# Major League Baseball Commissioner Names Nashville a Potential Expansion City

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Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred on Tuesday mentioned Nashville among a short list of possible expansion cities as the league explores growing from 30 teams to 32.

Manfred, who is in Washington D.C. for the MLB All-Star Game, was asked to name potential locations during a television appearance on Fox Sports.

"We have a real list of cities that I think are not only interested in having baseball, but are viable in terms of baseball — places like Portland (Ore.), Las Vegas, Charlotte, (N.C.), Nashville in the United States, certainly Montreal, maybe Vancouver, in Canada. We think there's places in Mexico we could go over the long haul."

Nashville is home to the National Football League's Tennessee Titans and National Hockey League's Nashville Predators, and in December was awarded a Major League Soccer franchise that has not yet started playing.

**MLB in Nashville: Could Nashville be next major league baseball city?**

MLB is interested in expanding for the first time since 1997, with Manfred citing four-team divisions in both the American League and National League, a new playoff format, and geographic league alignment as some of the advantages of doing so.

Baseball is struggling to connect with a younger audience, so MLB All-Stars offered up some suggestions on how to fix that.

"I do think 32 teams would help us," Manfred said. "It opens up a whole host of things for us."

A timeline for possible expansion is unclear, nor has it been decided if the league will expand.

On paper, Nashville seems like a long-shot for several reasons to become either MLB's 31st or 32nd team in the short-term.

Although Nashville is seen as an attractive city for sports expansion given its ongoing economic resurgence, some have questioned whether its market size could handle a fourth major league team.

But an even bigger hang-up would likely be the stadium question.

Mayor David Briley has not indicated that pursuing an MLB team — which would require a new stadium with the city's help — is on his priority list.

"It’s flattering," Briley said of the commissioners' remarks. "but my full focus right now is on bringing Major League Soccer to the city."

A proposal for a $275 million MLS soccer stadium project at the Nashville fairgrounds is working its way through the Metro Council, meaning there might not be an appetite for an additional municipal-financed stadium project any time soon.

Further complicating an MLB expansion push in Nashville: Metro government just recently spent $91 million to build 10,000-seat First Tennessee Park, home of minor league baseball's Nashville Sounds, that opened in 2015. The Sounds are the affiliate of MLB's Oakland Athletics.

Doug Scopel, vice president of operations for the Sounds, said the team has "one of the top, if not the top, minor league ballparks" in the country — one that cannot be expanded for MLB, he said.

"We look to continue having success here for many years," Scopel said. "If and when the time comes for Nashville to consider Major League Baseball, that's a conversation for city government and other folks to have."

Nashville also faces major questions concerning the city's two existing major league sports teams over the next decade as stadium leases for the Titans and Predators, at Nissan Stadium and Bridgestone Arena respectively, are set to expire.

In the past, Nashville has been speculated as a possible relocation destination for the Tampa Bay Rays, but formal talks never materialized.