

In This Issue:

Place Matters

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Health matters and, as always, intersects with every other aspect of society. One of the most important aspects is place and thus, “Place Matters.” In public health we know this to be a truth, yet the concept of “place” can be difficult to understand and even more difficult to manage. So what is “place?”

Place happens at the intersection of the natural and built environment, as they intersect with social, economic, and political factors. This is to say, it is difficult to look at one aspect of place without observing and assessing the influence of the other factors. Case in point: any place along a body of water or a river – an attribute shared by much of Delaware.

In Claymont and certain parts of Wilmington, being located along the Delaware and Christina Rivers places communities in jeopardy of flooding, and can add to long-standing neglect. Much of the Delaware River waterfront was taken over by rail, industrial, and highway systems, cleaving communities from waterfront recreational areas. Traveling further down the Delaware River brings you to Historic New Castle, and below it, Delaware City. While these areas are still on the flood plain, the social, political, and economic factors have combined in such a way as to create more desirable communities. As one travels further down the Delaware Bay to the beaches, we see the value of property skyrocket as these areas have long been coveted resort areas and are now becoming year-round residential areas.

The City of Wilmington Riverfront is an outstanding example of a formerly depressed area which, through massive investment and infrastructure improvement initiatives, has been reborn to the destination it is today. However, there is always a matter of displacement of communities when initiatives such as these take place, along with the lingering question of “why didn’t you go a bit further up or downstream?” to improve other areas.

“Place Matters” aligns planning and public health as partners along with institutions like higher education and our State’s healthcare institutions. It also aims to engage every community member in a conversation which prompts us to think about the deep implications of where something is, and how it can lead to healthy lifestyles, safe neighborhoods, navigable environments, high quality education and gainful employment. Place is thus a proxy for everything else, and as always, it all matters to health.

We look forward to your thoughts and as always look forward to your feedback.

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