



University of
Pittsburgh

School of Social Work

Pitt CEC

Community Engagement Centers

ENGAGING IN GENUINE RESEARCH
PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE
HOMEWOOD COMMUNITY
*RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS WITH HOMEWOOD
AND PITT STAKEHOLDERS*

Pitt School of Social Work, Community-Based Participatory
Research Class Project
In collaboration with the Homewood Community
Engagement Center

Engaging in Genuine Research Partnerships with the Homewood Community: Results from Interviews and Focus Groups with Homewood and Pitt Stakeholders

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The University of Pittsburgh strives to be a strong partner with community collaborators to achieve long-term impact in communities while at the same time strengthening our core mission of teaching and research. As part of our place-based engagement strategy, we leverage the diversity of Pitt’s community engagement assets and develop sustainable community-university partnerships in a focused number of neighborhoods. The material contained in this document helps us to advance, strengthen, and focus our place-based engagement efforts.

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Executive Summary

University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Class Project

Introduction

During the Fall of 2019, a group of 9 students in Dr. Mary Ohmer's Community Based Participatory Research class conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with Homewood and Pitt stakeholders on behalf of the University of Pittsburgh Community Engagement Center (CEC) in Homewood.

The primary goal of this research project was to understand what needs to be done to ensure that Homewood residents and stakeholders are engaged as genuine and collaborative research partners.

Project Design

In all, there were twenty participants including, members of the Homewood CEC Advisory Committee, residents with experience participating in prior Pitt research projects, and Pitt and Homewood community researchers working on current Pitt-Homewood research projects. All of those selected had strong ties to the Homewood community either through lived or work experience. The students worked in three groups of three students each to conduct the interviews and focus groups with Homewood residents and stakeholders and Pitt researchers. A CBPR Community Advisory Board (CAB) made up of seven Homewood residents¹ was formed to meet with and advise the students on the project. Darren Ellerbee, the Director of the CEC in Homewood, and Dr. Lina Dostilio, Associate Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement, also met with the students and the CAB during the semester to provide support and guidance. The entire class conducted focus groups with the CBPR Community Advisory Board (6 participants) and the CEC Advisory Committee (4 participants). Faculty, staff and/or research participants from the following Pitt-Homewood research projects were interviewed: (1) Spaces and People in Neighborhoods for Positive Youth Development (SPIN) (School of Social Work); (2) Research for Equity and Power (REP) (School of Social Work and Homewood Children's Village), and (3) Citizen Scientist Project on Life Expectancy in Homewood (School of Public Health and Community Empowerment Association).

Students conducted a neighborhood analysis to understand the history, characteristics and current issues in Homewood and prior research projects conducted in the community. These findings were presented and discussed with the CBPR CAB and the CEC staff. Using an interview guide developed by CBPR students and Dr. Ohmer in collaboration with the CBPR CAB and CEC staff, interviews and focus groups were conducted based on participant availability. All interviews and focus groups included student interviewers and note takers. Participants in the interviews and focus groups were asked to review and sign a consent form and for permission to audio record the sessions. Interviews and focus groups ranged in length from thirty to ninety-minutes, and were conducted in both public and private spaces, including the Homewood CEC, the library, in private residences or over the phone.

Themes

After the interviews and focus groups, each group analyzed the data from their respective interviews and focus groups and created reports summarizing the key themes and supporting quotes. These findings were discussed in a large group with the CBPR CAB members and CEC staff to analyze the results across all three groups. This discussion resulted in several overall themes that each student group selected to analyze further. For their final assignment, students submitted a report summarizing and analyzing the following overall themes, which are discussed in this report:

- Relationship Building
- Transparency and Accountability
- Community Benefits

Theme 1: Relationship Building

Relationship building refers to establishing rapport with community members, building trust among community members, and ensuring accountability and transparency throughout the research process. The sub-themes for relationship building include: **trust, collaboration and reciprocity.**

“Community partnerships are like any other partnership, [they] require relationship-building, collaboration, understanding, agreement, and give and take.” (Homewood Stakeholder)

