**ACTIVITY**

**What Is a City?**

We know that Delhi, Paris, New York, and Beijing are all cities. But what makes each of them a city? Is it population size, location, presence of government buildings, or social amenities? How do you define a city?

Share the following TEDxCity2.0 video: thecity2.org/about

Ask students to work in groups and think about what elements define a city.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- What do cities look like?
- Why do people live in cities?
- What are the primary goals of a city?
- Are towns and cities designed or do they just happen?
- What is the difference between a city and a community?
- What are the benefits of having a large number of people live in a city? What are the drawbacks?
- What problems do today’s cities face?
- How do cities feed and take care of their populations?
- Do cities have to be a certain size?
- What people help to create and sustain a city?

Students should use exploratory processes to research the term and should be encouraged to find examples, videos, blogs, surveys, and articles that can help them come up with a definition. They will most likely realize that city is a term without any firm rules. Have students record their ideas and understanding of the term, as well as any terms or phrases that are related to the topic that they may be unfamiliar with.

Once groups have created lists that help to characterize the term “city,” have them share their ideas and then create a master list (or definition) of those characteristics that define a city.

Responses may range from the most simplistic definition of a city as being a place where people live and work, to more detailed definitions that incorporate a certain population size and/or existence of a local government. Students may even move onto more abstract definitions that include ideas as to why cities exist and their purpose.

Point out that cities comprise a complex set of systems that are dependent upon people, their needs, and a variety of other unique goals that are specific to each city. Remind groups that the list that they have created is a working list (or definition) and may be modified at any time based on their new knowledge and understanding of the term.

**EXTENSION IDEAS**

- Use Google Earth’s Historical Imagery feature to explore how existing cities have changed over time. Find instructions at: support.google.com/earth/answer/148094?hl=en
- Compare two cities (small and large) that are familiar to students. How are they similar and different?
- Research several definitions of cities, compare them, and write your own.