicts—of which the railroad war was only one were of a scope, volume, and level of complexity that only an urban center could produce. Physical features—buildings, streets, open spaces—provided the broad canvas. Large and growing institutions—government, business, education, the church, the press—provided the medium. Men of talent and power—and increasingly, women too—grasped the opportunities and made things happen.⁶¹

However, the value of landscape also evolved over the twentieth century. At this time, Nashville claimed the title of “the first city in the Southland.”⁶² The construction of Union Station, a terminal station of the L&N railways, firmly tied Nashville to the nation’s major railway centers. This station bolstered the city’s growing railroad industry, while diminishing the ability of the steamboat industry to survive.⁶³ The new railway gave Nashville more fuel to continue its growth resulting in the population of Nashville nearly tripling from 1880 to 1910. It was

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⁶² ibid, 166.
certainly one of the largest and fastest growing cities in the South. Even as Nashville was developing, city officials still found time to regulate public sexuality. Officials stated in the 1909 Nashville City Ordinances

> Whoever shall, in this city, appear in any public place naked, or in a dress not belonging to his or her sex, or in an indecent exposure of his or her person, or be guilty of any indecent or lewd act or behavior, or shall exhibit, sell or offer for sale, any obscene, vulgar, or libelous book, picture, painting, paper or publication of any character whatever that shall be adjudged vulgar, libelous or obscene, or shall exhibit or perform any indecent, immoral or lewd play or other representation, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

Despite the regulation of adult or sexual behavior, Nashville contained a significant adult culture. The core of that culture could be found in Printer’s Alley. Traditionally the center of Nashville’s nightlife, Printer’s Alley was, in its earliest days, a series of posts where men bound for the courthouse hitched their horses. Printer’s Alley is one of the most popularly visited places in Nashville. This narrow alley has a long history intertwined with Nashville’s development as an urban area. Located between Third and Fourth Avenues stretching from Union to Church Streets, Printer’s Alley became well known before the turn of the twentieth century as the location of many of Nashville’s publishing and printing companies. In the late nineteenth century, cafes, saloons, bars, gambling halls, and speakeasies opened in Printer’s Alley to cater to the large number of businessmen after they ended their workday. Printer’s Alley became

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64 ibid, 172. In 1880, the population was about 40,000. In 1900, the population was a little over 80,000. In 1910, the population had reached over 110,000.
67 This area soon began to attract judges, lawyers, politicians, and other Nashville elite to these after work wind-down activities.
“Nashville’s dirty little secret” and some even considered it “sleazy.” No matter what vice someone was looking for, he or she could find it there—booze, food, adult entertainment, and music were plentiful. Prostitution and brothels cannot be fully equated with adult bookstores and adult venues, but they have a connection through their public display of sexuality through business. At the turn of the century, Nashville was growing into an up-and-coming metropolis. Various businesses were booming and staking out property in downtown, including adult stores and adult entertainment venues.

In the years between the World Wars I and II, Nashville continued to grow. The “Roaring Twenties were filled with big business deals, bootleg booze, gambling, growth, and revivals.” The Alley thrived even after the sale of liquor was outlawed in 1919 due to Prohibition. Hilary House, elected Mayor at the time was quoted by reporters as saying; “Protect them? I do better than that, I patronize them.” He was mayor for 21 of the 30 years that the sale of alcohol was illegal. Hilary’s actions are just another example of discretionary and selective enforcement by local officials influencing the existence and viability of a vice downtown. Six years after the end of national Prohibition in 1939, Nashville made it legal to buy liquor in stores. Although liquor was legal to sell in stores in Nashville, you could not buy it by the drink. For the next 30 years, the Alley flourished as the “mixing bar” came into existence. Patrons would bring their own

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68 "The Alley, and Beyond," Tennessean 11 May 1995, Printer’s Alley folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN).
69 Teddy Bart, “When Printer’s Alley was Like an Alluring, Forbidden Woman,” Tennessean 12 Dec. 1999, Printer’s Alley folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN).
70 Egerton, Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries, 198.
71 Bart, “When Printer’s Alley.”
bottle and the bartenders mix drinks for them. In 1969, Nashville voted for liquor by the drink. The survival of these establishments through a period of illegalization of their commodity demonstrates significant public demand, at least enough support to enable their continuance.

Tennessee Valley Authority began in 1933 and along with it came electric power that encouraged the economic growth and development in Nashville. TVA introduced electricity to the entire state of Tennessee and bordering counties in neighboring states that would have largely been without electricity otherwise.\textsuperscript{72} Nashville would also see the start of WSM Radio Station 1925, with the Grand Ole Opry beginning the following year—an occurrence that would change Nashville's future forever. This secured Nashville's reputation as a musical center and sparked its durable nickname of Music City. The Opry, still staged live every week, is America’s longest-running radio show, in continuous production for more than 85 years. WSM AM radio signal could be transmitted as far away as Chicago and New York.\textsuperscript{73} It ignited the careers of hundreds of country stars and lit the fuse for Nashville to explode into a geographic center for touring and recording.

The modern-day empire of Music Row, a collection of recording studios, record labels, entertainment offices and other music-associated businesses, populates the area. Nashville therefore became synonymous with country music to most of the nation. Egerton claims that “money and leisure time made Nashvillians eager to be entertained,” so attention turned toward the theaters

\textsuperscript{72} Don Doyle, \textit{Nashville Since the 1920s} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 106.  
\textsuperscript{73} Egerton, \textit{Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries}, 222.
downtown, including the Ryman Auditorium.\textsuperscript{74} Music entrepreneurs such as Roy Acuff (1903–1992) made Nashville the Country Music capital after World War II. Acuff joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1938, and although his popularity as a musician waned in the late 1940s, he remained one of the Opry’s key figures and promoters for nearly four decades. In 1942, he co-founded the first major Nashville-based country music publishing company—Acuff-Rose Music.\textsuperscript{75} This segment of downtown eventually grew into a local and tourist hotspot. The introduction of country music-related tourism as a significant role player in this narrative will be further examined in the next chapter.

Strip joints and adult clubs were very successful through the 1960s. Teddy Bart, who performed his piano bar act many times in Printer’s Alley, remembered the gambling, the exotic dancers, and the time when a “working girl” of Printer’s Alley filled the desire of a nationally known evangelist for “companionship.”\textsuperscript{76} The adult entertainment businesses in Printer’s Alley started decline in late 1960s as Nashville officials started to create regulations meant to force these businesses out of this now valuable commercial property.

1.3 Nashville Becoming a Modern Urban City

No aspect of Nashville’s recent history is more striking than the far-reaching changes that have taken place in its size, structure, and institutional life. Indeed, the range and intensity of Nashville’s social change since 1940 have

\textsuperscript{74} ibid, 221.
\textsuperscript{76} Bart, “When Printer’s Alley.”
made it a “new city.” The population of the city and surrounding county grew exponentially during the first half of the twentieth century and the local business expansion created a configuration of suburbs. This growth was seen as disruptive to a significant portion of the citizens of Nashville and Davidson County.77

This change came as a result of various circumstances and forces. Some developments, such as the spectacular growth of the new suburbia, reflected the acceleration of aforementioned trends. Other factors were external events, such as World War II. The war rejuvenated and strengthened the economy, stimulated the movement of people into and within the city, and provided a context for more rapid social change.78 Technological and scientific advances also encouraged change, leading to increased productivity as well as the growth of “new consumerism.” Communications technology helped pave the way for Nashville’s emergence as the center and major dispenser of country music.79

Nashville also faced an “urban crisis” in the postwar period. It was rooted in the swift and disorderly growth of the city’s suburbs, in the neglect and deterioration of its inner sections, and in the enormous strain placed upon its facilities and institutions by a sprawling and fragmented population. Many American cities undertook redevelopment campaigns in the decades after World War II, aimed at improving commercial and transportation facilities — and at

77 Egerton, Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries, 233.
79 Egerton, Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries, 233.
erasing what local leaders saw as the social and health problems of “urban blight.” The structure of local government itself was part of the urban crisis, since overlapping agencies, piecemeal policy-making, and divided authority had made it almost impossible to meet area-wide problems. However, the consolidation of the county and city governments into the Metropolitan (Metro) government would also become significant in the ability of the mayor’s office to push urban renewal and dramatic change downtown. While expansion of disposable income and commercialized entertainment was happening nationally in the twentieth century, Nashville’s government structure affected the types and methods of change that would ultimately define the city’s identity.

