What Influenced the Location and Growth of Major U.S. Cities?

Why do people live where they do? They do so for a variety of reasons. Cities throughout the United States were settled at different times for various reasons.

Boston
The city of Boston, Massachusetts was founded in 1630 by Puritan immigrants. The Puritans came to North America from England in search of religious freedom. Boston is located on the Shawmut Peninsula, where the tribe of the same name lived. This area was ideal for settlement. It provided the Puritans with access to fresh water and navigable waterways. These were vital for trade. The natural harbor near the city was deep enough for ships to enter. It could also support many docks and wharves for years to come. Food was plentiful in the area. Today, Boston has a population of 692,600 people. It is one of the largest cities in the United States.

Houston
During the early 1800s, Texas was under the control of the Mexican government. Mexican officials issued thousands of land grants to interested settlers and encouraged Americans to move to Texas. In 1836, brothers John Kirby Allen and Augustus C. Allen bought 6,600 acres along Galveston Bay known as Buffalo Bayou, where the Akokisa tribe lived. The area was ideal for shipping trade and rice production because of its proximity to Galveston Bay and its naturally deep harbor. The area was also abundant in other natural resources, including sources of fresh water and land ideal for farming.

The Allen brothers named their new settlement Houston after the celebrated Texan Sam Houston. At first, the town grew slowly. Only 12 white settlers lived in the city in 1836. The Allen brothers convinced the new Republic of Texas to set up their capital in Houston. This decision caused the population to boom. Within four months, the settler population grew from 12 to 1,500. Today, Houston is the fourth-largest city in the United States with a population of 2,320,268 people.

New York City
Dutch settlers from the Netherlands established a colony that they called New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island in 1625, where the Lenape people lived. This settlement eventually became New York City. The Dutch settled in this area because of its proximity to a deepwater port along the Hudson River. They built trading posts, a fort, and various mills near the Hudson River. This allowed the settlers to easily access trading posts, defend their settlement, and use the river to power their mills. Today, New York City is the largest city in the United States. Over eight million people live in the city.

San Francisco
Like Boston, New York City, and Houston, San Francisco was settled in its current location because of its proximity to water and a natural harbor. In 1769, Spanish explorers quickly realized that the natural resources of the area and the protected deepwater harbor would be very valuable to the Spanish empire. Settlers arrived in the area in June 1776. They constructed a presidio, or fort, and the Mission San Francisco de Asís.

San Francisco Bay, where the Yelamu tribe lived, provided the early settlers with many ways to meet their needs. The bay allowed the early settlers to travel easily to other Spanish settlements and conduct trade. In 1849, gold was discovered in California. Just one year later, over 90,000 people sailed into San Francisco Bay with the hopes of finding gold. To accommodate the number of ships entering the bay, the city expanded the port, and entrepreneurs built new wharves. The Port of San Francisco continues to draw people to the city today.

Chicago
Chicago, Illinois is the third-largest city by population in the United States. Historically, it was home to a network of native tribes including the Pustomatun Tribe. Today, it is home to about 2.6 million people and is a popular tourist destination for millions of visitors each year. Because of its ideal location, early explorers and settlers attempted to establish trading posts and Catholic missions near present-day Chicago for many years. These attempts were unsuccessful.

In 1829, the Illinois legislature surveyed the area to determine the best location for a town and canal. The completion of a canal between Michigan and Illinois transformed Chicago from a small port town into a bustling transportation hub. The railroad expanded the city even more. About 50 percent of goods transported by railroad still pass through Chicago. Today, Chicago remains a major transportation hub.

Denver
In 1858, a group of miners discovered gold at the base of the Rocky Mountains near Cherry Creek. Word soon spread of the discovery, and the area grew rapidly. That same year, miners established Denver City on the eastern banks of the Cherry River, where the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Ute tribes lived. In 1870, the Denver Pacific Railroad constructed a railroad that connected Denver to the Transcontinental Railroad. This greatly increased trade and transportation into the city. As a result, the population of Denver grew from 4,759 in 1870 to 106,713 in 1890. Railroads also allowed merchants, miners, and farmers to send their products to market all around the country.

There are many factors that have influenced patterns of settlement throughout human history. These include the physical environment, resources, and economic opportunities. People need food, clothing, and a place to live. The physical environment influences where people settle, their jobs, and their lifestyles. The physical environment of an area includes its landscapes, natural resources, climate, and weather. People depend on the environment to meet their needs. The natural features and resources available in an area provide materials, food, and clothing for the people living there.

When people migrate or immigrate to a new place, they generally settle in areas where resources are easily accessible. Early settlers formed towns and cities near bodies of water to meet their basic human needs. These places provided a source of clean water for drinking and growing crops. They also provided waterways used for transportation and trade. Many of the plants and animals needed for food also lived near the water. Materials from these plants and animals were also used to make clothes and build homes.

As more and more people settle in an area, they form communities to meet their needs. They open shops, start schools, and build public meeting places. Many small communities eventually grow into larger cities. New forms of technology such as the railroad, cars, improved roadways, and air travel made it easier for people to move to new places. People also develop economic activities based on the resources available in their environment. These include things such as agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, and tourism.

