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| **Planning for a City's Future****Overview:**This lesson asks students to consider how knowledge of geography and history can help prepare for the future. Students will research the geography and history of a [city](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction/habitats/cities_suburbs.html) and write reports explaining how the city’s leaders can use this information to plan for the future. **Connections to the Curriculum:**Geography, earth science, history **Connections to the National Geography Standards:**Standard 18: "How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future" **Time:**Five to six hours **Materials Required:*** Computer with Internet access
* Access to a library
* Writing materials

**Objectives:**Students will * do the Xpeditions [History Through Headlines](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/activities/18/headlines.html) activity;
* research the geography and history of specific cities, and discuss the ways that this knowledge can help the city's leaders plan for its future; and
* write reports describing the city's geography and history and explaining how this information can help plan for the city's future.

**Geographic Skills:****Acquiring Geographic Information Organizing Geographic Information Answering Geographic Questions Analyzing Geographic Information** **S u g g e s t e d   P r o c e d u r e** **Opening:**Have students complete the [History Through Headlines](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/activities/18/headlines.html) activity. Then discuss how they think historical knowledge about a [city](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction/habitats/cities_suburbs.html) can help citizens and planners prepare for a city's future. What types of historical information would be particularly helpful in determining what might happen in the future and in preventing future mistakes? **Development:**Divide the class into pairs or small groups, and have each group choose a major city that they would like to investigate. They can select Miami or Sydney (the two major cities referred to in the activity) or another city that interests them. Ask groups to pretend they are consultants who have been hired by the city government. As consultants they will investigate the city's history and geography and report on what significant historical and geographical information the present city government, planners, and residents should take into consideration when planning for future developments. Have students conduct Internet and/or library research on their cities. As they conduct their research, they should be looking for information to answer the following questions: * What is the climate like?
* What is the natural landscape like?
* What is the population of this city today, and how rapidly is it growing?
* What natural or human-made disasters is this city particularly susceptible to (e.g., earthquakes, hurricanes, nuclear accidents)?
* What are some of the significant environmental problems facing this city today?
* What events have had a significant impact on the city's history (e.g., a major earthquake or fire, an economic recession or depression, an influx of refugees)?
* If you were planning for this city's future, what specific information about the city's geography and history would you find particularly important and helpful to know about?

Students should compile their research into reports that address the above questions. They should be sure to include references to specific past or present conditions and events that might be valuable for people to know about when planning for the city's future. **Closing:**Have students go to the [United States Geological Survey: Earthshots](http://edcwww.cr.usgs.gov/earthshots/slow/tableofcontents) Web site and look at the following satellite images: Las Vegas, Nevada; Lake Chad, West Africa; and Chernobyl, Ukraine. They should read the captions and view the Satellite images for each time period. Have students write brief summaries explaining the patterns they see over time for each of these three locations. Their summaries should answer the following questions: * What, in general, has been going on in this place (e.g., population expansion or environmental changes)?
* What specific trends are noticeable over the years depicted in the satellite images?
* What did the place look like in the most recent satellite image, and what trends seem like they might have continued past the date of the last image?

Have a class discussion about what students have learned. **Suggested Student Assessment:**Ask students to think about what the places they just studied in the closing might look like in the future. What patterns and changes are currently occurring in these places that might contribute to their appearance in the future? What trends have they noticed in the satellite images to indicate what the places might look like in ten years? In 50 years? Ask students to think about two possible future scenarios for each location: one if trends continue as they have been over the past few decades (as shown on the satellite images), and one if trends were to change. A changing trend could be due to a change in environmental practices, an economic downturn, a natural disaster, or various other events. Students should think about the types of events that could realistically occur to change the trends shown on the satellite images. Have them brainstorm possible changes, either individually or in groups, and write down their ideas. If there is time, have them conduct further research on these three places to find out some of the things that could realistically occur to change recent trends. Ask students to draw two hypothetical satellite images for each location depicting the two possible scenarios they have described. Have students write captions to go with each future satellite image describing the trends shown on the images and explaining the conditions under which each scenario might actually occur in the future. For example, they might say that Las Vegas will realistically continue to expand and develop, but their alternate scenario might be a severe economic downturn in which building is brought to a halt. Have students compile their research into reports that address the above questions. They should be sure to include references to specific past or present conditions and events that might be valuable for people to know about when planning for the city's future. **Extending the Lesson:**After the students have completed the activity, discuss with the class the ways in which studying maps and satellite images can help them understand what the future might hold. **Related Links:**[National Geographic: Geography Action! 2003Habitats](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction/habitats)[National Geographic: Xpeditions ActivityHistory Through Headlines](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/activities/18/headlines.html)[United States Geological Survey](http://edcwww.cr.usgs.gov/earthshots/slow/tableofcontents) |

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