1.4 Governmental Change-up

Nashville’s Metro Government, in contrast to the previous coexistence of the city and county governments, is significant in understanding why urban renewal and policy changes were so efficient at the time. Having a consolidated government allows the community to react quickly to proposed economic development prospects. Instead of having to deal with two or more governments, prospective businesses have one point of contact.⁸⁰ There is less red tape. One government will eliminate some discord, such as annexation disputes, and local planning and zoning issues may be more readily resolved.


Urban areas across Tennessee began to experience rapid growth after World War II, especially Nashville. Suburbs developed in Davidson County outside the city limits of Nashville. These suburbs began to surround the city fully. While vast development occurred in the county, the city's tax base began to erode. The county could not provide its residents who lived outside the city limits adequate urban services such as sewers. Fire protection in the county was provided only as a private service to those residents who contracted for it. The outward migration of industry from the city of Nashville to the county suburbs eliminated a significant portion of the tax income. Divisions and inequities between the city and the county became increasingly evident. The city and the county competed for tax revenues and there was much overlap of services. County residents enjoyed many city services such as the use of the libraries and the parks system without paying city taxes to fund those services.\footnote{David A. Booth, \textit{Metropolitics: The Nashville Consolidation} (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963); Carole S. Bucy, "Your Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County," in \textit{Nashville: The League of Women Voters of Nashville} (1990); James C. Coomer and Charlie B. Tyer, \textit{Nashville Metropolitan Government, the First Decade} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985); Charles A. Zuzak, Kenneth E. McNeil, and Frederic Bergerson. \textit{Beyond the Ballot: Organized Citizen Participation in Metropolitan Nashville} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1971).}

Counties in Tennessee could only perform services that were specifically authorized by the state legislature, while the city could perform any services that were not prohibited by the legislature. The city had the authority to render
services, while in the county, the creation of any department or board had to be
authorized by the General Assembly. As early as 1915, a city commission in
Nashville recommended massive annexation and the formation of a single city-
county government. A unified government would be achieved, but it would be the
city’s government. This idea did not gain public support and was not passed at
this time. As the suburban areas of the county grew, it became increasingly
difficult for the county to provide adequate services for those areas where rapid
growth was occurring. The primary services that the county rendered were roads
and schools. Much of the county continued to be rural farmland with fewer needs
for urban services than the suburbs.83

In 1952, the Community Services Commission, a joint commission of
Davidson County and the city of Nashville, created to study the provision of
services, published a new study, A Future for Nashville. This study advocated the
consolidation of city and county government into one Metropolitan government.
Soon thereafter, a charter commission was created. The commission was
composed of ten members, of whom the county judge would appoint five and the
major would appoint five.84

After several months of work and study, the commission presented its
Charter to the voters for referendum. Mayor Ben West, County Judge Beverly
Briley, and both Nashville newspapers supported the Charter.85 There seemed
to be little opposition to the idea of consolidation. A citizens group, Citizens for
Better Government, gave speeches on the Charter, but there was no organized

83 ibid.
84 ibid.
85 ibid.
political campaign to get the Charter passed. Shortly before the June 17, 1958 referendum, opposition to the idea began to surface in sections of the county where residents were fearful that Metropolitan government would mean a tax increase. When the referendum occurred, the Charter passed in the city of Nashville, but failed in the county.\textsuperscript{86}

As soon as the Charter was defeated, Mayor West began to implement plans to generate revenue for the city. He saw annexation as a means to achieve consolidation. This, however, would mean that the city would incorporate large areas of the county into the city until the city limits reached the boundaries of the county. Annexation would raise needed taxes to provide city services; however, no plan for the delivery of additional city services was implemented. The Nashville City Council passed two annexation ordinances and created the wheel tax, or green-sticker law, taxing the automobiles of commuting residents of the suburbs. The affected residents saw their property taxes increase after annexation, but received few, if any, city services.\textsuperscript{87}

Many of the residents of the newly annexed areas were outraged that they were now living inside the city with no additional city services. They began to call for another referendum on consolidation. In March 1961, the Davidson County legislative delegation passed another private act to create a Metropolitan charter. The second commission studied the first charter and why it had failed.\textsuperscript{88}

When the Charter was completed, the size of the Council had been increased from twenty-one members to forty members. There were specific

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
details in the Charter to provide for existing personnel in the city and the county. The functions of health and hospitals had been combined in the first Charter; the second Charter separated these two boards. Provisions were made in the Charter for a transitional school board to implement the consolidation of the schools. The second Charter attempted to address the concerns of the residents of the county who had been annexed. The Charter created two service districts, the General Services District and the Urban Services District, to provide for a differential in tax levels. Residents of the Urban Services District had a full range of city services. The areas that comprised the General Services District had a lower tax rate until services were provided.\textsuperscript{89}

After the Charter was written, a countywide political campaign was launched to urge support of the Charter. Mayor Ben West and the \textit{Nashville Banner} no longer supported consolidation and now opposed this Charter. Judge Beverly Briley and \textit{The Tennessean} led the campaign in support of consolidation.\textsuperscript{90} On June 28, 1962, a majority of 56 percent of the voters of the city and the county voted in favor of the creation of a Metropolitan government. Beverly Briley was elected the first Mayor in November and Metropolitan government was formally implemented on April 1, 1963. Nashville became the national pioneer in Metropolitan organization. Although other cities had partial

\textsuperscript{89} ibid.
consolidation, Nashville was the first city in the country to achieve true consolidation.\(^91\)

In some respects, Nashville was undergoing a process of modernization. The result was a new and healthier environment and more adaptive and creative social system. In economic affairs, for instance, new opportunities and initiatives brought self-sustaining growth and a more mature economy. The consolidation of the city and county governments in the early 1960s provided a single governmental entity, which centralized decision-making, facilitated comprehensive planning, and made the political process more coherent and workable.\(^92\)

The benefits of metropolitan consolidation were even more apparent in the city’s relations with the federal government. Under Briley, and continuing under Mayor Richard Fulton, Nashville developed an effective team of planners and lobbied in Washington, D.C., for grants that flowed with increasing velocity to the nation’s cities during the 1960s. Fortuitously, metropolitan consolidation came just before President Lyndon Johnson launched the Great Society. On a scale that dwarfed FDR’s New Deal, Johnson carried out a “war on poverty” and attacked the “urban crisis” with such programs as “model cities,” designed to revitalize inner-city neighborhoods.\(^93\) Metro pursued an aggressive course in response to these federal programs. Briley’s office set up the Policy Analysis and


\(^92\) Egerton, *Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries,* 234. See also Spinney “Municipal Government in Nashville.”

Program Analysis units to concentrate on the acquisition and monitoring of federal grants. These units tapped the intellectual resources of Nashville’s universities, medical facilities, and business community and brought local experts into league with city and state government in a variety of federally sponsored projects. The Urban Observatory, set up in the late 1960s, became a grant sponsor for projects that linked Metro to academic consultants at Vanderbilt, Tennessee State, and Fisk universities. By the early 1970s, Metro was involved in over 170 federal grants at one time, and the city ranked well above larger rivals in federal funds received.\textsuperscript{94}

In Washington, then Congressman Richard Fulton, elected to the first of seven terms in 1962, represented Metropolitan Nashville’s interests effectively through his key positions on congressional committees. Fulton was a young liberal Democrat who quickly established contacts with the party leaders during the Kennedy and Johnson years. He was among the few southern congressional representative to back such legislation as the voting rights, fair housing, and fair employment acts, and he earned the support of blacks and poor people back in Nashville. As a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, beginning in his second term, and chair of its Subcommittee on Public Assistance, Fulton had his finger on the pulse of the Great Society.

