



PART 1

Read the text below and answer questions 1–13.

MODELS OF URBAN STRUCTURE

A

Urban structure is not simply the accidental outcome of millions of individual choices; it is the patterned result of economic competition, transport technology, and policy decisions that together shape urban morphology. To make these patterns intelligible, geographers have proposed simplified models that describe recurring arrangements of land use and social space. One influential early framework was Ernest Burgess's concentric zone model, developed in relation to rapidly industrialising North American cities. In this view, the city grows outward in rings from the central business district (CBD), where accessibility is highest and the intensity of competition for space is greatest. Because land values rise where firms can most easily reach labour, customers, and services, high-value commercial activity tends to dominate the core, while lower-income housing and older industry historically clustered in adjacent zones. Although the Burgess model is an abstraction rather than a blueprint, it captures an important logic: the CBD's expensive land produces strong pressure for activities that can pay for central locations, leaving less profitable uses to seek cheaper space.

B

A second classic model—Homer Hoyt's sector model—challenged the idea that urban growth proceeds evenly in circles. Hoyt argued that cities often expand in wedge-shaped sectors that radiate from the centre, guided by major transport corridors such as rail lines, tram routes, river channels, and later arterial roads. Once a corridor becomes established, it attracts related land uses: heavy industry may align along rail infrastructure for bulk movement, while commercial strips develop where passenger flows are dense. Housing patterns, in turn, reflect environmental advantages and disamenities created by these sectors. Higher-income residential areas may extend outward along desirable directions—often upwind of smoke or away from industrial noise—while lower-income districts may remain closer to industrial belts where rents are lower. The sector model therefore explains why spatial segregation is not evenly distributed around a city's centre: growth follows routes and environmental gradients, producing directional patterns rather than symmetrical rings.

C

As cities expanded further and motorised travel reduced reliance on a single downtown, a third framework emerged: the multiple nuclei model associated with Harris and Ullman.



This approach treats the modern city as increasingly polycentric. Instead of revolving around one dominant CBD, urban regions develop several specialised hubs—for instance, industrial parks that cluster near freight access, university districts that attract housing and services, airport zones with logistics and hotels, and entertainment or retail complexes designed for high visitor volumes. Each nucleus generates its own agglomeration effects: once a specialised activity is established, related businesses and workers benefit from proximity and reinforce the cluster. Over time, these hubs may compete for investment and labour while also cooperating through transport links and complementary functions. The resulting urban form is more complex than either rings or wedges, reflecting the idea that multiple centres can coexist, each shaped by its own accessibility and land-value gradients.

D

Despite their explanatory power, classic models have been criticised for understating how politics and inequality shape urban space. Zoning ordinances, infrastructure investment, and planning decisions can actively steer development, creating winners and losers rather than allowing “natural” market sorting. Discrimination in housing and credit markets can also produce durable spatial segregation that cannot be reduced to distance or corridor effects alone. Furthermore, many cities contain informal settlements that do not fit neatly into concentric rings, sectors, or planned nuclei. In rapidly urbanising regions, self-built neighbourhoods may emerge where land is available rather than where models predict, shaped by legal ambiguity, evictions, and uneven service provision. In addition, global capital flows can reshape land values through speculative investment, driving price changes that classic models—designed for earlier industrial contexts—did not fully anticipate. These critiques do not make the models useless; instead, they highlight that urban structure reflects governance and power as much as transport and land economics.

E

Contemporary redevelopment has added another complication: the reversal of expected residential movement. Earlier models often imply a long-term outward shift, with wealthier households moving away from congested centres toward suburban space. Yet many cities have experienced gentrification, in which central neighbourhoods become desirable again due to proximity to employment, cultural amenities, and renovated housing stock. As higher-income residents move inward, rents and property values rise, which can displace lower-income communities and small businesses. This process reshapes spatial segregation and can produce a “return to the centre” that contradicts a simple centre-to-suburbs narrative. It also demonstrates that land value is not determined by distance alone: image, safety, public investment, and symbolic prestige can reprice central districts. Gentrification thus complicates the predictive comfort of classic models by



showing that urban change can reverse direction and that redevelopment strategies can reshape who occupies the most accessible zones.

