

Urban Sprawl

All questions require at least
THREE sentences on own paper.

PLACES & TERMS

urban sprawl poorly planned development that spreads a metropolitan population over a wider and wider area

infrastructure basic facilities, services, and installations needed for a community to function

smart growth efficient use and conservation of land and other resources in growing cities

sustainable community community where residents can live and work

Growth Without a Plan

Where does urban sprawl occur?

North Americans often choose to work in a city but live in its suburbs. They are attracted to the suburbs by new housing and open spaces. As outlying areas become more populated, the land between them and the city fills in as well.

Metropolitan areas become larger and more difficult to manage as suburbs become more numerous. Poorly planned development that spreads population over a wider and wider geographical area is called **urban sprawl**.

Urban sprawl is a matter of increasing concern in North America. From 1970 to 1990, people who worked in U.S. cities moved farther and farther from urban centers. The population density of cities in the United States decreased by more than 20 percent. About 30,000 square miles of rural lands were gobbled up by housing developments.

Canada is less populated than the United States but has similar problems. In the 1990s, more than 75 percent of all Canadians lived in urban areas.

Sprawl occurs in metropolitan areas that allow unrestricted growth or that have no plans to contain it. Other factors also contribute to sprawl. These include unlimited use of automobiles and the growth of expressways.

Autos and relatively cheap gasoline allow Americans to drive many miles to and from their jobs. Despite clogged highways and long commutes, Americans have been *reluctant* to use mass transit.

Many Americans try to recapture the sense of community they experienced while growing up. They want their children to know their neighborhoods and have a backyard in which to play. Most American cities only recently have begun to plan neighborhoods with a sense of community. Traditionally, city dwellers have sought this way of life in the suburbs.

1. How does the unlimited use of automobiles contribute to urban sprawl?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

Urban Sprawl's Negative Impact

How can urban sprawl affect costs?

Urban sprawl has a negative impact on the quality of life in many ways. As the perimeters of cities grow, more commuter traffic strains the infrastructure. Infrastructure consists of the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for a community to function. Sources of water, such as rivers or underground aquifers become depleted. More cars on the road add to air pollution, too.

Urban sprawl causes housing costs to rise. The cost of providing streets, utilities, and other public facilities is often at least 25 percent higher in suburbs. Urban sprawl also separates the well-off from the poor. Lower-income residents can become isolated in inner city areas.

2. How does increased commuting affect infrastructure?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.

Solutions to Sprawl

What is smart growth?

More and more cities are developing plans for smart growth—the efficient use and conservation of land and other resources. Most often this involves encouraging development close to or inside the city limits. Good public transportation systems make smart growth possible.

In 1971, the city of Portland, Oregon, drew a line around itself to create its urban growth boundary. Building was allowed inside the boundary. The surrounding green space was off limits to developers. This decision caused *controversy* but has paid off. Portland has contained urban sprawl.

Since 1961, Vancouver, British Columbia, has seen the population of its metropolitan area double. The growth of outlying suburbs often took place at the expense of forests, farms, and flood plains. In 1995, the Greater Vancouver Regional Board adopted a plan to manage growth. It involved turning suburbs into sustainable communities. These are communities where residents can live and work.

Not all city governments respond to the concerns of their citizens. So, people often band together to offer their own solutions. For example, the citizens of Durham, North Carolina, opposed additional commercial development along a *congested* area of nearby interstate highway.

Urban sprawl has had a major impact on the quality of life for North America's increasingly urban population. It challenges us to plan wisely for continued growth and development in the 21st century.

3. Which problems do sustainable communities solve? Which remains unsolved?

Answer in at least THREE SENTENCES on own paper.