Congressman Fulton formed a strong link in the chain between Washington and the mayor’s office during the 1960s. Nashville learned to play the angles in federal grant funding. Nashville enjoyed an edge over rivals because its consolidated government ensured a coherent governmental structure.

\textsuperscript{94} Doyle, \textit{Nashville Since the 1920s}, 217.
and monitoring system for carrying out federal programs. Nashville’s planners and politicians learned how to speak the language that the federal granting agencies used, and they worked diligently to earn favor with Washington.

1.5 Transition to Tourist Destination

As Nashville was experiencing this political restructuring, it was also coming into its own as a tourist location. After the Grand Ole Opry opened in 1925, Nashville began its journey to become synonymous with music, particularly country music. The success of the Grand Ole Opry gave new life to the city and continuously brought visitors into the area. Opryland USA, a theme park located about 20 minutes northeast from downtown, opened in 1972. This music-themed amusement park highlighted Nashville's association with music. Five years later, the Opryland Hotel and Convention Center opened attracting visitors, conventions, and more businesses to Nashville.95 Downtown had to revamp its image to draw Opryland/Grand Ole Opry visitors back downtown.

By 1972, Nashville officials stated that they were in the midst of a great development boom and claimed that Nashville was experiencing the greatest revitalization of any major Southeastern urban area. The growth in businesses and industries, the expanding influence on the music front, and the successful addition of several tourist attractions was only the beginning for this “new city.”96 By 1976, Nashville was looking to use its connection to country music to expand

95 The emergence of Nashville as the Country Music Capital will be examined more in chapter two.
its tourist draw. Campaigns for development downtown centered around the desire to mix the old with new, keeping the heritage of downtown while adding modern structures, like malls, shopping centers, and pedestrian parks. One citizen wrote, “While music draws many visitors to Nashville, the music and entertainment industry can grow even larger if Nashville draws them to town with the lure of a colorful, creative and cosmopolitan city.”

Mayor Richard Fulton whole-heartedly supported expanding tourism in Nashville, so much so that he created the Metro Nashville Tourism Commission to launch an “aggressive program to attract even more tourist dollars.” As Nashville became more established as a tourist town, music center, and urban hub of the South, the value of landscape grew dramatically. The land with a view of the Cumberland River was no longer undesirable. The rise in property values and the transformation of Nashville into a family tourist city influenced the eventual trend to push adult businesses outside of the downtown district.

By the 1970s, Nashville had become a more established tourist destination with a significant portion of visitors being families. Nashville was making an effort to become more family friendly. The introduction of the country music industry established the situation that family centered businesses were economically viable because they brought in external money from visitors. In

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99 “Entertainment Eyed for Riverside Center,” Tennessean. Aug. 8, 1976, Unprocessed scrapbooks, Nashville Metro Library (Nashville, Tennessee). New riverfront development aimed to bring more business into the area, beautify the area near the river, and increase Metro income up to 400%.
contrast, adult businesses relied heavily on a limited local patronage. There was a call to make Nashville a vacation destination; government officials, planners, and business owners wanted people to stay more than a couple days.\textsuperscript{100} This shift coupled with rising property values downtown gave officials motivation to push out the adult businesses from this coveted downtown area.

\textsuperscript{100} Bill Hance, “Connector to Music Row will be Finished in June,” Dec. 17, 1976, Unprocessed scrapbooks, Nashville Metro Library (Nashville, Tennessee).
CHAPTER 2

URBAN RENEWAL

2.1 Nashville’s Early Urban Renewal-Housing

Following World War II, and continuing into the early 1970s, “urban renewal” referred primarily to public efforts to revitalize aging and decaying inner cities, although some suburban communities undertook such projects as well. Comprised of massive demolition, slum clearance, and rehabilitation, urban renewal began as a local and state level initiative. The earliest emphasis was placed on slum clearance or “redevelopment,” which was followed by a focused effort to conserve threatened but not yet deteriorated neighborhoods.\(^{101}\) After Nashville became associated with the country music scene, urban development entered politicians’ agendas.

In 1937, Congress passed a national housing act, authorizing millions of federal dollars for public housing projects across the country. Within a year, the Public Works Administration was building two projects in Nashville.\(^{102}\) The new legislation had three primary functions. First, it expanded the city’s power of eminent domain and enabled it to seize property for the new “public purposes” of slum clearance or prevention. Second, it pioneered the “write-down” formula,


\(^{102}\) Don Doyle, *Nashville Since the 1920s*, 121-129. One, for whites, was called Cheatham Place and was built in a North Nashville slum previously known as Cab Hollow. The other, for blacks, was built adjacent to Fisk University. The city named it Andrew Jackson Courts. There was a racial element in the implementation in urban renewal programs outside of the centralized downtown area. This small area was virtually exclusively handled in regards to the public sexuality and tourism elements.
which permitted the city to convey such property to private developers at its
greatly reduced “use” value after the municipality subsidized its purchase and
preparation. Last, the state provided assistance in relocating site residents—an
absolute necessity in a time of severe housing shortages to enable the clearance
of crowded, inner-city sites. The Federal Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, and
their later amendments, provided a national framework and greater financial
resources for the renewal effort. The clear intent was to offer public assistance to
the private sector in the hope of heading off an urban crisis.

At its inception, public housing in Nashville was touted as a cure for
society’s ills. “Like a breath of spring...a new and clean little town within Nashville
is bustling toward completion to house people who formerly existed in dilapidated
and unsanitary slums,” one Tennessean reporter wrote in 1937. “The spot will
resemble a cozy English village covering approximately 22 acres...situated in a
flourishing site flooded with green lawns, flower and vegetable gardens, parks,
paved sidewalks, and an air of freshness and healthfulness.”

This positive perception of public housing would remain common until the early 1960s.

After Congress passed another massive housing bill in 1940, Nashville got
another influx of public housing money. By the time America entered World War
II, the city had two more projects—Boscobel Heights (later known as Cayce
Homes) in East Nashville and Napier Homes in South Nashville. The Nashville
Housing Authority was also planning three more.

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103 Bill Carey, “A City Swept Clean: How Urban Renewal, For Better and For Worse, Created the
City We Know Today” Nashville Scene, Sept 2001.
104 ibid.
2.2 Introduction of Downtown Urban Development to Urban Renewal

After World War II, Congress passed the Housing Act of 1949, which stretched the limits of local government power. The legislation authorized cities to buy land using power of eminent domain—not just for civic projects such as roads and public housing—but for resale to private owners, who could put commercial, industrial, or residential developments on the site under master plans approved by the local planning commission. With the act, Congress committed to funding two-thirds of the cost of urban renewal projects, with local governments required to fund the remaining third.\textsuperscript{105} This act established a legislative precedent for eminent domain that remains today. It not only set in motion massive urban renewal programs across the country; it also gave local governments the legal authority to help large employers acquire land for the buildings that dominate the skylines of virtually every American city today.

