



Definition of Terms

used in

The Evolving Urban Form Series

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newgeography.com

City: A term that has multiple meanings, ranging from an area generally larger than a metropolitan area (such as in China and Viet Nam), to metropolitan area or urban area, down to individual municipalities within metropolitan areas or urban areas. Because of substantial confusion among consultants, academics and the press in the use of the word, it is important for the context to be clearly denoted.

Exurb: urban development that is within the labor market (metropolitan area), but is separated from the urban area by rural (non-urban) territory.

Megacity: An urban area with more than 10 million residents.

Metropolitan area: A geographical labor market with an urban area as its core. Metropolitan areas virtually always include rural areas, which are characterized by a high degree of economic integration with the urban area, especially commuting to the urban area. There is no general international standard for definition of metropolitan areas. As a result, this series will often use a term, such as "region" to denote the closest approximation to a metropolitan area that can be estimated from available data.

Municipality: A local government authority area, such as the city of New York or the city of Buenos Aires. In nearly all cases, municipalities are smaller than their corresponding metropolitan areas or urban areas, with China and Viet Nam being the exceptions.

Suburb: Urban development outside the urban core, but within the area of continuous urban development (called the "urban area" or the "urban agglomeration").

Urban area: Continuous urban development (also called the urban agglomeration). The urban area, by definition, contains no rural land (all land that is not urban is rural). There are broad international standards for designation of urban areas. These are described in [*Demographia World Urban Areas*](#), which also includes a listing of all identified urban areas in the world with more than 500,000 population (including land area and population density). Unlike jurisdictions (states, provinces, municipalities, etc.), urban areas do not have formal borders, except as defined by the extent of urban development at a particular time.

Urban core: The center of an urban area. The urban core includes the development that preceded the largely automobile oriented development that has occurred (virtually everywhere in the world) in recent decades. Data for the urban core is sketchy and in the absence of precise information, data is often used for the [historical core jurisdiction](#), which always includes pre-automobile development. Such jurisdictions may include a large share of automobile oriented development (such as Phoenix, San Jose, Rome or Sapporo). See [Suburbanized Core Cities](#).

Urban area names: Urban areas (and metropolitan areas) are generally shown with a single name, which is the name of the largest historical jurisdiction (such as Chicago). In some cases, more than one jurisdiction name is used to reduce confusion. Examples include:

Tokyo-Yokohama: Both academics and the press have confuse the Tokyo "metropolis" with the Tokyo urban area or metropolitan area. The Tokyo "metropolis" is the prefecture of Tokyo, which constitutes only one third of the urban area or metropolitan area. Inclusion of the largest city in the region (Yokohama) makes it clear that the area extends beyond the prefecture of Tokyo (the city of Tokyo is 23 separate wards, having itself been abolished in the 1940s).

Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto: In some cases, large urban areas have grown together, having large historical core jurisdictions. More than one name will be used in the most significant cases, such as Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto.

Seoul-Incheon: International data often shows only the city of Seoul as the urban area. The name of the large, nearby city of Incheon is added reduce confusion.

Jakarta (Jabotabek): Often, the Jakarta urban area is shown as a relatively small area largely conforming to the central jurisdiction. The Jakarta area has adopted a name for the larger metropolitan area (Jabotabek) that is used to reduce confusion.

Virginia Beach-Norfolk: In the United States, metropolitan area names have the primary name of the largest jurisdiction. In the case of Virginia Beach, the historical core jurisdiction is Norfolk, which is thus included in the name.

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