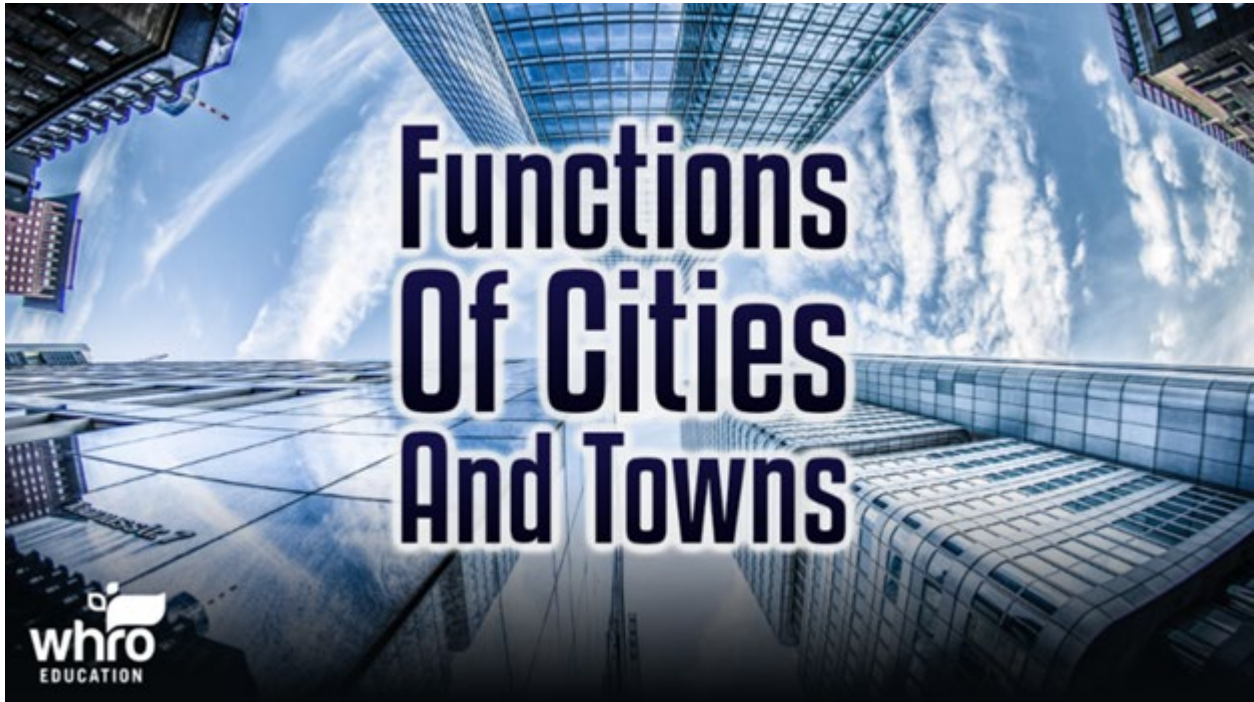


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Topic Content: Functions of Cities and Towns

Functions of Cities and Towns



Click next to begin.

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Security and Defense

Security and Defense

Military bases are strategically located in or near large cities



For most of human history, cities have served as regional centers for security and defense. Historically, people seeking protection could fortify themselves within the walls of a city. In modern times, large military bases are strategically located in or near large cities, providing protection to a greater region or country.

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Religious Centers



Cities and towns function as religious centers. Major religious structures and places of worship are generally located within a city. In some cases, the city itself may hold particular religious significance. For example, Mecca is a place of pilgrimage for Muslims; Varanasi is revered by Hindus and Buddhists; and Jerusalem is an important religious center for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

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Trade Centers

Trade Centers

Cities offer large markets that attract trade



Cities and towns have larger populations than rural areas, which means they offer larger markets that attract trade. A city may act as a local trade center for a region, or a long distance trade center for international business interests.

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Government Administration

Government Administration

Governmental institutions are located in cities



In order to effectively administer the government at local, state, and national levels, governmental institutions, like courts, city halls, town halls, and agencies, are located in cities and towns.

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Manufacturing Centers



Economic opportunities have the potential to pull people to a location. Because of this, many cities and towns develop around industry and function as manufacturing centers.

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Service Centers

Service Centers

Cities provide the local community with a variety of services



Cities and towns function as service centers that provide the local community with a variety of services, including utilities like electricity, water, and sanitation, as well as health and safety services like hospitals and fire departments.

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Education Centers

Education Centers

Cities offer access to schools, libraries, and museums



**National Library of Spain
Madrid, Spain**

Cities and towns function as education centers, offering access to public schools, libraries, and museums. Additionally, cities and towns are often home to one or more institutions of higher education, including universities, community colleges, and technical or trade schools.

