

Assignment 2

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"I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor System."

Question 1.

North American colonial cities were substantially smaller than what we would consider cities today, not even reaching 10,000 in population until after the Revolutionary War. Most of them were along a body of water; either a river, bay, or the ocean, which allowed for easily importing and exporting goods to sustain the economic growth necessary for a settlement of their size. Due to a lack of both motor vehicles and, generally, a building commission, the topography of the city was quite erratic, with streets jutting off in many different directions and not following a singular pattern, like many do today. This was because the streets were mostly built "as-needed", with little foresight into what might need to be built nearby in the near future. The roads were mostly unpaved.

Question 2.

In the post-industrial era, North American cities suffered from racial tensions resulting in riots, which drove middle-class white people out of the cities and into the suburbs. As factories closed, the minority population was trapped within the city, which was economically deteriorating, and many feared the situation would never improve. However, cities were generally too attractive and ripe with opportunity to remain downtrodden forever, and were able to bring in new prospectors building new offices, businesses, and living spaces which attracted new residents and young working professionals. This has led to surge in urban construction, and many believe we are in the midst of a "urban renaissance". The process of these new residents bringing money into a low-income area and renovating the neglected buildings is called "gentrification", and although it has the unfortunate effect of displacing long-term (often minority) residents of the area, it has largely contributed to the revitalization of modern urban areas.

Question 3.

The beginnings of the city of New York go back to when it was actually called New Amsterdam, and was a Dutch colony which occupied only the south part of Manhattan. New Amsterdam was an export hub for the fur trade, which came from animals hunted in the Northeast and Canada. Following the Revolutionary War, New York was the official capital of the new independent nation for a few years, before Philadelphia took over. In 1825, New York opened up the Erie Canal, which solidified its position as urban center number one. In 1848, steel and iron were used to construct a 5-story factory in the city, which was record-breaking at the time, and was the beginnings of skyscrapers today. In 1898, the City of New York officially incorporated all five boroughs as we know them today. The city continued to grow in population, and soon a large concentration of minorities, especially African-Americans, began to appear in Uptown areas like Harlem, kicking off racial tensions between citizens. Today, the

population exceeds 8.3 million people, and the ad-hoc headquarters of finance, media, arts, and real-estate nationwide. It houses many of the Fortune 500 companies, and is the busiest seaport east of the Mississippi river. It is massively diverse, and houses both extremes on the spectrum of economic wealth: the poorest of the poor, and those rich beyond comprehension. The homelessness crisis has led to further racial divide within the cities, with many calling for further economic assistance programs to help clean up the streets.