Nashville’s leaders were ready. Before the 1949 act, Nashville planning director Charles Hawkins met with representatives of Gov. Gordon Browning’s administration to develop a plan for the blighted area on the north side of the State Capitol.\textsuperscript{106} That plan called for clearing 97 acres. About half of the land, then, would be sold to the state and left undeveloped as green space around the Capitol. The flat area that winds around Capitol Hill would be redeveloped into a commercial corridor.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} “Urban Renewal Information, 1958,” folder 91, box 1, Tennessee Department of Planning records, Tennessee State Archives (Nashville, TN).
\textsuperscript{106} This area is about less than a mile northwest of Printer’s Alley and Broadway.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid.
Under the influence of U.S. Sen. Kenneth McKellar, Nashville’s Capitol Hill Redevelopment Plan became the nation’s first urban renewal project funded by Congress. Within a couple of years, more than 400 homes along roads such as Gay Street north of downtown were assessed, acquired, and razed. All traces of the old streets were removed, and James Robertson Parkway was laid out and paved. Resale of the land to private developers was delayed by a major lawsuit, filed by Bijou Theater owner Alfred Starr and Nashville grocer H.G. Hill Jr. against the Nashville Housing Authority. In that lawsuit, Starr and Hill claimed that the purchase of their land through eminent domain for resale to another private owner violated their property rights. However, Starr and Hill lost their case before the U.S. Supreme Court, which decided that such taking was legitimate.108

In 1958, Mayor Ben West and the Nashville Housing Authority moved on to another big urban renewal project, this time on a 2,051-acre area of East Nashville roughly bounded by the Cumberland River on the west and south and Eastland/Cleveland Avenue on the North.109 Unlike the Capitol Hill project, East Nashville was to be a “rehabilitation” area rather than a “slum clearance” area. What this meant was that the housing authority would not buy and clear every piece of property, but handled each parcel on a case-by-case basis. Some houses would be torn down to make way for commercial or industrial use or a

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108 Carey, “A City Swept Clean.”
government project. Other houses would be allowed to remain, but only if the owner brought the building up to existing codes.\footnote{Steven Hoskin, \textit{A Restless Landscape: Building Nashville History and Seventh and Drexel} (ProQuest, 2009), 1-42.}

In 1959, the Nashville Housing Authority began selling lots on James Robertson Parkway for redevelopment. The city helped the land sale by buying one large piece for a new arena, now known as Municipal Auditorium. By the mid-1960s, a Holiday Inn, a large apartment building called Capitol Towers, and small office buildings for IBM and the Tennessee Education Association had been built along the parkway. Many of these commercial tenants would have left downtown Nashville for the suburbs had it not been for the Capitol Hill Redevelopment Project. The program gave new life to downtown and showed business owners that Nashville was looking toward future development.\footnote{Paul Clements, Excerpt 1 from oral history interview with Beverly Briley, 1980 April 03. Nashville Public Library Digital Collections. See also Presentation by Thomas Patton, "The Businessman's Stake in Urban Renewal," folder 5, (Urban Renewal, 1958), box 39, Health Department Records, Nashville Metro Archives (Nashville, TN).}

According to official documents, the Capitol Hill Redevelopment Project displaced 301 families and 196 single residents who previously lived in the area. Gerald Gimre, executive director of the Nashville Housing Authority, once wrote that most of those residents were African American and "many went into low-rent public housing projects."\footnote{Carey, “A City Swept Clean.”} Because many of those projects had waiting lists, and because Nashville’s newspapers published few articles about the fate of poor blacks who were being moved, it is almost impossible to obtain more details about what happened to them. The project also displaced African American businesses. Often areas with notable numbers of African Americans were
deemed residential because that made the process of eminent domain easier. Owners in the area objected to the residential classification because many businesses were present, mostly African American ones. They saw this as a method to try to dispose of these businesses on the grounds of race, and they fought against being labeled as a "slum." The lawsuits that resulted in this process did have some negative effects on the public perception of the project. However, in terms of fiscal planning and beautification, the project was a success. It alleviated traffic problems downtown and provided state employees with desperately needed parking. Property tax revenues from the area actually increased because of the sale and redevelopment of the land.

Moreover, for the first time ever, Nashville residents could appreciate the beauty of their state Capitol, no longer flanked by slums. "In 1950, Capitol Hill was two-thirds slums and dilapidated commercial structures and one-third littered streets and dismal alleyways," a Tennessean article declared in 1958. "Today it is a clean and graceful area of parkways, sloping lawns, new streets, and 40 acres of sorely needed desirable new downtown building sites." Nashville even received national attention for the success of the Capital Hill project, stating that the "renewal project [had] returned a double dividend of both pride and profit."

One of President John F. Kennedy’s first executive acts, the Omnibus Housing Bill of 1961, was to increase urban renewal spending, leading the

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114 Hoskin, A Restless Landscape. See also "War on Ugliness," folder 5, box 39, Louise Davis Papers, Tennessee State Archives (Nashville, TN); "Capitol Hill," folder 18, box 13, Louise Davis Papers, Tennessee State Archives (Nashville, TN).
115 Carey, “A City Swept Clean.”
Nashville Housing Authority to begin work on three more plans. One was a redevelopment area downtown that would eliminate Nashville’s old Public Square and enable companies to acquire enough land to build large buildings if they chose. Another was a large urban renewal area in Edgehill, stretching from what is now the Music Row area south and east to Interstate 65. A third was a neighborhood, then known as the University Center, between Vanderbilt and what is now Interstate 440.117

After houses were cleared, a number of things happened to these properties in the Nashville urban renewal areas. Sometimes a parcel would be grouped together with others and converted to commercial or industrial use. Some land was turned into new roads, public facilities, or public housing owned by the Nashville Housing Authority. The city completely reshaped a part of one area into a wide boulevard and commercial area now known as Music Row. This area would become permanently attached to the now-famous Nashville country music scene and business.

Urban renewal programs give officials ways to lead and transform areas; they provide an opportunity for officials to undertake a long-range program of improvements which otherwise would not be financially feasible. That power means that urban renewal is also political. Officials used urban renewal for campaigning. Their ideas concerning urban renewal gave voters an insight to their vision of Nashville’s future. Mayor Beverly Briley made urban renewal an integral aspect of his political agenda. Even as he was campaigning for the

creation of the metro government, Briley saw urban renewal as a necessary move for the future of Nashville. His vision of urban renewal was a balance of housing and urban development. However, as his term continued, housing became a larger focal point in the urban renewal planning. He saw the growth of slums as a critical issue and devoted urban renewal time and funding to eradicating them. Comparatively, Fulton, the subsequent mayor, moved away from complete redevelopment of housing to renovation, which was more cost efficient so more money could be devoted to urban development downtown.

2.3 The Evolving Reputation of Nashville

The cultural and economic shifts that define Nashville’s revitalization form a chronological story contingent upon government partnerships. The people involved in these partnerships understood that Nashville’s success was dependent on its architectural and cultural identity. While downtown transformed significantly in the twentieth century—from porno row, to honky tonk row, to tourist row—its unique layers celebrate the area’s rich cultural and architectural patina that defines this distinctive area of Nashville.

When the Grand Ole Opry made the decision to move its Saturday night country music performance out of its 50-year home at the Ryman Auditorium in the early 1970s, downtown Nashville was, by most accounts, already in a state of

dilapidation. Downtown began its transformation in the 1960s and early 1970s. The area was described at the time of the Opry’s relocation as blighted and populated by prostitutes and panhandlers, but with surprisingly little crime.\textsuperscript{120}

Despite the lack of crime, downtown was sometimes just too much for many Opry fans who did not live in or have much association with urban environments: “the Opry people just don’t know how to handle them [prostitutes and panhandlers].”\textsuperscript{121} With many fans uneasy about the environment of downtown and the Ryman needing costly repairs and maintenance, the Opry fled Lower Broadway for Opryland, a new music-oriented theme park 12 miles outside of Nashville. Downtown became almost exclusively the domain of prostitutes and panhandlers, down on their luck musicians, and the establishments that catered to them. Local Nashvillians recalled the Opry’s departure from downtown as the nail in the coffin for the once thriving area.\textsuperscript{122}

When Opryland opened in 1972, much of Nashville’s tourism veered away from the city and toward county music’s only theme park, which included a convention complex with hotel and multiple stages for live musical performances. With these accoutrements, Opryland offered a vision of Nashville and country music that was family friendly and upbeat. Opryland was able to draw tourists away from Nashville’s downtown and the Ryman because of its focus on theme and a commercialization of mainstream interests. Opryland’s prominence in

\textsuperscript{121} ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} “Lower Broadway- Once Proud, It Now Draws the Rootless, Restless, Desperate,” \textit{Nashville Tennessean}, undated, Adult Entertainment folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN).
Nashville’s tourism industry at the time, at least in tourism guides of the late 1970s and early 1980s, included passages that read as promotional tools for the theme park rather than independent publications. The guidebooks defined Opryland, especially after its sale to Gaylord Entertainment in the early 1980s, as the embodiment of Music City, U.S.A.\footnote{Joli Jensen, \textit{The Nashville Sound: Authenticity, Commercialization and Country Music} (Country Music Foundation Press, 1998).} Opryland though, with its interest in family-oriented leisure activities, eschewed much of the authentic history, background and place that defined the ballads of country music, and the Ryman Auditorium was blandly footnoted in the guides as a relic of country music’s past. Most of the businesses downtown catered to musicians in spite of the Opry’s absence from the area, but the block was not free from the adult venues that blighted the streetscape.