“It’s nothing like going to meet people where they are, and it shows them that you are really interested.” (Homewood resident)

“A partnership can’t happen unless you come into a situation being open to collaboration and sharing power - sharing resources.” (Pitt Researcher)

“So, I think that we have to be open to things and sometimes things that might make us uncomfortable.” (Homewood Stakeholder)

“I believe they have to come in, I have to feel comfortable with them, they have to talk to me, they give me literature, show what they’re talking about, and I feel comfortable and trusting about the work they’re getting ready to do.” (Homewood Resident)

Building strong relationships with community members is vital when attempting to conduct a research project “with” the community. Participants in the project felt that people from the researcher’s community of interest must feel that researchers are making a genuine effort in getting to know them, their neighborhood, and the needs of their community before asking them to participate in a research project.

Participants in this project described a variety of factors and elements that contribute to relationship building. Genuine partnerships must be based on respect, communication, honesty, understanding, and empathy. These are particularly important when conducting a research project in a community whose members have had negative experiences with researchers in the past. In order to establish confidence and comfort and to undo wrongs from the past, participants felt that researchers must understand the history of the community they are working with, acknowledge and break-down power dynamics, and be open to discussing uncomfortable topics.

Several residents that have participated in research projects commented that the results are often not shared with participants or the community. Others commented that tangible change in their community did not result from these projects. These experiences can sometimes turn residents away from participating in future research. One Homewood Resident and Pitt Researcher believes that: “the expectations [should] be made clear before anyone does anything.”

Sub-Theme: Trust

Participants felt it was important for researchers to demonstrate that ethical and respectful behavior throughout the research process. Several participants commented on instances in the past when the University of Pittsburgh did not respectfully engage the community in research. Some participants also reflected on the historical mistreatment of African American people and communities in prior research projects, which have led to mistrust of any type of research and questioning the intentions of the researchers involved. Establishing trust within a community is essential to the success of a project, including gaining community buy-in, rebuilding trust that has been broken, and effectively utilizing research results research in collaboration with the community.

Many participants discussed the importance of trust in forming a genuine research partnership. Without forming trust, a research project has the potential to diminish the established relationships between the University and the community of Homewood.

“Well, I am going to say this about trust. I don’t trust nobody. What I do have is confidence in folks. Really, we start talking about trust... to me that’s something sacred... that’s why I deal with confidence. If you have confidence in someone, confidence is in a program, that’s what I look for. Because sometimes when you betray confidence... then that’s a betrayal that sometimes we see from Pitt. It’s extremely important for a partnership, especially if you are coming into the community to try and get research done. It’s key if it’s viable. If you don’t have confidence, you don’t have anything.” (Homewood Stakeholder)

“I look at the University of Pittsburgh, it may be a trustworthy organization. I look at the integrity of the people conducting the research...but once you lose that trust it does not get built back up. It takes many years to rebuild.” (Homewood Resident)

“You have a lot deeper of a conversation if trust is already established, people feel more comfortable and share more information. I’m going to share more with you because I feel more comfortable with you, I’m not gonna share as much with you because I don’t know you... So, trust is used to close emotional distance.” (Pitt Researcher)

“I look at the University of Pittsburgh, it may be a trustworthy organization or college. I look at the integrity of the people conducting the research and once that integrity has been shot it affects the trustworthiness of the organization. It has a lot to do with the people and the organization and the integrity ...If the University of Pittsburgh or any other organization or anyone who is doing a study or data collecting on individuals, the integrity of the people doing it must at all times be put in front of the University or whoever is doing the study. It could put a tarnish on anything that Pitt does in Homewood.” (Homewood Stakeholder)

“Trust? Well it’s everything. The people in the neighborhood you’re dealing with have to trust you... you just have to form relationships with the community so that people trust you and that’s like a person to person kind of thing.” (Homewood Resident)

Sub-Theme: Collaboration

“A genuine or true partnership is based on time... I do believe that time is something that can help build authentic partnerships. I think that my definition would include, basically, collaboration at every level of the engagement - whatever you're doing and I also... picture it three dimensionally. So, you would be together from the beginning to the end and then also vertically because at every level of the work from the highest level of the theoretical framing and the conceptual framing through the partner engagement all the way to individuals who would be collaborative and also participants in the project.” (Homewood Researcher)

