

A “Google” search about sprawl yields a number of sites with generally consistent definitions of sprawl in the context of planning/urban planning.

Miriam-Webster definitions of Urban Sprawl suggest:

1. The spreading of urban developments (as houses and shopping centers) on undeveloped land near a city.
2. A situation in which large stores, groups of houses, etc., are built in an area around a city that formerly had few people living in it.

I liked the summary on Lehigh University’s Lehigh Environmental Initiative page (<http://www.ei.lehigh.edu/envirosci/enviroissue/sprawl/whatissprawl.html>), which I have cut and pasted below.

1. Taken from *Smart Growth America*, “Sprawl is defined as the process in which the spread of development across the landscape far outpaces population growth. The landscape sprawl creates has four dimensions:
  - a population that is widely dispersed in low-density development;
  - rigidly separated homes, shops, and workplaces;
  - a network of roads marked by huge blocks and poor access;
  - a lack of well-defined thriving activity centers, such as downtown's and town centers;
  - a lack of transportation choices other than personal cars;
  - and difficulty of walking as a result of housing locations."
2. Taken from *The Sierra Club*, "Sprawl is irresponsible, often poorly-planned development that destroys green space, increases traffic and air pollution, crowds schools, and drives up taxes."
3. Taken from *Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University*, "Sprawl features rapid geographic expansion of metropolitan areas in a "leapfrog," low density pattern, segregation of distinct land uses, heavy dependence on automobile travel with extensive road construction, architectural and social homogeneity, shift of capital investment and economic opportunity from the city center the the periphery, and relatively weak regional planning."
4. Taken from *10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania*, "Sprawl is a regional pattern of real estate development that is characterized by:
  - Low density;
  - Unlimited and non-continuous outward expansion;
  - Spatial segregation of different land uses;
  - Consumption of outer suburban agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive lands;
  - Travel dominance by motor vehicle;
  - Lack of integrated land use planning."