Jane Jacobs praised diversity as a signifier of a successful urban environment, but it must be understood that not all forms of diversity in Nashville were considered desirable.\footnote{Jacobs, \textit{The Death and Life of Great American Cities}, 143-51, 222-256; see also Citizen Participation in Community Development: An Issue Paper,” undated, Box 204 (Urban Policy Area-Housing-Model Cities, 1969-1974), Mayor Briley Papers-Urban Policy Area, Nashville Metro Archives (Nashville, TN); Citizen Participation: An Analytical Study of the Literature,” June 1968, Box 201 (Urban Policy Area-Housing-Codes 1971-1972), Mayor Briley Papers-Urban Policy Area, Nashville Metro Archives (Nashville, TN).} The mix of businesses in downtown in the 1970s and 1980s actually threatened the area’s livelihood and future success. The vacancies and types of business were the results of the Opry’s departure according to Nashville \textit{Banner} and \textit{Tennessean} newspaper articles of the late 1970s and early 1980s.\footnote{Jensen, \textit{The Nashville Sound}} The presence of adult venues and the customers they attracted, as well as the vacant storefronts, created an undesirable form of...
diversity that caused some long-time business owners to close their downtown locations.\textsuperscript{126} Ironically, the diversity that helped to further downtown’s shabbiness and decrepitude is what Nashville’s Metropolitan Historical Commission (MHC) rallied to protect during the active years of the area’s renewal.

Mayor Briley and the professional planners and city officials who served with him, may not have delivered Nashville into the metropolitan utopia that some reformers had envisioned before 1963. However, the arrival of metropolitan government obliterated the demoralizing dilemma of factionalism and petty politics that seemed to obstruct any progress toward reform.

2.4 Fulton’s Urban Renewal-Downtown

When Briley retired in 1975 at the end of his third term, Richard Fulton returned from fourteen years in Washington to run for mayor. Fulton, born in Nashville in 1927, had been part of the generation who came to age politically in the 1950s, eager to move the city forward.\textsuperscript{127} Traditionally, politicians have sought local and state offices as progressive stepping-stones leading away from the city politics. However, Fulton came in the opposite direction. Given the growing importance of the federal-city partnership, Fulton’s knowledge of Washington would prove a valuable asset.

Fulton’s experience in drawing federal funds to Nashville allowed the city to continue earning federal grants through multiple presidencies. “In 1978 alone, the total federal outlays that went to the city, universities, hospitals, and other

\textsuperscript{126} Hill, “Country Music is Wherever the Soul of a Country Music Fan is.”

\textsuperscript{127} Doyle, Nashville Since the 1920s, 217.
area programs and agencies amounted to more than $927 million." Fulton redirected Briley’s program of revitalization towards downtown.

By the time that Fulton became Metro Mayor in 1975, Nashville’s connection to country music had given the city new life. Fulton saw the potential for the city if it embraced this newfound fame. He also used the new Metro government structure to his advantage. Fulton saw the biggest benefits of this new system as less red tape in legislation and not having the competition for money between the county and the city. Fulton wasted no time in making his presence known to Nashvillians. Within three months after he took office, Fulton declared that he alone would set Metro policy. He believed, as the elected official, he had the power to speak for citizens of Nashville and Davidson County while the non-elected officials did not share that power. He also fired numerous government officials, including five department heads, in the first year of his term.

Fulton transformed Church Street with new sidewalks, a serpentine street way, brick pavement, modern lighting, and planters that enlivened the area and inspired many retailers to stay downtown. Red bricks represent one key example of Fulton’s very specific vision for downtown. During the Church Street

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128 ibid, 220.
renovation, his first big renovation project, Fulton wanted the sidewalks repaved with bricks and flowerpots added. Fulton’s vision was so detailed that when the brick came in the wrong color (gray instead of red), he ordered the removal of the gray ones that had already been used, donated the remaining grey bricks to the Salvation Army, and reordered red bricks. There was significant public outcry concerning his insistence of the change and the fact that the city was not refunded on the first order. However, his projects did get attention; he was nationally awarded for his projects when Nashville won first place in the “Keep America Beautiful, Incorporated” contest. Fulton’s projects came with mixed reviews locally.

The new reality for Nashville in the 1970s and 1980s was a downtown so bereft of commercial appeal and enterprise that Mayor Fulton forwent the idea of celebrating the city’s past in order to concentrate on a major reconstruction of the downtown area for a new convention, tourist, and retail businesses. Fulton had a distinct and personal vision for what Nashville should become. He wanted to

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136 Doyle, Nashville Since the 1920s, 265.
physically clean up, update the sidewalks and street decorations, bring in professional sport teams, host the 1996 Olympics, and, most of all, bring in more tourism. His vision did not include the long-standing adult businesses that were located downtown. There was no doubt that Fulton was determined to see change in downtown.


CHAPTER 3

FULTON’S VISION AND THE RESULTS

3.1 Fulton’s Path to His Ideal City

Fulton had observed Nashville leaders before him and saw the weaknesses in their plans for urban renewal and development. He did not want to be accused of racial discrimination as the planners of the Capitol Project had been. He also realized that to remove the “undesirable” businesses, he needed more than financial pressure. He decided to reach out to allies in the community that had influence and reasons to oppose adult businesses.

Criminalization is but one of the tools employed by governments to regulate sex and sexuality. While restrictive laws related to sexuality are often driven by moral argumentation, public health concerns also bear enough influence to impact laws and official regulations. The untold narrative of the evolving downtown area of Nashville through the lens of sexuality gives a new understanding of this Southern urban center. This examination of Nashville represents the intersection of capitalism, tourism, attitudes toward sexuality, public health regulations, and the evolution of an urban area, which has the potential of paralleling other cities. Nashville witnessed several attempts by officials to use the legal system to clean up downtown, but it was not until these legal means were coupled with public health reforms that a plan to clean up came to fruition.
3.2 Adult Businesses Flourish in Downtown Nashville

Printer’s Alley and Broadway were once characterized as the “party zones” of Nashville. Printer’s Alley was home to live entertainment; it was a “boozzy blend of burlesque and live music” with such establishments as Skull’s Rainbow Room, the Voo Doo Room, the Libo Club, Zanzibar, Trade Winds, and the Black Poodle. The Tennessean stated that the Printer’s Alley of the 1970s was “a bustling adult entertainment district, comparable to Bourbon Street in New Orleans.” Broadway housed different types of adult businesses-adult bookstores, pornography stores, adult theaters, and massage parlors. One reporter called the area “a peep-show paradise” in the late 1970s as he pointed out that he could count “10 adult movie houses, bookstores or massage parlors within three blocks.”

Additionally, Broadway and Printer’s Alley both were areas where prostitution was concentrated. Nashville’s adult businesses were numerous and outnumbered those in other Tennessee urban areas. In October 1975, Nashville had eighteen massage parlors alone, while Memphis and Knoxville had none and Chattanooga had six. Growing focus on the negative image these businesses and ultimately these areas put on Nashville began in the major newspapers, the Nashville Banner and Tennessean. These papers began to run regular articles

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140 Mark Ippolito, “Printers Alley Sprucing Up.” Tennessean, May 6, 1995, Printer’s Alley folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN).
141 Tom Wood, “Our Back Pages: This Week in Print Over the Years” Nashville Scene 26 Oct. 2009.
on the raids on and other problems with these businesses. The *Tennessean* even sent reporters undercover to explore the open practice of vices in these areas and the businesses that lured customers to their shops of magazines, sex toys, and pornographic movies. The article claimed these areas as “teeming, vice-ridden” with “open prostitution, drug abuse, drunkenness, and homosexual contacts.” This exposé argued that the adult centers were not just about a good time; connections to moral and health issues meant that stronger efforts were needed to control or remove this atmosphere from Nashville. These articles were only highlighting issues that Fulton had already made a priority for his mayoral office. Fulton was ready to use the new power of the consolidated government, as well as his ally in the Metro Health Department, to succeed in his goals.