“You need a memorandum of understanding, an agreement between the researchers and the community that spells out all the roles and responsibilities. How they're going to disseminate information. Be very clear and transparent about that. Be clear about what you can and can't do. If you can't do something just be clear about it. Don't over promise. Don't make your research bigger than it is.” (Pitt Researcher)

“So out of this activity you do what you all are doing, gain some trust with the community folk and also in terms of interventions and policies that you involve the community folk on the front end, on the implementation, and also in the evaluation. The inclusion of community members in all of those three phases and the idea is also to have systemic change. That's where this, what we believe civic engagement is extremely important in terms of systemic change. It's not just get out and vote, but also being an active participant in these other areas.” (Pitt Researcher)

Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is an approach to research that is conducted “with” the community, with collaboration occurring at every step (Branom, 2012; Israel, Schulz, Parker & Becker, 1998; Hacker, 2013). In CBPR researchers are also open and forthcoming throughout the entire research project. CBPR encourages community members and researchers alike to be on the same page, so mistrust and misunderstanding does not develop. Furthermore, community members participating in CBPR projects play active roles in the research (Hacker, 2013).

The University of Pittsburgh researchers interviewed for this project have also hired Homewood residents as Community Researchers for their projects, and paid residents to be members of their research advisory boards. However, compensation does not just have to be monetary, it can also occur through skill building, training, certifications, or tangible action taken in the community.

“Also ask them what they would like from a knowledge training, capacity building perspective so they can better engage with researchers. I think it comes back to some type of programming or providing some type of programming in Homewood that's going to increase residents' capacity to do that. For instance, what's the IRB? What is consent? Why is this important? When you get a consent form, what do you need to look out for? Why does this even exist? Because of all these things that have happened in the past...so that kind of stuff would be really good for universities to provide for the community to learn more about research.” (Pitt Researcher)

Sub-Theme: Reciprocity

Participants identified reciprocity as the give-and-take needed to develop genuine research relationships. Reciprocity means that each person involved in the research partnership is clear

about their goals and motivations and that each party will benefit. Participants also discussed the importance of data that better serves the needs of community stakeholders and leaders. They also described the potential for research that benefits the researcher's interests and provides the tools, knowledge and capacity for the community to utilize the data.

Involving the community through each phase of the project and prioritizing relationship-building within the community where research is occurring means that researchers must be genuinely invested in the outcomes. While this doesn't suggest that researchers over-state or make promises about results, developing a project with mutual goals and reciprocity will establish a basis for accountability and provide a platform for researchers and the community to gain knowledge and skills, as well as ensure that community voices are amplified and heard. If the goals and questions for research projects are created with the community, then the research questions and research process will ensure that mutually beneficial outcomes result from it. This reciprocity is vital to healing the negative impact of prior research that didn't benefit the community. Reciprocity means that not only will participants and the community have access to results, but that the goals and needs of the community are already integral to the project, ensuring mutual benefits.

It is important that "the end result is something that they can definitely see... is tangible...and making a difference. People who are investing in them genuinely." (Homewood resident)

"See what kind of things that they can collect, that we can collect that we can be partners on that everyone can see a good outcome on instead of having to run around and say, 'what did you do with what you took or what you did?'" (Homewood Stakeholder)

"I think a lot of times with research it does become public. It becomes a publication, but it is never given back to the people. That's where I think it kind of gets lost like you never know – well what did my data really produce." (Homewood Stakeholder)

Summary: Relationship Building

Relationship-Building was identified by participants as crucial for forming genuine research partnerships between the Homewood community and University of Pittsburgh. Relationship building was described by Homewood stakeholders, residents, and Pitt Researchers as building rapport, showing up, and displaying genuine interest and integrity. Trust is crucial in any relationship and an important for ensuring that community members and researchers are open about motivations and goals and can speak truthfully about their experiences. Collaboration means that the community is engaged, and in some cases leading, during all aspects of the project. Throughout our focus groups and interviews, the idea of "reversing the trend" was identified as key to research collaboration, including asking the community what they would like to see and their research questions, as well as sharing power and resources. A collaborative process also means that results are available and transparent, and that the community is involved at each stage. Lastly, reciprocity within the relationship means that each party will benefit from the research at multiple levels (individual, community, and institutional), and mutual goals and outcomes are identified.

