

Affordable Housing: Creative Solutions for Growing Urban Populations

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

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Reading Passage

Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.

- A** As urban populations continue to swell, the demand for affordable housing has become a pressing issue in cities worldwide. In places like San Francisco and New York, high rental prices have pushed many families to the outskirts, leading to longer commutes and increased stress. To tackle this challenge, city planners and architects are exploring innovative solutions that can effectively address the housing crisis. One such approach involves the use of modular housing, which allows for quick assembly and can be built off-site. These units not only reduce construction time but also lower costs significantly, making them an attractive option for municipalities looking to provide affordable living spaces for their residents.
- B** Another promising solution is the conversion of unused commercial properties into residential spaces. In many urban areas, vacant office buildings and warehouses are abundant. By transforming these structures into apartments or co-living spaces, cities can utilize existing infrastructure while addressing the housing crisis. This method has been successfully implemented in cities like Detroit, where old factories have been turned into vibrant communities that foster social interaction and economic growth. Moreover, local governments are incentivizing developers to include affordable units in new projects through tax breaks and zoning changes. Such creative strategies are essential for ensuring that urban growth does not come at the expense of the community's well-being, allowing cities to thrive while providing necessary housing options for all residents.

Vocabulary Glossary

Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
swell	to become larger in number or size	<i>The crowd began to swell as more people arrived at the concert.</i>
pressing	requiring immediate attention; urgent	<i>The team faced a pressing deadline to finish the project on time.</i>
outskirts	the outer parts of a city or town	<i>They live on the outskirts of the city, where it's quieter.</i>
modular	made of separate parts or sections that can be joined together	<i>The new office furniture is modular, allowing us to rearrange it easily.</i>
municipalities	cities or towns with their own local governments	<i>Many municipalities have their own police and fire departments.</i>
conversion	the act of changing from one use or purpose to another	<i>The conversion of the old school into apartments took two years.</i>
incentivizing	offering something to encourage someone to do something	<i>The company is incentivizing employees to work extra hours by offering bonuses.</i>
zoning	the process of dividing an area into zones for different purposes	<i>The city changed the zoning rules to allow more shops in the area.</i>

Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. The _____ of the old factory into apartments created a new community.
2. The city's population continues to _____, creating more demand for housing.
3. The government is _____ developers to build more affordable housing.
4. Many families are moving to the _____ of the city to find cheaper rent.
5. The new building uses a _____ design, so it can be built quickly.
6. _____ issues, like housing shortages, need to be solved quickly.

Comprehension Questions

These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.

Question 1

What is a key advantage of using modular housing in cities?

- A. It provides luxury living spaces.
- B. It reduces construction time and costs.
- C. It attracts tourists to the city.
- D. It requires a lot of space for assembly.

Question 2

Why are vacant office buildings being converted into homes?

- A. They create new business opportunities.
- B. They help utilize existing infrastructure.
- C. They are too old to be used as offices.
- D. They are located in remote areas.

Question 3

What role do local governments play in promoting affordable housing?

- A. They build all the new housing themselves.
- B. They offer tax breaks and zoning changes.
- C. They relocate families to rural areas.
- D. They set high rental prices for city apartments.

Question 4

How does the passage suggest urban growth can be balanced?

- A. By expanding cities into rural areas.
- B. By only building luxury apartments.
- C. By using creative strategies like modular housing and building conversions.
- D. By reducing the city's population.

Question 5

What is one effect of high rental prices on families?

- A. They can live closer to city centers.
- B. They face longer commutes and more stress.
- C. They have more leisure time.
- D. They spend more on travel to rural areas.

Discussion & Writing Prompts

Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).

1. Paragraph A mentions longer commutes as a result of high rental prices. How might longer commutes affect a person's daily life and well-being?

2. The passage discusses the use of modular housing to reduce construction time and costs. What are the potential downsides of modular housing that the passage does not mention?

3. Paragraph B describes the conversion of unused commercial properties into homes. Do you think this approach is sustainable for long-term urban development, and why?

Answer Key

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 B

Q2 B

Q3 B

Q4 C

Q5 B

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 conversion

FIB2 swell

FIB3 incentivizing

FIB4 outskirts

FIB5 modular

FIB6 Pressing

Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

1. What is a key advantage of using modular housing in cities?

✓ B — It reduces construction time and costs.

The passage states that modular housing reduces construction time and lowers costs.

✗ A — It provides luxury living spaces.

The passage does not mention luxury living spaces as a feature of modular housing.

✗ C — It attracts tourists to the city.

Tourism is not discussed in relation to modular housing.

✗ D — It requires a lot of space for assembly.

The passage mentions modular housing is built off-site, not requiring a lot of space for assembly.

2. Why are vacant office buildings being converted into homes?

✓ B — They help utilize existing infrastructure.

The passage explains that converting vacant buildings helps use existing infrastructure.

✗ A — They create new business opportunities.

The passage focuses on housing solutions, not business opportunities.

✗ C — They are too old to be used as offices.

The age of the buildings is not mentioned as a reason for conversion.

✗ D — They are located in remote areas.

The passage does not mention remote locations for these buildings.

3. What role do local governments play in promoting affordable housing?

✓ B — They offer tax breaks and zoning changes.

Local governments incentivize developers with tax breaks and zoning changes, as stated in the passage.

✗ A — They build all the new housing themselves.

The passage does not mention local governments building housing themselves.

✗ C — They relocate families to rural areas.

Relocation to rural areas is not discussed as a government strategy.

✗ D — They set high rental prices for city apartments.

The passage states the opposite; they promote affordable housing.

4. How does the passage suggest urban growth can be balanced?

✓ C — By using creative strategies like modular housing and building conversions.

The passage discusses modular housing and conversions as creative strategies to balance urban growth.

✗ A — By expanding cities into rural areas.

The passage does not mention expanding into rural areas.

✗ B — By only building luxury apartments.

Luxury apartments are not mentioned as part of the strategy.

✗ D — By reducing the city's population.

Reducing the population is not proposed in the passage.

5. What is one effect of high rental prices on families?

✓ B — They face longer commutes and more stress.

The passage states that high rental prices push families to outskirts, leading to longer commutes and increased stress.

✗ A — They can live closer to city centers.

The passage states the opposite; families move away from city centers.

✗ C — They have more leisure time.

Increased stress and longer commutes imply less leisure time.

✗ D — They spend more on travel to rural areas.

The passage does not mention spending more on travel to rural areas.

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