3.3 Health Department Publicly Connects Venereal Diseases and Public Sexuality

Venereal disease was a significant concern of the Metro Health Department in the years prior to Richard Fulton’s election as mayor. The health department, in cooperation with other agencies, conducted numerous studies and reports in an effort to gain a better understanding of the presence and spread of sexually transmitted infections. They recorded large amounts of data

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each year to track patterns and changes of those infected.\textsuperscript{144} They implemented education programs through schools and media to combat the growth of the infected population.\textsuperscript{145} Dr. Joseph Bistowish, director of the Metro Health Department beginning in 1964, saw venereal disease as an important social problem; therefore, he devoted a significant amount of time advocating and running various programs connected to venereal disease education and activism. Dr. Bistowish’s efforts were noticed by other cities including Houston, Texas who asked for help in “intensifying” their venereal disease control program.\textsuperscript{146}

In addition to Dr. Bistowish’s sponsored education programs, he was on the committee that funded the Metro’s V.D. Citizen’s Council.\textsuperscript{147} His efforts were furthered when federal funding in 1972 enabled local county health departments to increase staff and program reach. A syphilis epidemic hit Davidson County in 1973, which helped renew public awareness efforts. Dr. Bistowish used pamphlets, community forums, and media plugs. He even had long-standing


\textsuperscript{147} Letter Dr. Joseph Bistowish and Jerry Narramore, Program Co-ordinator V.D. I.C., April 7, 1975, folder 12 (Venereal Disease 1970-1979), box 174, Health Department Records, Nashville Metro Archives (Nashville, TN).
venereal disease public service announcements airing on three different Nashville television stations.\(^\text{148}\)

While Dr. Bistowish focused his education on treatment and general preventative measures, his collected study information and educational programs implied that the adult centers and the type of activities encouraged there were significant in Nashville’s high venereal disease rate, one of the highest levels of incidence in the nation. Several research reports discussed “infestation sources,” particularly prostitutes. Those reports also noted that these women were just one part of the atmosphere of the adult centers. Some of these women were also workers at the strip clubs and their clientele overlapped. One report claimed these Printer’s Alley and Broadway businesses were a “potential explosive situation concerning V.D. infections.”\(^\text{149}\) Information presented at community meetings supported by Dr. Bistowish claimed that young adults were at the biggest risk for venereal diseases and that adult businesses downtown promoted promiscuous behavior that could include activities resulting in exposure to venereal diseases.\(^\text{150}\)


\(^{150}\) Letter from Robert Crumby to Joseph Bistowish, undated, folder 12 (Venereal Disease 1970-1979), box 174, Health Department Records, Nashville Metro Archives (Nashville, TN). For a broader discussion on the connection of public sexuality and venereal disease, see John C.
3.4 Fulton Finds Ally with Health Department

Adult businesses sometimes fall into a gray area of enforcement and community concern. The spreading of venereal diseases, the intermingling of the mores the tourist and host cultures, and the potential for the development of crime and increase drug use are all important concerns. Public health regulation provides an alternative to traditional law enforcement methods to more effectively control or eliminate adult businesses. Beyond physically “beautifying” downtown, Fulton believed it was necessary to remove adult businesses and public sexuality if Nashville was going to continue to grow as a tourist destination. Fulton used various avenues to achieve this goal, including housing authority, zoning, fire codes, and city ordinances. However, he used a means that had been successfully implemented only twice before—public health.\(^{151}\)

During WWII, Nashville and the surrounding areas became home to massive war maneuvers and thousands of military men from surrounding bases. Beyond the parties and dances, “[t]here was private entertainment, too, and not all of it was sanctioned: Scores of young girls joined old-line prostitutes on the city’s streets, and venereal disease reached epidemic proportions unmatched since the Civil War.\(^ {152}\) When used before, public health was able to combat

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\(^{151}\) It was used in the Civil War as mentioned earlier. It was also used in 1942 to combat the extremely high rates of venereal disease due to the influx of soldiers into the area. In addition to federal measures, the city reacted to this public health crisis. “Nashville’s public sector had never before assumed such responsibilities,” according to Spinney (86). See also “Michael Long, “King of the Night: Skull Schulman and the Splendid, Tawdry Past of Printer’s Alley,” *Nashville Scene*, Sept. 22 1994, Printer’s Alley folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN). The earlier efforts to use public health in the matter were focused on regulation, whereas Fulton used it a means to eliminate adult businesses.

\(^{152}\) John Egerton, *Nashville: The Faces of Two Centuries*, 238.
venereal disease epidemics and regulate public sexuality, but it had not been used to usher in urban redevelopment and eliminate adult businesses. Public health was key to Fulton’s ability to oust adult businesses; it was the piece that other officials had passed by. A potent economic pressure to increase governmental controls over adult businesses through public health came from potential future tourist revenue.

Once Fulton became mayor, he soon discovered that he had an ally in Dr. Bistowish. The two men began to exchange information through official memos and personal communications. A relationship built on the understanding that each man would benefit from the other is a reasonable conclusion. The Mayor and Metro Health Department Director each had end goals in this situation, and while the goals were not the same, they also were not mutually exclusive. Fulton supported Bistowish’s education programs and research studies, and Bistowish quickly gave Fulton any new data related to changes in the state of venereal disease in Metro Nashville. In return for this venereal disease information, Fulton publicly supported some other campaigns by Bistowish. Fulton also gave Bistowish more power in dealing with venereal diseases by expanding his investigation authority and staff. While venereal disease information was becoming increasingly available, and most Nashvillians were aware of the issue,

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154 “Accomplishments of Metropolitan Health Department During Fulton Administration” Feb 7, 1979, folder 13 (Mayor), box 180, Health Department Records, Nashville Metro Archives (Nashville, TN).
no major social discourse or campaign happened until Mayor Fulton used the information given to him by Bistowish to heighten public concern.

Utilizing information on the state of increases in venereal disease infections became a focus of Richard Fulton’s tenure as mayor of Metro Nashville. The impetus for Fulton’s campaign against venereal disease came in the form of memoranda from the desk of Dr. Joseph Bistowish. The evidence for increases in venereal disease in Nashville shaped Fulton’s public policy, including public health reforms, safety codes, zoning, and increased regulation of adult businesses. Fulton and Dr. Bistowish’s relationship was obvious not only in the written correspondence but was also obvious to political observers. One reporter even directly asked Dr. Bistowish if the involvement of the health department was motivated by Mayor Fulton’s vow to clean up the image of downtown during his term. Bistowish avoided answering but the fact that members of the public and media saw this connection is significant.¹⁵⁶

By the 1970s, Nashville had become a more established tourist destination with a significant portion of visitors being families. In response, Nashville was making an effort to become more family friendly. This shift coupled with rising property values downtown gave officials motivation to push out adult businesses from this coveted downtown area. As the city tried to encourage tourists and Nashville residents to invest and spend time in downtown, it was faced with solving the problem of adult entertainment outlets on the streets. Prostitutes and the homeless moved among adult movie houses, adult

bookstores, gift shops, and massage parlors in the same vicinity as tourists catching a quick glimpse of the Ryman Auditorium before they were whisked to Opryland on air-conditioned bus tours. Fulton knew that the removal of the adult-oriented storefronts was imperative to Nashville’s success.