F

In response to these complexities, newer approaches emphasise networks and flows rather than single-centre geometry. Instead of asking how far a place is from downtown, analysts examine how it sits within systems of mobility and information. A location's value may depend on connectivity to employment clusters, transit interchanges, and other connectivity nodes through which commuters, goods, and services move. This perspective also helps explain phenomena such as the “edge city,” where large concentrations of offices, retail, and entertainment form on metropolitan outskirts near highways, functioning as secondary downtowns. Network-oriented thinking does not discard the earlier models; rather, it reframes them as partial views of a more interconnected urban system. Where the concentric and sector models focus on geometry around a CBD, network approaches highlight that accessibility is increasingly produced by infrastructures—rail, highways, digital networks—whose nodes can generate their own centres of gravity.

G

Ultimately, models of urban structure are best treated as heuristic tools rather than as formulas that can be applied mechanically to any city. Each model highlights certain forces—competition in the CBD, corridor-driven sector growth, or polycentric clustering—and invites users to ask what mechanisms are shaping a particular urban landscape. At the same time, no model captures every driver of urban morphology, particularly those rooted in political decision-making, inequality, and informal urbanisation. For practical planning, the value of these frameworks lies less in perfect fit than in sharpened debate: they help planners and residents test assumptions about why land values rise, why segregation persists, and how transport projects may reorganise daily life.

Questions 1–6

Select the correct answer.

1 Why do geographers use simplified models of urban structure?

- A** To make recurring patterns of land use and social space easier to understand.
- B** To calculate exact land prices in central business districts.
- C** To show that urban form results mainly from individual residential choices.
- D** To separate the effects of transport from those of economic competition.

2 In the concentric zone model, what feature of the central area is emphasised?



- A** High-value activities dominate because competition for expensive land is intense.
- B** Housing quality improves steadily towards the centre because services are concentrated there.
- C** Industry is excluded from the central zone because it requires large plots at low cost.
- D** Residential patterns are mainly determined by the age of buildings rather than congestion.

3 Why, according to the sector model, are social patterns not evenly distributed around the city centre?

- A** Residents choose locations mainly on the basis of distance from the central business district.
- B** Transport improvements weaken the influence of corridors on development direction.
- C** Growth follows transport routes and environmental advantages, creating wedge-shaped sectors.
- D** Industrial districts shift constantly, so housing expands randomly in all directions.

4 What does the multiple nuclei model propose about modern urban form?

- A** The historic centre remains the only location where specialised functions can develop.
- B** Multiple centres appear mainly because cities attempt to reduce inequality through policy.
- C** Cities develop nuclei only when suburban housing expands faster than public transport.
- D** Several specialised hubs emerge and attract related activities, producing a more complex structure.

5 What limitation of classic urban models is highlighted in the passage?

- A** They assume land value depends only on distance, and ignore access and regulation.
- B** They may underplay how politics, discrimination and investment shape where people live.
- C** They treat informal settlements as the standard form of urban growth in all regions.
- D** They argue that global financial flows have replaced transport as the main driver of urban change.

6 What does the passage suggest about the use of urban structure models?

- A** They provide accurate predictions for individual cities if enough data are collected.
- B** They are best treated as fixed templates because most cities match them closely.
- C** They simplify reality but highlight forces that help people debate planning and change.
- D** They have been superseded by network approaches and are no longer useful.

Questions 7–10



Complete the notes below. Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the text for each answer.

Key influences and changes in urban structure

- Firms value central locations partly because they provide easy access to labour, customers and **7**
- Once a specialised activity becomes established, related businesses and workers can benefit from **8** and reinforce the cluster.
- A modern redevelopment process known as **9** can push higher-income residents back towards central areas.
- Railways, highways and digital networks contain **10** that can generate new centres of activity.

Questions 11–13

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

11 The multiple nuclei model describes specialised urban activities as depending on a single dominant CBD.

12 The passage indicates that informal settlements may not be explained neatly by the classic models.

13 In some cities, higher-income households have moved towards inner-city neighbourhoods rather than continuing the outward movement expected by earlier models.

Answer Key

1. A
2. A
3. C
4. D
5. B
6. C
7. services



- 8. proximity
- 9. gentrification
- 10. nodes
- 11. FALSE
- 12. TRUE
- 13. TRUE