
WELLNESS EMPOWERMENT FOR BROOKLYN:

2018 Participatory Action Research in Canarsie, Flatlands and Flatbush

Overview:

In the summer of 2018, Community Care of Brooklyn brought together 42 Central Brooklyn students under the banner of Wellness Empowerment for Brooklyn (WEB) as the Canarsie, Flatlands and Flatbush Participatory Action Research (CFF PAR) Team.

Through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the team trained a cadre of high school and college students in the social determinants of health and participatory action research, amplified the voices of Central Brooklyn community members, and developed young community health leaders.

By building leadership, knowledge and civic infrastructure, efforts like CFF PAR are an important part of the continuum of investments being made in New York's health system, reshaping the system to more effectively address the economic, social, and cultural factors that influence the well-being of Brooklyn residents of all ages. The three PAR research projects completed to date have already helped to catalyze important investments in Central Brooklyn. They have established a focus on the social determinants of health among community stakeholders, modeled a participatory approach to coordination, developed recommendations for improving health and well-being in Brooklyn neighborhoods, and generated commitment to building a wellness based community-owned entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Key Research Findings:

Neighborhood Assets and Challenges

Residents love the convenience, vibrancy and cultural diversity of their neighborhoods but also identified some of the challenges: cost of living, access to healthy food, safety, and lack of access to places for youth. The neighborhoods all face common health and economic challenges, including higher rates of diabetes, hypertension and maternal morbidity, as well as higher rates of crowding, eviction, and foreclosure.

Mother and Infant Health

The study neighborhoods face noticeably higher rates of serious health conditions related to pregnancy than the citywide average — in some cases, more than double — and babies receive late or no prenatal care at higher rates than in other parts of the city.

Community Resources and Participation

The majority of residents were not aware of existing community resources like childcare, mental health services, and job training, nor were they aware of their neighborhood's Community Board. Respondents said that they mostly learn about community resources through flyers, word-of-mouth, and social media.



WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR?

CFF PAR is the third in a series of WEB PARs. Community Care of Brooklyn's **Community Action and Advocacy Workgroup** (CAAW) have been working to implement the recommendations of three consecutive years of PAR research findings, including:

-  Food savings program
-  Building hydroponic farms
-  Farm-to-institution initiative
-  Fitness & nutrition education programs
-  Food Justice workgroup
-  Community Call to Action event

2018 Recommendations:



Physical and Mental Health

Increase awareness, communication and services, especially for mother and infant health, diabetes care and prevention, and mental health.



Housing

Work with government & advocates to increase truly affordable options and to prevent evictions.



Public Housing

Increase communication and support to public housing residents to improve physical and social conditions.



Economic Well-Being

Increase awareness of existing and create additional opportunities for job training; advocate for family-supporting jobs.



Education & Youth Development

Increase the number and support of youth development and youth athletic programs; reduce school crowding; improve relationships between students and school personnel.



Immigrant Advocacy

Increase awareness about and availability of language services, legal assistance, and safe spaces for immigrants.



Food Access

Increase the number of green markets, green carts, gardening programs, and healthy food options in schools.



Transportation

Explore innovative and green modes of transportation that can improve access, reduce air pollution, and provide potential sources for community wealth generation.



Public Safety

Provide more youth and anti-violence programming; increase the availability of programs to support those who have been incarcerated.



Sanitation

Increase the number of sanitation jobs, trash cans, and trash pick-up days.



Communication & Community Involvement

Work with Community Boards, CBOs, hospitals, schools, and precincts to improve awareness of and access to community resources.



Physical Environment

Increase the number of green spaces and places to relax in parts of the neighborhood where there are few existing options.

OVERARCHING CFF PAR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote racial equity and addressing structural racism
- Advocate for the financial health of community-based organizations; strengthen the civic infrastructure through joint planning
- Continue to include community members in ways exemplified in the WEB PAR projects



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