Further stress was placed on adult entertainment centers as Nashville announced plans for a convention center that backed up to Broadway and included an upscale hotel. The convention center complex signaled a multi-million dollar investment in the area. The *Banner* and *Tennessean*, while publicly targeting the adult entertainment venues downtown, made scarcely a mention of the bars. The exclusion of bars from the lists of problems in the area signified that the bars were a valuable part of the area’s cultural cachet. The National Register of Historic Places’ nomination of Broadway’s bars highlighted them as being culturally significant, not just to Nashville, but also to country music and consequently to American culture. The press complemented this assessment in the years that followed by identifying such bars and musical institutions as Tootsie’s Purple Orchid Lounge, Gruhn Guitars, Lawrence Records, and Ernest Tubb Record Shop as permanent, desirable businesses downtown.\(^{157}\)

3.5 Fulton’s Plan-Contain then Eliminate

During Fulton’s time as mayor, Nashville saw stricter codes and ordinances on a local level because the state laws were not “good enough.”\(^{158}\) Mayor Fulton’s plan was tactical and well thought out, and downtown became a

\(^{157}\) Doyle, *Nashville Since the 1920s*, 170-172.

“combat zone.” His office, like many cities across the country, pushed new legislation that limited the areas where adult businesses could be located. This move confused many of his constituents, who called the move irresponsible and believed that adult businesses would “have a monopoly and there [were] more than enough of them to give downtown Nashville a bad name across the country.” The pornography ordinance was “designed to limit adult bookstores, peep shows and movies to the downtown area—keeping them out of the suburbs. The bill, supported by the Fulton administration, passed 31-4.” Once the businesses were limited to certain areas, Fulton could turn his focus to forcing the businesses to close down because they did not have an economically viable location in Nashville to move to.

New regulations were enacted that all adult venues found almost impossible to follow. The local government created most of the regulations with a few coming down from the state level. In 1978, new nudity ordinances required dancers to keep their “nipples, pubic hair, and ‘the cleft of the buttocks’” covered at all times. The officials even went as far as to define what articles were appropriate; plastic pasties and G-string underwear did not bring the dancers into compliance. Even if the dancers covered all the stated body parts, they were

160 Leonard, “Pornography and Obscenity.”
161 ibid.
still restricted by body movements. It was a violation of the ordinance to act in "suggestive ways." While sexual intercourse, masturbation, sodomy, and fondling were explicitly prohibited, "suggestive ways" were less explicit and, therefore, left up to the judgment of police officers. A prevailing attitude toward dancers' exhibition of sexuality was clear when an elected official stated, "It does not have to be the ultimate sex act before it does not fit in with the community's wishes." The 1978 obscenity act's definition of obscenity clearly meant that a detailed description of sex in any context was per se patently offensive. These local obscenity acts were founded in the public understand that the Metro Health Department operated in the community's best interest.

New fire safety codes in 1978 aimed to "reap the fringe benefit of shutting down [adult] businesses." These codes directly affected peep shows and strip clubs, which would force these "establishments to make massive changes in their buildings." Fulton also ordered regular and increased police patrol of these areas "in an effort to discourage patrons from going into the businesses." Fulton was initially openly discouraging patronage to these businesses, and then

forcing them to either make costly, sometimes impossible, building changes or close.

New ordinances continued to be passed in Nashville into the 1980s. For example, tabletop dancing was prohibited, servers could not be nude, topless dancers had to be on stages eighteen inches high, and the required distance between exotic dancers and customers was increased from three feet to six feet.\(^{169}\) Most adult clubs did not have enough space in their buildings to accommodate this new policy. Moreover, even the adult businesses that could comply with the new regulations and ordinances claimed that their businesses suffered from them.\(^{170}\) Businesses also took a hit from the beer board in 1980. It made efforts to deny beer permits to nightspots that featured adult entertainment. Assistant Metro Attorney Jack Long added that the request for the more stringent ordinance came at the request of Mayor Richard Fulton’s office.\(^{171}\)

New ordinances did not just affect adult bars, clubs, and strip joints; they also changed the operations of adult bookstores and theaters. Many newspaper articles refer to these business owners as “smut dealers.” And the Nashville Banner stated while they recognized “that morality cannot be legislated and that there is a market for smut otherwise dealers wouldn’t be in business, Metropolitan Government has a responsibility to control to whatever extent it can these outlets of filth. If we cannot wipe them out of our city, then at least let us


corral them.”

Most adult theaters were closed after health inspectors supposedly found semen and “general filth” in them. Fulton even directly stated that these businesses were “so filthy that prospective patrons would even hesitate to touch the door knobs.”

The new ordinances limited the products that adult bookstores could sell and enforced new zoning laws that stated that these businesses had to be a certain distance away from schools, churches, and other public areas like parks. The restrictions cut profits and perpetuated the idea that any connection to these businesses was a mark against one’s moral character. Many of these regulations had their foundations in public health. By claiming that their actions were for the betterment of the community and its citizens, officials were able to create and pass these ordinances.

3.6 Press and Church Influences on Adult Centers

Press coverage of adult centers downtown by the Nashville Tennessean and Banner in the mid-1980s provided insight to public opinion regarding the area. Although newspapers often display their biases as matters of pride, the Tennessean and Banner provided documentation of downtown’s development where city archive records were incomplete. Both papers interviewed property

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172 “Metro Council Can Send Smut Dealers a Message.” Adult Entertainment folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN).
173 ibid
175 Even though there had been zoning laws similar to this in place before, these new laws increased the distance needed.
owners, business owners, and Metropolitan officials regularly in 1970s and 1980s. With remarkably comprehensive coverage, the range of articles by both the *Tennessean* and *Banner* suggested an interest in downtown, especially adult centers, by the Nashville community at large.

Regular newspaper coverage focused on the crackdowns of fire, health, and safety codes in the buildings where these businesses operated, and this motivated some tenants to leave the area.  

Many businesses challenged the new codes saying they created a “suspect classification” and that “complying with the ordinances would cause them to suffer severe economic loss at the very least or to close down entirely.” These businesses also claimed that Metro enacted these ordinances to hamper and stifle their existence, which the Metro government was unable to do through the exercise of criminal process or civil proceedings.

The Merchants Hotel, long known for its association with prostitutes, closed in 1985 after violating fire codes. That year, half of the adult stores downtown had closed; however, Fulton and the city continued to place pressure on the remaining store and property owners. The *Tennessean* even publicly named property owners who the paper asserted were prohibitive to Broadway's

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revitalization by continuing to rent to such businesses as the Ellwest Theatre, Adult World, and Swinger's World.\textsuperscript{179} Even country music singer Roy Acuff legend came under Fulton’s wrath; Acuff owned several buildings that were being used for adult establishments. He leased the buildings and then they were subleased to adult business owners. Acuff’s attempts to publicly distance himself from the adult businesses by saying he did not personally lease to them shows how critical public perception was of public sexuality. If there was not a negative association, then Acuff would have had no reason to defend himself. Acuff was publicly pushed to oust the businesses from his properties and that drive was “sparked by complaints from Mayor Fulton’s office.”\textsuperscript{180}

Opinions on the morality of the community were abundant in newspapers, including \textit{The Nashville Banner}, which stated,

\textit{It does not believe that our community should be inundated with a mess of pornographic movie theaters, ‘adult’ book stores, lewd performances of strip-tease dancers, ‘peep shows’ and other forms of ‘adult entertainment’ by whatever name the purveyors of smut wish to call them. And as we have said before, these establishments tend to cheapen and degrade Nashville where an overwhelming number of our citizens want to raise their families in an atmosphere of decency, dignity, and honor.}\textsuperscript{181}

Opponents of the adult businesses saw them as magnets for criminal activity and damaging marks on the reputation of Nashville. When the Metro government geographically limited adult business location, opponents called for their


\textsuperscript{181} “Metro Council Can Send Smut Dealers a Message,” \textit{The Nashville Banner}, Sept. 9, 1977, Adult Entertainment folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN).}
complete expulsion. Then they celebrated the harsher codes and ordinances that started closing these businesses.\textsuperscript{182}

The strongest public moral voice came from the churches and church groups.\textsuperscript{183} Churches became active in several ways in the assault against venereal disease and adult businesses including public forums, pamphlet creation, and protesting.\textsuperscript{184} A group of ministers “declared war” on bookstores and film theaters and made it their objective to force these businesses to move. They picketed and handed out material. One member, Reverend Mel Perry, stated that the obscene material emphasized “abnormal sex,” which was a threat to the morals of the community.\textsuperscript{185}

Beyond collaborating with Dr. Bistowish in increasing awareness of venereal disease, Fulton made his position on public sexuality clear with his association with certain Christian groups and his participation in public rallies. He participated in a large protest of two peep shows by churches in 1978. More than


\textsuperscript{183} As discussed in the introduction, there is a long history of moral objection to public sexuality and this includes churches. However, I was unable to find substantial historical evidence in my sources of a long history of church objections in Nashville. This does not mean that it did not exist; it just was not found in my available resources.