Theme: Transparency and Accountability

“What could stop a partnership to me would be lack of transparency -- in terms of somebody asks a question, ‘Okay well what about this what about that?’ [And] you don’t answer it, don’t wanna or can’t answer it - that’s gonna make people suspicious and if you’re on the up and up, why wouldn’t you just answer it? Just be honest.” (Homewood Resident)

“Well to me a partnership would be a situation where the people that are doing the research just make it clear to the community that, you know, this is what we’re doing, this is why we’re doing it and we need you to participate because without research you can’t find any solutions.” (Homewood Resident)

“Accountability that the community will be part of the planning. Accountability at every single step. There should basically be accountability that whatever you said you were going to do, you’re doing it.” (Homewood Researcher/Stakeholder)

“Accountability is kind of baked in when you have vested community partners.” (Pitt Researcher/Homewood Resident)

“You need a memorandum of understanding, an agreement between the researchers and the community that spells out all the roles and responsibilities. How they’re going to disseminate information. Be very clear and transparent about that. Be clear about what you can and can’t do. If you can’t do something just be clear about it. Don’t over promise. Don’t make your research bigger than it is.” (Pitt Researcher)

Community-Based Participatory Research also offers guidance about how to design research in ways that provide communities and researchers pathways to join in mutually beneficial partnerships (Detroit URC, 2011). In order to create a partnership between the community and external groups, transparent channels and behaviors are needed throughout the entire research process (Detroit URC, 2011).

Transparency and accountability are similar characteristics; however, transparency is the behavior, while accountability represents the action (Detroit URC, 2011). Transparency requires both parties to disclose clear and explicit goals, objectives, and perspectives throughout each stage of the research cycle (Echeverri, 2019). Accountability is a partner’s willingness to follow through on the goals that are established at the beginning of the partnership (Echeverri, 2019). Participants said that transparency must be a pillar for all interactions between researchers and the Homewood community.

Several sub-themes were also discussed by participants, including how **research data are collected and results are disseminated**, and **accountability** to ensure that the community is involved in creating research.

Sub-Theme: Data Collection and Dissemination

According to Homewood residents, there cannot be accountability without transparency, and for institutions to build quality and sustainable relationships with Homewood residents, transparency should be the center of the research process. A Homewood resident said, “This level of transparency is especially important during research collection and dissemination of the results.”

“Accountability? Well, actually you want to deliver and share and present. Be transparent. Accountability is transparent. What actually is taking place? And, also have they been involved? Was the community involved in presenting the data and being a part of the sale if you will...Homewood residents believe transparency should start at the inception of the research question.” (Homewood Researcher/Resident)

“What I had heard from other folks was that these students come in here and they get all of this information then they leave, and we never see them again and then next thing, they are Dr. So and So and now they are doing this on the backs of the people in the community.”
(Homewood Stakeholder)

“I think the community should know [about the report] because it’s based on us; anytime the information is based on us, I think it should be a report back out.” (Homewood Resident)

“If you’re going to be researching me then...I would want to see a report after that research. Make sure that it was actually what I said, and you didn’t reword it.”
(Homewood Resident)

“It becomes a publication, but it is never given back to the people. That’s where I think it kind of gets lost like you never know – well what did my data really produce.”
(Homewood Stakeholder)

Many participants discussed the poor transparency in reporting the results, reports, or solutions provided through the research process, as well as the inadequacy of the data collected during the research.

A Homewood researcher and stakeholder offered the following suggestions for improving transparency and accountability in data collection and dissemination: “Reporting needs to be preplanned and agreed upon. What is the need? Like what would you want to know? This is what we’re doing; what would you want to know? What would be beneficial? What are the needs in your community and how can we push those needs forward?”

