

New York Buildings “Going Green”



New York City has lots and lots of buildings, and many people live there—almost 8 million people! Human beings take a lot of things from the earth, and they also put a lot of things back into it, including things that pollute the air or use up natural resources.

“Eco-friendly,” or “green” buildings in New York City are good for the environment. “Green” living helps save natural resources, makes the air cleaner, and helps us breathe better.

We spend about 90 percent of our day indoors, where the air quality can actually be much worse than it is outside.

Certain buildings have more access to natural daylight, appliances that use less energy, and encourage people to use environmentally friendly practices. Green buildings give the people who live in them cleaner air to breathe, and some even have sensors that turn lights on and off when you walk into or leave a room. The buildings also capture and reuse rainwater.

The Albanese Organization built the first green residential building in North America in 2003. It is called the Solaire, and is located in Battery Park City. Now, in 2013, they are building another new green building in Battery Park City called the Visionaire, which is so environmentally friendly that it is being called America’s “greenest” high-rise building.

The building purifies and reuses water, using 50% less water than a typical high-rise building. Some of the building’s electricity is powered by the sun, and the fresh air is filtered to take pollutants out.

The buildings themselves were all built using recycled materials from other construction projects, so that those materials do not just end up in a garbage dump.

Skanska USA, a construction company that is the largest builder of parks and buildings in New York, takes all the ground-up rock from their city construction projects and brings it in to recycling yards so they can use it in other places – as of summer 2013, they are using it to build Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Brooklyn Bridge Park is an environmentally friendly park, which collects and recirculates rainwater and uses it to water the trees and plants in the park's many gardens. The cars that the park's rangers use were built with recycled wood and are powered by the sun.

It costs more for companies to make these buildings, so the people who live in them have to pay more, too. But reduced energy bills help you save money. And if you have allergies, you may end up saving on doctors' bills, too, since these buildings are healthier to live in.

"I have a history of asthma and hypersensitivity to odors and allergens in the air," said a Visionaire resident, Rod McCowan, 52. "The air is crisp and pure. I can tell I'm breathing better."

Mr. McCowan is most impressed with other details too, like the recycling room, which includes a battery shoot and a recycling program for old electronics. He said he "barely hears street traffic," and that the apartment always sees a whole lot of natural light, even when it's overcast, thanks to floor-to-ceiling glass windows.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is a "green" building?

- A a building that is not powered by the sun
- B a building painted green
- C a building that is very harmful to the environment
- D an eco-friendly building

2. Which of the following does the author NOT describe in the passage?

- A Brooklyn Bridge Park and "green" buildings in New York City
- B the benefits of living in a "green" building
- C "green" buildings constructed in American states other than New York
- D the different ways "green" buildings are environmentally friendly

3. Read the following paragraph from the passage: "It costs more for companies to make these buildings, so the people who live in them have to pay more, too. But reduced energy bills help you save money. And if you have allergies, you may end up saving on doctors' bills, too, since these buildings are healthier to live in."

This paragraph suggests that money saved living in a "green" building

- A is not worth the cost of living in a "green" building
- B can make up for part of the expense of living in a "green" building
- C is hard to calculate so it's unclear how it compares to the expense of living in a "green" building
- D is greater than the cost of living in a "green" building

4. The passage suggests that companies constructing "green" buildings

- A do not make a profit from constructing "green" buildings
- B try to use "eco-friendly" methods in the construction process
- C don't try to use "eco-friendly" methods in the construction process
- D are unaware of the impact different construction methods have on the environment

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A pollution in New York City
- B "eco-friendly" buildings in New York City
- C the Skanska USA construction company
- D recycled materials used to build "green" buildings

6. Read the introductory paragraph of the passage: "New York City has lots and lots of buildings, and many people live there—almost 8 million people! Human beings take a lot of things from the earth, and they also put a lot of things back into it, including things that pollute the air or use up natural resources."

Why does the author begin the passage by describing the negative impact people can have on the air and natural resources?

- A to argue that the pollution in New York City is the worst in America
- B to show how hopeless the pollution issue in New York City is
- C to establish this problem so that he can then explain how "green" buildings in New York City can address that problem
- D to present a problem for which there is no solution

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

_____ the Visionaire is so environmentally friendly, it is being called America's "greenest" high-rise building.

- A Because
- B However
- C Although
- D But

8. The Visionaire is very environmentally friendly. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

9. Describe what improvement Rod McCowan, resident of the Visionaire building, has noticed since living in the Visionaire building.

10. Why might residents of more expensive, "green" buildings be willing to pay the higher cost of living in these buildings? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1210

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8. The Visionaire is very environmentally friendly. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Students should note that the Visionaire building is very environmentally friendly because the building purifies and reuses water, using 50% less water than a typical high-rise building. In addition, some of the building's electricity is powered by the sun, and the fresh air is filtered to take pollutants out.

9. Describe what improvement Rod McCowan, resident of the Visionaire building, has noticed since living in the Visionaire building.

Suggested answer: Students should answer that McCowan, a man who has a history of asthma and hypersensitivity to odors and allergens, has stated he can tell that he is breathing better.

10. Why might residents of more expensive, "green" buildings be willing to pay the higher cost of living in these buildings? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary but students could cite the health benefits of living in these buildings, as was the case with Rod McCowan. Students may also answer that these residents are willing to pay more money to live in these buildings if they know they are reducing their harmful environmental impact.