\textsuperscript{185} Minister Group to Picket Dickerson Road Porno,” Nashville Banner, Oct 13, 1976, Adult Entertainment folder, Banner Clippings Collection, Downtown Nashville Library (Nashville, TN).
1300 people packed into the Presbyterian Church downtown. In a speech to the protesters, he called for the closure of “undesirable businesses” that had hampered Nashville’s potential for too long. He stated that he had spoken with visitors of Nashville and an overwhelming number of them told him that while they overall enjoyed their visits, the adult centers had irked them. He claimed for downtown to continue to attract tourists that these “undesirables” have to go. After Fulton’s speech, the protesters marched to Broadway and then proceeded to sing hymns and pray.  

The moral voice was the dominant one publicly in the newspapers. There was very little public opposition to this moral perspective apart from the business owners. Some owners publically defended their businesses by claiming they ran a straight place whether people believed it or not. Others called the constant pressure from the local government harassment and stated that customers would not defend themselves because of the critical perception of an outspoken portion of the populace and media. A few business owners even claimed that the constant media coverage was beneficial to business; the coverage served as free advertisement. The public attack on adult establishments in the newspapers by journalists, Mayor Fulton, and various citizens created a hostile environment for those who supported these businesses’ existence. Adult businesses were


187 Ibid.
deemed “filthy” and patrons were “perverted.” Therefore, while the moral voice may have been the strongest, it probably was not the only one—just the only publicly accepted one.

By directing new regulations toward adult bookstores, theaters, bars, and clubs, Mayor Fulton and the government had defined the businesses as something that needed to be controlled or eliminated. Adult businesses posed a threat to the community as a whole; the subsequent regulations cemented these industries into taboo places and ideas. Mayor Fulton’s plan of forcing adult businesses out of the historical downtown Nashville area was successful as a result of using a variety of tactics. His success was in no small part due to the incorporation of public health, awareness, and manipulation.

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188 West, “Citizens Sing During March Against Porno”; “Metro Council Can Send Smut Dealers a Message”; Gibson, “Fulton Says ‘Peep Show’ Locations Filthy.”
This thesis, like many, has been as much an exercise in curiosity as in archival research. In choosing to write about Nashville, an area that holds a special place for me, I have been trying to figure out how and why the city has come to look and function as it does. This topic found me and grabbed my attention away from topics that I once thought I would be researching for my thesis. I initially approached this project for a seminar paper on prostitution during the Civil War for an early American seminar. As I found maps of downtown from the nineteenth century highlighting the red light district, I also found realty maps of downtown in the twentieth century. I then noticed that if you compared the maps the adult businesses in the twentieth century were in the same areas as the brothels during the Civil War era. I continued looking into locational similarities when I discovered that by the 1990s most adult businesses were no longer in historic downtown. I wanted to know what happened. I became interested in examining the several factors that shaped the current urban landscape of Nashville. And what I found was a wonderfully complex story of a city renewing itself, reinventing itself for the chance to succeed and prosper.

One goal of this thesis, then, has been to tell the combined story of governmental structure, urban renewal programs, and public health in Nashville in the hopes of understanding more clearly how and why Nashville changed. Federal urban renewal programs gave Nashville large amounts of money to
revitalize the city, but the change went beyond that renewal. A renewal of people and specific businesses took place, too. Nashville becoming the home to country music had a larger impact than I think anyone realized it could while it was happening. While the country music connection was growing, it took the visions of local politicians that enabled Nashville to transform into a modern urban area that could handle this newfound fame.

While country music in Nashville is significant, it is not the focus of this thesis. The music scene was one motivation for the changes in Nashville, and this thesis analyzes the mediums for the changes. Local political leaders each held ideas as to how best to revitalize Nashville, and what the city, once renewed, should look like. Local officials controlled federal urban renewal programs and Nashville’s urban renewal goals ended up reflecting the visions of those local officials, whose power had been centralized because of the consolidated metropolitan government. Like country music, public health was an important aspect to this narrative but is not the central focus. While public health officials and policies created legal changes, Mayor Fulton used it as a means to create the desired change outlined in his political agenda.

In regards to public health, this thesis ends at a natural point. The acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) crisis of the 1980s completely transformed the perception and existence of public sexuality, especially adult centers. Many believed these areas were places that encouraged behavior that helped spread AIDS. In Nashville, new ordinances were passed that stopped “unsavory activities” linked to AIDS. The *Nashville Banner* stated that certain
adult businesses attracted a large percentage of the homosexual community and claimed those businesses were “breeding grounds for the deadly AIDS virus.” While the study of the public sexuality in Nashville during the AIDS epidemic is a logical next step, it would be better suited in a future study.

A second goal of this thesis has been to explore the history of public sexuality in Nashville. The history of the adult entertainment industries in the U.S. can almost be seen as a history of amazing business savvy and moral battles. No one thesis, article, or book would capture all the jobs and products that fall under the heading of adult entertainment. The adult entertainment industry is made of up of people and business that have endured, through recession and depressions, and reform movements, as well as legal and technological changes of the time. This includes sexual health in the United States. Public sexuality has influenced many aspects of American life from technology, advertising, fashion and business models. Adult entertainment should be studied as an integral part of history.

Sexuality is interlaced with the rest of American culture and history. War, technology, prosperity and poverty have influenced Americans’ sexual lives just as much as they have affected political or business history. Sex in all its forms has become an integral part of American social and cultural history. It needs to be reintroduced into our historical understanding. It is a history worth writing and reading. Not only does the history itself hold the possibility of titillation; it helps to

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paint a more complete picture of American history and current social norms. The existence and subsequent battle to remove adult businesses in Nashville is a significant historical narrative.

Nashville shifted from a streetscape dominated by adult venues to a tourist destination from the 1970s through the 1990s. Historic downtown, once it rid itself of its pornography shops, prostitutes and panhandlers, was viewed as an icon where entertainment, historic buildings, and live country music mingled together to form an individual urban identity unmatched by other American streetscapes. The city exhibits an intricately woven story about a definitive American landscape. The area’s cultural identity and history present a dynamic environment that transformed significantly in the last half of the 20th century. As American culture moved to being more in line with consumption and commercialization, Nashville mirrored this transformation. The city does not exist and change in a vacuum, though. Nashville’s distinctiveness was and is largely dependent on its association with country music, and much like country music’s evolution in the 1960s, Nashville had to alter its identity in the 1970s and 1980s in order to survive as a commercially successful American landscape. The changes in Nashville are reflected in the area’s music and tourism. Downtown shaped its identity as an entertainment district and that identity was proffered to the tourism and consumed by tourists who, in turn, shaped the area as it catered to their wants and needs.

For a further understand of why it is important to incorporate sex into the general history of culture and bring the general historical context into treatments of sex see John C. Burnham, *Paths into American Culture: Psychology, Medicine, and Morals* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 115-37.
Nashville transformed from a blighted environment to a family-friendly tourist attraction. Nashville became the place where arts and entertainment intersect. The businesses that were pushed out of the area and the businesses that were ushered in relay information as to what the Nashville officials thought the public wanted. The decisions of the political leaders to support urban renewal and force out adult businesses helped solidify the area’s musical and cultural identity.
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