The physical environment and economic activities of an area determine if people live in rural, urban, or suburban areas. An urban area is a city with a larger population than the surrounding areas. People often choose to live in these areas because of the jobs and industry available there. Suburban areas are near urban or city areas. Suburbs may be quieter than city homes, but they are close enough to enjoy city advantages such as sports teams, universities, museums, and hospitals. There is more space for homes and businesses in suburban communities. Suburban areas are less crowded than urban areas. Rural areas have smaller populations and use more land for agriculture or farming. Rural areas also have businesses, shopping, education, and entertainment, but the majority of land is used for growing food and producing other things that we need. These products are shipped to urban areas around the nation.
Trade Routes, Water, and Transportation

For thousands of years, people in communities produced most of the things that they needed. Later, as civilizations expanded, people learned that they could specialize in one thing and then trade with others. Soon, trading became so common that some people did nothing but conduct trade. These people were called merchants. In the 1400s, the whole world was on the move. In the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe, empires were growing. Rich empires served as patrons. This meant they could pay people to study, explore, or create art for the glory of the empire. This patronage led to new advances in knowledge and exchanges of ideas through trade routes.

A trade route is an area used by merchants for economic purposes. The voyages of Christopher Columbus and other explorers opened trade routes between the Eastern Hemisphere and the Western Hemisphere. Many explorers hoped to find new advances in knowledge and exchanges of ideas through trade routes.

The invention of the automobile in the late 1800s increased trade and made transportation even easier. This technology required new and more reliable roads. Highways were constructed across states. Eventually, the interstate highway system connected many of these highways. Trade and transportation have changed drastically from the time of European exploration to the present.

Climate

Climate also plays a significant role in settlement. Climate is a physical characteristic of a place. It is the average weather conditions of a place over an extended period of time. While the weather can change in just a few hours, climate takes hundreds, thousands, and even millions of years to change. Climate includes the average temperature, precipitation, and wind in an area. Precipitation includes rain, snow, and sleet.

The geography and location of a place dictate its climate. Climate determines what people can produce in an area. Countries closer to the equator tend to have longer growing seasons. That means they can produce more kinds of fruits and vegetables in greater amounts. Countries with cooler weather and shorter growing seasons are better suited to raising livestock and growing hardy vegetables and grains.

The diverse climate of the United States has greatly influenced where people have settled. Many English settlers chose to live in the southern colonies because the climate was ideal for growing cash crops, such as tobacco, indigo, and rice. Because the climate of the Northeast is characterized by harsh winters, the animals of this region generally have thick fur. For this reason, many fur trappers and traders settled in this area during the 1600s and 1700s. Others migrated to the Great Plains to farm. The rich soil and mild climate of this region make it an ideal landscape for farming.

Economic Opportunities and Land

Why do people live where they do? Why do they move somewhere else? Well, people live in places where they can find jobs and housing. Those people help to shape the economy, population, and political activities of the area they have chosen to live in.

Frequently, large companies are built in or near urban areas or cities. Many lawyers and software engineers live near the Amazon.com, Inc. headquarters in Washington or in Silicon Valley in California. When a large company moves into a downtown area, there is economic growth in that place. Workers often move there to be near their jobs. Other businesses come in to meet the needs of the people moving there. In this way, the economy of an area expands.

Historically, people moved to cities because there were more places to buy and sell goods. People specifically moved to port cities so they could sell and buy goods from different countries. These areas were economic centers. As cities became more crowded, people moved to areas where land was more affordable and readily available.

A prime example of this from our nation’s history was the migration and immigration of people that settled in Texas in the early 1800s. The environment of Texas is rich in natural resources and land was more affordable than other areas of the United States. Settlers hoped to purchase land and benefit from new economic opportunities, such as farming, ranching, fishing, and manufacturing. Eventually, these small settlements developed into larger towns and cities, many of which have become economic centers in the state.

Immigration Population Distribution

Between 1820 and 2007, more than 73 million immigrants came to the United States. Many immigrants from around the world came to the United States due to various push and pull factors. A push factor could be considered forceful, or negative. Usually, a push factor is when a person’s way of life is in danger. The danger could be because of war, persecution, famine, or any other fact that endangers the welfare of a person or a family.

A pull factor could be considered an attraction or draw to a place. Usually, a pull factor is when a person wants something more in their life. Leaving one location for another would then be considered a positive thing. A pull factor could be the availability of land, new jobs, better climate, lower costs of living, or other positive things.

Many people from Canada and Mexico immigrated through the borders they shared with our country. Millions of immigrants from Europe came by boat. The majority entered through Ellis Island in New York, but others landed in port cities like Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Boston. Other immigrants, many of which traveled from Asia, entered through Angel Island in California.

People from each country tended to settle together to help them adjust to their new lives. Many people from Germany found work on farms in Texas, the Midwest, and the mid-Atlantic states. People from Scandinavia were drawn to dairy farms in the upper Midwest. In the late 19th century, people from southern Europe began making their way to America. People from Italy helped each other find jobs in stores and sales. Each new wave of immigration had people of the same heritage helping one another get their jobs and take care of their families.

