Unit 6 Cheat Sheet: Cities and Urban Land Use

AP® Human Geography · Unit 6 Review · Topics 6.1 to 6.11

> **The big idea:** Unit 6 is about cities: why they grow where they do, how land inside them gets sorted, and what problems fast growth brings. Every topic asks: who gets which space in and around a city, and why? The unit is worth about 12 to 17 percent of the multiple-choice section, and city models, bid-rent, sprawl, and gentrification are FRQ favorites.
>
> **How to use it:** Fill in the blank version from memory first, then check it here. Star anything you missed. Those are your review targets.

KEY TERMS

Urban growth (Topics 6.1 and 6.2)

Site	The physical character of the place itself (a harbor, a hill, fresh water).
Situation	Location relative to other places, such as trade routes and resources.
Suburbanization	People and jobs spread out to suburbs, helped by highways and home loans.
Megacity	An urban area of more than 10 million people (metacity: more than 20 million).
Urbanization in the periphery	Fastest city growth (rural migrants, high births); housing often lags.
Edge city	Offices, malls, and hotels at a suburban interchange; more jobs than homes.
Boomburb	Fast-growing suburban city of more than 100,000 that stays suburban.
Exurb	Rural-looking area past the suburbs; many residents commute into the metro.
Urban sprawl	Low-density growth leapfrogging onto open land; more driving, lost farmland.

World cities and city systems (Topics 6.3 and 6.4)

World (global) city	Global hub of banks, headquarters, and media; power, not size (London, Tokyo).
Rank-size rule	The nth-largest city is about 1/n the size of the largest (close: U.S., Germany).
Primate city	More than twice the next city's size; dominates its country (Paris, Bangkok).
Gravity model	Bigger and closer places interact more: (Pop. A × Pop. B) ÷ Distance².
Central place theory	Towns serve hexagon-shaped market areas that fit with no gaps (Christaller).
Low- and high-order goods	Everyday goods (gas) in many towns; specialized (hospital) in few cities.
Threshold	Minimum customers a service needs to stay open (huge for a heart surgeon).
Range	Maximum distance people will travel for a service (short for a gas station).

Inside the city (Topics 6.5 to 6.7)

Central business district (CBD)	Downtown, where offices and stores outbid everyone for land.
Limits of North American models	Built from U.S. cities; mostly ignore rivers and hills; fit few cities elsewhere.
Bid-rent theory	Highest bidder wins: offices and stores downtown, then industry, then homes.
Density gradient	Density falls from center to suburbs; costly central land forces building up.
Zoning	Laws that set what can be built where, and how dense it can be.
Infrastructure	Roads, transit, water, sewers, power, and internet; growth follows them.

Sustainable design (Topic 6.8)

Smart growth	Compact, walkable, mixed-use growth in existing areas, near transit (Portland).
New Urbanism	Walkable streets with homes, shops, and schools close by (Seaside, Florida).
Mixed-use development	Homes, shops, and offices in one area or building (apartments above stores).
Greenbelt	A protected ring of open land that limits outward growth (London, Toronto).
Urban growth boundary	Legal line limiting city growth to protect farms; can raise home prices.

Urban challenges (Topics 6.10 and 6.11)

Redlining	1930s federal maps outlined Black and immigrant areas in red; no home loans.
Gentrification	Richer newcomers renovate a low-income area; rising rents can displace residents.
Informal (squatter) settlement	Self-built, without legal title; often no clean water or sewers (favelas).
Urban heat island	Pavement and buildings make a city hotter than the land around it.
Environmental injustice	Pollution falls hardest on low-income communities and communities of color.
Brownfield	Abandoned, contaminated industrial site that can be cleaned up and reused.

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CITY MODELS: WHO LIVES WHERE, AND WHY

MODEL	LAYOUT	WHO LIVES WHERE	WHY IT LOOKS THAT WAY
Concentric zone (Burgess, 1920s)	Five rings; CBD is ring 1	Poorest near the CBD, wealthiest at the edge	Invasion and succession: newcomers in, older groups out
Sector (Hoyt, 1939)	Wedges along transport routes from the CBD	Low-income beside industry; wealthy on the best corridor	Industry follows rail; the wealthy take high ground or a waterfront
Multiple nuclei (Harris and Ullman, 1945)	Several nodes; CBD is one	Low-income by the CBD; wealthy far from heavy industry	Nodes like a port, airport, or university pull growth
Galactic city (peripheral)	Old central city ringed by suburbs and edge cities	Homes spread across suburbs; jobs cluster in edge cities	Car and highway era: a beltway ties it together
Latin American (Griffin-Ford)	Plaza CBD, elite spine, declining rings, disamenity sector	Wealthy near the center, poor at the edge	Colonial plaza core; poor newcomers settle at the edge
African (de Blij)	Three CBDs: colonial, traditional, and market	Ethnic and mixed areas; informal townships at the edge	Colonial CBD built beside older traditional business areas
Southeast Asian (McGee)	Old colonial port, not a CBD; alien (often Chinese) commercial zone	High-class areas and new suburbs; squatters at the edge	Colonial powers built ports to ship goods out

DON'T CONFUSE THESE

Megacity vs. world city	A megacity is defined by size (more than 10 million people); a world city, by global economic power. A city can be one without the other.
Primate city vs. world city	A primate city dominates its own country, even if it is small and not a world city (Apia, Samoa).
Site vs. situation	Site is the spot itself (a harbor, a hill). Situation is how that spot connects to other places.
Burgess vs. Latin American model	Burgess: the poor live near the CBD. Latin American: the wealthy live near the center and the poor at the edge.
Redlining vs. blockbusting	Redlining: lenders refuse loans in whole neighborhoods. Blockbusting: real estate agents use fear to get white owners to sell.
Threshold vs. range	Threshold is how many customers a service needs. Range is how far people will travel for it.

EXAMPLES TO KNOW COLD

New Orleans	Poor site (low and flood-prone) but a superb situation near the mouth of the Mississippi River.
Chicago	Railroads and factory jobs pulled rural people in; Burgess modeled its 1920s streetcar city.
Zurich and London	Zurich is a world city but modest in size. London is both a world city and a primate city.
Portland, Oregon	The classic smart growth city; gentrification there also displaced many Black families.
A "revitalized" census tract	Quantitative census data look better; qualitative interviews show residents were pushed out.

FRQ: HOW UNIT 6 SHOWS UP

PROMPT SAYS	WHAT TO DO
Identify	Name it. No explanation needed.
Define	Give the meaning of the term.
Describe	Give its key features or details.
Explain	Say how or why, and connect the cause to the result ("because," "which leads to").
Compare	Give a similarity or a difference between two things.
Explain the degree to which	Pick low, moderate, or high, then explain why.

Likely Unit 6 FRQ angles

- Identify a city model, explain the history behind it, and compare where rich and poor live.
- Explain how bid-rent shapes land use and density.
- Describe how data show a megacity or a primate city.
- Describe an informal settlement and explain why periphery cities draw rural migrants.
- Explain one benefit and one drawback of gentrification.
- Explain the degree to which smart growth limits sprawl.

> **FRQ rules:** Answer exactly what each part asks, and use every stimulus it names. Write in complete sentences. If a part asks for one example, only your first is scored.

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