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Changes in Function



A city may have multiple functions at once, and it may also change functions over time. Click each of the images to learn more about cities whose functions have changed over time.

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Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh

Industries shifted to a variety of services after steel jobs were lost



During the French and Indian War, British colonists constructed Fort Pitt at the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. Although Fort Pitt was originally built for defense, more settlers came to the area, which was named Pittsburgh in 1758.

Pittsburgh grew into a major steel manufacturing center during the late 1800s. In the late twentieth century, the demand for steel began to decline and many manufacturing jobs were moved to developing nations. Pittsburgh responded to this economic shift by transitioning the city's industries to a variety of services, like healthcare, finance, and light manufacturing.

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Rio de Janeiro



In 1960, the capital of Brazil was moved from Rio de Janeiro to the city of Brasilia. The reason for the move was to establish the federal government in a more centralized location. Rio de Janeiro remains an important Brazilian city, functioning as a center for trade and tourism.

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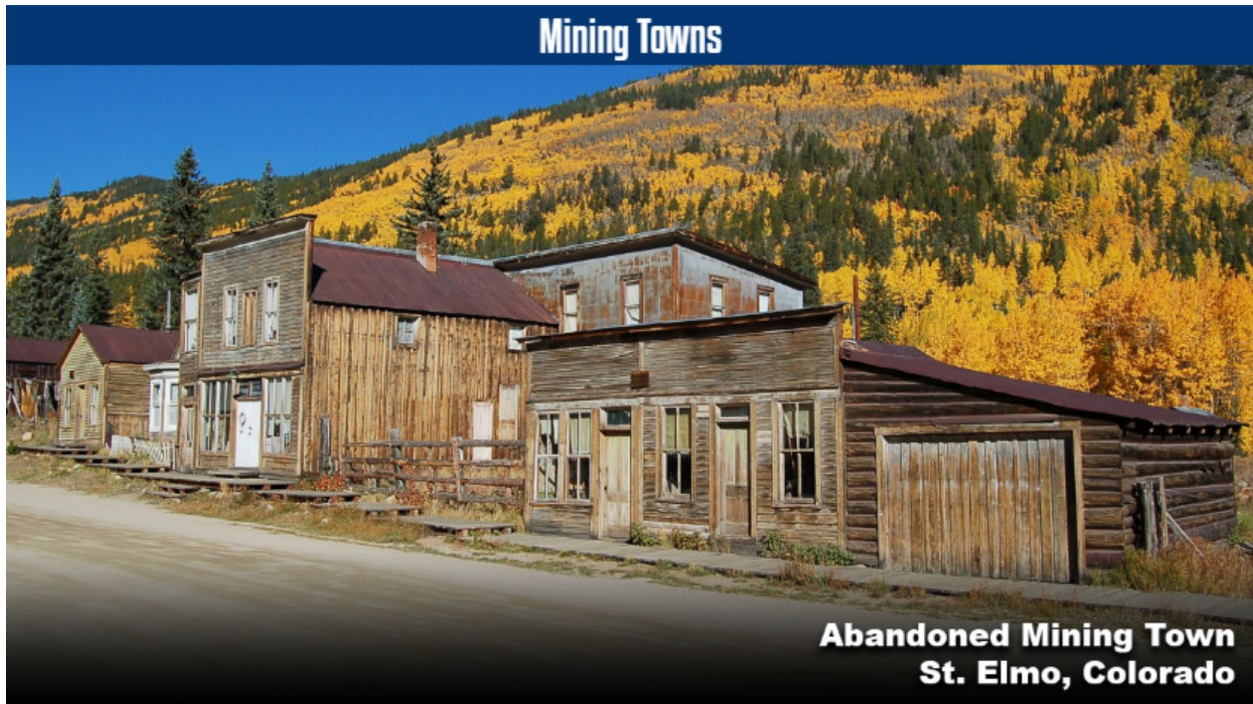
New York City



New York City has remained an important trade center by continually adapting and expanding its trade patterns. The city began as a major port for coastal and transatlantic trade, but as the United States grew, its economic influence expanded trade to the Great Lakes via the Erie Canal. Now, New York City functions as an international economic hub, engaged in worldwide trade and finances.

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Mining Towns



When valuable natural resources are found in an area, towns are quickly developed to support the mining or extraction of the resources. These mining towns thrive while the resources are available; however, once the resource is depleted or environmental changes occur, the towns are typically abandoned. Without economic support, many of these locations become “ghost” towns.