

# Emerging SDOH Practices

## CASE STUDY

# A Participatory Approach to Measuring Health in a Cleveland Neighborhood

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Adam Perzynski, PhD

This was a project of MetroHealth Foundation, Inc. in partnership with The MetroHealth System, Case Western Reserve University, Metro West Community Development Corporation, University Hospitals Cleveland, The Unify Project, Scranton Road Ministries, Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation, The City of Cleveland, Rethink Advisors, The Center for Community Solutions, and The Family Ministry Center.

1

## Why did you start?

- Interest in understanding how neighborhoods influence cardiovascular health and well-being.
- The project aimed to bring community perspectives together with local data experts to promote the health and well-being of residents in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood.
- Interest in involving residents in the data design process for understanding the impact of an EcoDistrict (a major neighborhood renewal effort) on community health.

2

## What did you do?

- Conducted 19 “Go-Along” interviews (walking/driving interviews) with Clark-Fulton residents in order to better understand how the neighborhood is perceived to affect health.
- Completed a qualitative analysis of “Go-Along” interview data to identify substantive themes and EcoDistrict priorities.
- Obtained feedback from community data experts on pilot findings as well as potential EcoDistrict indicators.

3

## What did you find?

- Residents’ health vocabulary is distinct and does not readily match the terminology used by clinical and public health experts. Therefore, health resources must be tailored to the needs and health literacy level of the population served by the materials.
- Social connectedness is a primary driver of the relationship between the neighborhood and health; this finding was corroborated by local data experts.
- Neighborhood interviewees expressed a need for more systemic help from institutions in a way that will make resources and support (e.g., assistance repairing a damaged roof) more accessible.
- Outside perceptions (e.g., by family or friends living in other communities) of the neighborhood’s safety or cleanliness affects residents’ capacity to maintain or foster social connectedness.

4

## What does it mean?

- General well-being and cardiovascular health in particular are influenced by neighborhood conditions.
- Residents have perspectives on health and healthy living that are different from health care providers.
- In particular, residents value factors like connectedness, social participation, trust, community pride and neighbor support systems. Although these social factors are rarely measured or acknowledged in clinical settings, they can be critical to understanding barriers and facilitators to cardiovascular health and general well-being.

