

Julez Hill

Dr. Shea

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Define Wicked Problems in East St. Louis

In CODES we have been learning about wicked problems and the damage they do to communities or areas. Wicked problems reside in every area known to man. Some problems involve water, some involve women's rights, and some involve racism in certain regions. Environments even have to deal with wicked problems. These problems can have different characteristics, such as vague problem definitions, undefined solutions, no endpoint, irreversible, unique, and urgent. The focus of this discussion is flooding in East St. Louis and how wicked problems affect this area.

You may be asking, "What exactly makes flooding a wicked problem?" Allow me to explain. For a long time now, East St. Louis has been dealing with flooding. Two years ago, in 2022, East St. Louis dealt with probably one of the most historic floodings in the area. Fox 2 now says "*East St. Louis remains in the State of Emergency until further notice. We want to make sure that our citizens are safe and treated with dignity and compassion, said Eastern III. "To date, we are estimating that over 50 families were affected (Hoskins)." Those 50 families could only do so much to prevent those waters from entering and destroying their homes. Now again I ask, "What makes flooding a wicked problem?" It is a unique problem, as certain areas in East St. Louis don't have to experience water backing up so bad or the risk of destroying their homes.*

With East St. Louis not being such a great area, a lot of people don't have the money or resources to replace what's been lost. Not to mention the families that temporarily went homeless because there was no saving for their homes. This problem could even have the characteristics of a vague problem definition. The area doesn't have anywhere for the water to go. It could be the lack of attention that they area has. Even when it comes to the community dealing with this problem the situation will still be. This problem has affected so many people in the area, what if it gets worse?



The image above is from someone's home in the East St. Louis area that was majorly affected by the flooding two years ago. *“Homes and vehicles in the 600 block of Terrace Dr. in East St. Louis were flooded as water rose quickly in the area near the Harding ditch (Holtmann).”*

Although nature must run its course, what are people doing to help those who have been affected? Could it be that there's not an endpoint to this problem? As bad as it sounds, flooding is only prevented in so many ways. Without a cause or knowledge to stop this issue from it will continue to dominate in this city. What's worse is the fact some people have no family or friends in the area to help recover from this incident. What about the community? Seeing the homes of their loved ones being destroyed, and the memories that these places have carried could bring someone down. So again, I ask, "What makes flooding a wicked problem?" Each characteristic deals with this problem, some more than others. For example, the damage done to some of these homes is irreversible. Some of these problems can be urgent, because of the time involved with these incidents.

Before Covid-19 I used to go over to my Godmothers to help around the house. It was good spending time with her, but an issue she used to have to deal with was flooding. It used to reach the top of the stairs, ruining her appliances and other things in the basement. There was nothing she could do but wait till someone came over to help drain her basement. Her washer and dryer would be damaged and sometimes there would be mold build-up. The same thing used to happen at my church. The basement would flood so badly that we didn't have a church for months. There are so many other factors flood water brings, it's not just homes being damaged but the livelihood of others in the area. On KSDK news, longtime resident Terry Barnes said, " *I own my home, I run a home daycare and I'm sick of this flooding. They need to fix the problem (Townsend).*"

A lot of news articles addressed the concern with flooding in the area and the frustration people feel. Flooding slows down a lot of things going down in the city. This wicked problem hits home because East St. Louis is where I was raised. The flooding destroyed so many people's homes and people I know have been affected. Wicked problems can't be solved in a day and

some of these problems lead to undefined solutions. Nothing could handle this issue leading to just a bigger circle. For example, if there we solve a situation in one area, what about the other areas in East St. Louis? How could we solve one problem and another problem build up? All these problems just don't have one solution. Without anything to lead these people out of this issue, some things wouldn't be able to change. This issue I am hoping that in the future will find a way to balance this flooding and have a lower chance of affecting different homes. If homes can be saved before they are consumed by water damage, I would personally want to see that change. Solutions are what we strive for, and I know one day things can be better for not only the city but communities that are also affected by this issue.

Work Cited

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