Most immigrants settled in urban neighborhoods with other members of their ethnic group. This allowed them to retain their heritage, food, art, language, and culture. Slowly, different groups of immigrants began integrating, or blending together. This allowed others to learn about their culture and help make our country what it is today.
What Influenced the Location and Growth of Major U.S. Cities?

Why do people live where they do? They do so for a variety of reasons. Cities throughout the United States were settled at different times for various reasons.

Boston
The city of Boston, Massachusetts was founded in 1630 by Puritan immigrants. The Puritans came to North America from England in search of religious freedom. Boston is located on the Shawmut Peninsula, where the tribe of the same name lived. This area was ideal for settlement. It provided the Puritans with access to fresh water and navigable waterways. These were vital for trade. The natural harbor near the city was deep enough for ships to enter. It could also support many docks and wharves for years to come. Food was plentiful in the area. Today, Boston has a population of 692,600 people. It is one of the largest cities in the United States.

Houston
During the early 1800s, Texas was under the control of the Mexican government. Mexican officials issued thousands of land grants to interested settlers and encouraged Americans to move to Texas. In 1836, brothers John Kirby Allen and Augustus C. Allen bought 6,400 acres along Galveston Bay, known as Buffalo Bayou, where the Akokisa tribe lived. The area was ideal for shipping the products of the Akokisa. They subsequently bought land from the Yelamu tribe in 1836. In 1839, the Galveston Bay settlement was known as Galveston. PeopleMinute 12:2 of 12:2

New York City
Dutch settlers from the Netherlands established a colony that they called New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island in 1625, where the Lenape people lived. This settlement eventually became New York City. The Dutch settled in this area because of its proximity to a deepwater port along the Hudson River. They built trading posts, a fort, and various mills near the Hudson River. This allowed the settlers to easily access trading posts, defend their settlement, and use the river to power their mills. Today, New York City is the largest city in the United States. Over eight million people live in the city.

San Francisco
Like Boston, New York City, and Houston, San Francisco was settled in its current location because of its proximity to water and a natural harbor. In 1769, Spanish explorers quickly realized that the natural resources of the area and the protected deepwater harbor would be valuable to the Spanish empire. Settlers arrived in the area in June 1776. They constructed a presidio, or fort, and various missions near present-day San Francisco. San Francisco, where the Yelamu tribe lived, provided the early settlers with many ways to meet their needs. The bay allowed the early settlers to travel easily to other Spanish settlements and conduct trade. In 1849, gold was discovered in California. Just one year later, over 90,000 people sailed into San Francisco Bay with the hopes of finding gold. To accommodate the number of ships entering the bay, the city expanded the port, and entrepreneurs built new wharves. The Port of San Francisco continues to draw people to the city today.

Chicago
Chicago, Illinois is the third-largest city by population in the United States. Historically, it was home to a network of native tribes including the Potawatomi Tribe. Today, it is home to about 2.6 million people and is a popular tourist destination for millions of visitors each year. Because of its ideal location, early explorers and settlers attempted to establish trading posts and Catholic missions near present-day Chicago for many years. These attempts were unsuccessful.

In 1829, the Illinois legislature surveyed the area to determine the best location for a town and canal. The completion of a canal between Michigan and Illinois transformed Chicago from a small port town into a bustling transportation hub. The railroad expanded the city even more. About 50 percent of goods transported by railroad still pass through Chicago. Today, Chicago remains a major transportation hub.

Denver
In 1858, a group of miners discovered gold at the base of the Rocky Mountains near Cherry Creek. Word soon spread of the discovery, and the area grew rapidly. That same year, miners established Denver City on the eastern banks of the Cherry River, where the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Ute tribes lived. In 1870, the Denver Pacific Railroad constructed a railroad that connected Denver to the Transcontinental Railroad. This greatly increased trade and transportation into the city. As a result, the population of Denver grew from 4,759 in 1870 to 106,713 in 1890. Railroads also allowed merchants, miners, and farmers to send their products to market all around the country.

Patterns of Settlement
There are many factors that have influenced patterns of settlement throughout human history. These include the physical environment, resources, and economic opportunities. People need food, clothing, and a place to live. The physical environment influences where people settle, their jobs, and their lifestyles. The physical environment of an area includes its landforms, natural resources, climate, and weather. People and their environment interact. People change the environment by building cities and roads, and create tools and technology such as the railroad, cars, improved roadways, and air travel. People also depend on technology and resources available in their environment. The physical and economic environment of an area determine if people live in rural, urban, or suburban areas.

San Francisco, California
Chicago, Illinois
Denver, Colorado

San Francisco is a city with a larger population than the surrounding areas. People often choose to live in these areas because of the jobs and industry available there. Suburban areas are near urban or city areas. Suburbs may be quieter than city homes, but they are close enough to enjoy city advantages such as sports teams, universities, museums, and hospitals. There is more space for homes and businesses in suburban communities. Suburban areas are less crowded than urban areas. Rural areas have smaller populations and use more land for agriculture or farming. Rural areas also have businesses, shopping, education, and entertainment, but the majority of land is used for growing food and producing other things that we need. These products are shipped to urban areas around the nation.