

Passage 1: *Frederick Peters* argues for the evergreen appeal of the city.

- 1 The world over, cities will struggle, but they will rise. It helps to remember why so many Americans (and people worldwide) live in cities. For centuries, people have flocked to New York, to Paris, to Rome, to Berlin, to Shanghai, to Los Angeles. They have come seeking jobs, seeking companionship, seeking freedom, seeking love. In these pandemic days, it does well to remember what it is that makes urban dwellers committed, even as so much press today is being devoted to urban flight. It is not just the theatre, or the restaurants, or the visits to Yankee Stadium. Our attraction to cities depends on some more fundamental characteristics. 5
- 2 Cities foment change. New ideas are born within the crucible of the melting pot. With so many people living cheek by jowl with one another in a liberal environment, different ideas inevitably bubble up, come into contact with one another, and synthesise, creating new societal directions. Liberalism embraces the notion of people thinking differently and co-existing comfortably. It is this trait that has, over the years, drawn so many different types of people from so many different backgrounds to a place like New York. There is a like-minded group for you in the city if you are black or white, gay or straight, a professional athlete or a professional musician or a professional model, from Wuhan or Wyoming. This diversity also fuels the discussion, the argument, which leads to the change described above. 10 15
- 3 Next, cities are both anonymous and embracing. Just as people have flocked to cities throughout history to find like-minded people, others choose them because they offer a kind of invisibility. Amidst so many, it is not hard to choose to be invisible. The lonely city painted by Edward Hopper and the crowded city painted by George Bellows are both the same city. Job opportunities in cities exceed those elsewhere. Why do people from all over the world move from their original birthplaces to cities? Of course, much of it has to do with employment: jobs tend to cluster in cities. Even with the advent of Zoom, most people still want to return to the office (according to a recent Gensler survey, only 12% of those asked indicated that they wanted to continue working full time from home). And the majority of those offices are still clustered in urban areas. When the dust settles, people will still be moving to urban centres for work. 20
- 4 Cities attract communities of affinity since time immemorial. For decades, if not centuries, those who felt outcast in their home environments have gravitated to cities. Here, there are others like you, regardless of what you love. Whatever your social, artistic, sexual, or spare-time proclivities are, others in your city share them in a way that cannot be guaranteed in your hometown. Plus, by and large, no one is watching. 25
- 5 Urban populations ebb and flow. Today, many have decided to postpone returning to their urban lives as long as they have reasonable alternatives. Others are deciding to quit urban life altogether. As that happens, people are always moving in. They come for jobs, they come for community, and they come because New York will always remain a melting pot of opportunity. Especially as more reasonable immigration laws re-open our borders to seekers from the world over, and our cities continue to embrace seekers from all over the country, American urban areas will continue to showcase the values which made us the country we are. The world over, cities will struggle, but they will rise. 30 35

Passage 2: *Mamka Anyona* and *Stefan Peterson* are of the view that city living impacts our health adversely.

- 1 Urbanisation is quickly increasing across the globe. Today, some 55% of the world's population live in cities and the number is projected to reach 70% by 2050. This shift has come with major advantages. It has become easier to consolidate the workforce, driving economic development and making it cheaper to provide services such as education, health, and sanitation to larger populations at lower fixed costs. However, urbanisation has also led to a rapid change in the way human beings live and interact with one another, with a cascade of adverse consequences to our health and environment. 5

- 2 City living has led to more sedentary lifestyles. For most of human existence, physical activity has been incidental to daily living, and exposure to the outdoors and green spaces was higher than they are today. In the age of urbanisation, people live in high-rise buildings with less exposure to green spaces for outdoor activities. In addition, green spaces are unequally distributed in cities, with low-income neighbourhoods having a lower density of green spaces and facing more barriers to accessing them. In the United States, inequality along wealth and racial lines correlates with distance to green spaces, with Black and Hispanic communities having the lowest levels of access. Disparity along wealth lines is replicated strongly in cities in the Global South. 10
- 3 Urbanisation's impact on health has been unprecedented, leading to a 'double burden' of diseases in low and middle-income countries. Historically, countries have 'transitioned' from infectious to non-communicable disease (NCD) burdens as they advanced economically. However, urbanisation has contributed to a rapidly growing burden of NCDs such as heart diseases, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases. As many countries are also still contending with unresolved significant burdens of infectious diseases, undernutrition, and poor maternal and child health outcomes, this double burden of disease slows economic and social development due to productivity losses and poverty, often from catastrophic out-of-pocket medical spending. 15 20
- 4 Due to urbanisation, people use motorised transportation at the highest rates in human history, significantly reducing one incidental source of physical activity and increasing pollution. While 9 out of 10 people worldwide are breathing polluted air, people in many cities are suffering stratospheric levels of air pollution, leading to sickness and an estimated seven million deaths worldwide every year. 25
- 5 In addition, the urban food environment perpetuates injustice between those who can access nutritious food and those who cannot, with 'food deserts' and 'food oases'¹ following inequality lines that pervade all other realms of capitalist living. In many low-income 'food desert' neighbourhoods, individuals have limited access to affordable and nutritious food, and residents are often forced to subsist on unhealthy, cheap fast food, in contrast to 'food oases' neighbourhoods, which have higher access to fresh foods. In general, urbanisation reduces access to fresh food for all, as food is sold far from where it was cultivated. Industrial farming practices further damage the environment, reducing the quality of the air we breathe and exposing us to climate catastrophes. 30
- 6 On top of the negative impact on physical activity and diets, urbanisation has atomised living, tearing the social fabric and reducing the communal living that characterised most of human existence. This has led to isolation, with every succeeding generation recording increasing levels of social isolation and loneliness, and related mental and emotional health conditions such as anxiety and depression. In some cities, young people have resorted to completely cutting themselves off from society due to the pressures of modern city living, such as the case of hikikomori in Japan, characterised by a form of severe social withdrawal among young adults who become recluses in their parents' homes, unable to work or go to school for months or years. 35 40
- 7 But cities are also engines of change, leading progress on the multi-sectoral collaboration required for the sustainable health of both people and the planet. Cities across the world are creating green spaces in increasingly innovative ways, and may be our best bet in combating the impact of the fast-approaching climate change catastrophe, with cities being the centre of mission-driven approaches to climate and carbon neutrality. In a similar vein, cities are growing hubs of the renewed youth activism that is driving change — including initiatives such as Fridays for Future, now active in 7,500 cities across all continents. We must embrace our urbanised existence and support the transitions needed to improve the quality of life in cities. For better or worse, the world's future will see most people living in cities, and it is incumbent upon us to take the good while working together to mitigate the bad. 45 50

¹ Oases is the plural of oasis.