

## Planning and Public Health

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The way our communities are designed and built influences public health. One hundred years ago, major cities across the USA were grappling with overcrowding, undeveloped sanitary systems, disease outbreaks, poorly controlled fires, and air and noise pollution. The automobile revolution and government-led highway development, land zoning, and suburban home ownership programs drained central city populations through mid-century, which helped to alleviate these early public health issues.

Today, most North Americans live in suburbs. While the public health challenges of the past have largely been resolved in part by this migration, new ones have arisen. Cars and highways are the lifeblood of suburban landscapes. Widespread car ownership ushered in an era of unprecedented human freedom and mobility for many.

But these everyday machines are still dangerous to operate and interact with, expensive to buy and maintain, are a continuing source of pollution, and are now recognized as a leading and stubborn human contributor to global warming. Land zoning policies which supported suburban growth properly spaced industry from homes, which reduced residential exposure to emissions, odors, and noise. However, the rigorous implementation of strict land zoning also led to the isolation of many neighborhoods from nearby commerce and jobs – such as food markets and retail – and community spaces, such as parks and schools. This residential isolation has created an over dependence on cars. In turn, this overreliance has supported the rise in sedentary lifestyles, limited access to healthy foods and medical care for some and has helped fuel many of the public health challenges of our day, such as obesity, diabetes, death and injury from vehicle crashes, and cardiovascular disease.

With these health impacts becoming increasingly evident, planners and public health professionals are working more closely together than ever before to propose solutions. And this is nowhere truer than in Delaware. The First State is nationally recognized as a place where the planning and public health professions proactively work together. This issue of the Journal will explore the intersection between planning and health in Delaware, and some of the collaborative policy, infrastructure, and program solutions which have come about. Taken together, we are confident that the articles in this Journal present a full picture of the development of the two professions, examples of current collaborative work underway, and ideas for future efforts. Enjoy!

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