Sub-Theme: Accountability for Research Creation

“Early participation in research development will help combat assumptions about the people and the community you’re engaging, which can create inadequate or misguided representations and hinder the quality of the research and its ability to provide positive outcomes for the community.” (Pitt Researcher)

“This is what I call the ignorance of arrogance and the arrogance of our ignorance. The assumptions we make about people and the way they are managing their lives affects the work we’re doing, and this is what interferes. Especially this type of work - it’s based on relationships, other types of research it’s not so important always.”
(Homewood Researcher/Stakeholder)

Participants felt that residents and community members should be involved in deciding what kind of research should be conducted and determine what kind of research the community needs. One Homewood resident described the need for researchers and institutions to involve the community during the conception of research topics. Creating transparent lines of communication can help to prevent ineffective practices and disband rumors and assumptions about either party.

Summary: Transparency and Accountability

Without transparency, sustainable research partnerships cannot be developed, and the community will continue to distrust and be suspicious of research and the institutions that support it. Providing information and working with the community is one of the primary principles of CBPR (Detroit URC, 2011), particularly given past negative research experiences that residents and community stakeholders may have had in the past.

Theme 3: Community Benefits

Community benefits are the positive effects and concrete products provided through a research study. Participants often reported that prior research studies have not considered community needs and lacked tangible community benefits.

Participants commented that equalizing power among researchers and community members helps to ensure that community benefits and needs are met, from the initial IRB process to dissemination of the results.

“There is this type of idea that a university will come into a community like Homewood, get data and use it for whatever purposes they need and then leave. And really no type of solutions to anything they researched came out of it.”
(Homewood Resident)

“The proof is in the pudding. So, who’s going to benefit? Or what are the results? You know folks are willing to listen and say ok we’ll do this but the bottom line is what is going to mean?
“What’s in it for the community in terms of change?” (Pitt Researcher)

One of the most often identified characteristics of a genuine partnership in this study was reciprocity, which was explained in the theme on relationship building. A tangible way to demonstrate reciprocity is by ensuring that the community benefits from research projects.

“I think we have to value community members’ time the way we value our own time. If you’re getting paid to be at a meeting to facilitate it, then the people who are attending the meeting should be getting paid for their time to attend.” (Homewood Researcher/Stakeholder)

“Certainly, community folks should be compensated because we’re in the world today in terms of commodities and being able to function and deliver, have a livelihood. That’s one dimension. It’s an aspect of it that is not exploiting folks.” (Pitt Researcher)

Community benefits from research can take many different forms. Participants said that one important benefit was to support individuals who participate in or contribute to research. These resources may take the form of monetary stipends, educational workshops, access to institutional resources, professional development, or employment in a research study.

Researchers can also provide benefits to the community on a wider scale. The data collected from research studies is a powerful tool that a community can utilize to its advantage. Data can validate the concerns of a community by providing “proof” of an issue. It can also demonstrate to the “outside world” (i.e., policymakers, the media, and other high-level decision makers) that the issues a community identifies warrant awareness and attention.

“Folks who are familiar with the project are engaged to see what we do with the project, they’re aware of the disparities already. There’s nothing that we’re talking about that they don’t already know. It’s being used as a step to something bigger. How will [we] use this research and make things better for people in the neighborhood.”
(Homewood Researcher)

“If you’re studying asthma presence, is this going to reduce asthma in the community? If you’re studying streetscapes and walkability, is there going to be a safe path to school for my kid? Tangible action. It would improve the perception of Pitt researchers coming into a neighborhood if all of the research provided a tangible benefit. People would think, ‘Here’s another team from Pitt! Something’s gonna improve in my neighborhood! What do you need from us?’ People would be a lot more excited to get involved.” (Homewood Researcher/Stakeholder)

When researchers properly disseminate results and allow community stakeholders to take ownership of their data, the entire community can benefit from the implications of the research. A Homewood resident's comment summarizes the importance of ensuring community benefits as a research partner: "You can't be a partner if you're not active. You can put your name on a piece of paper, but that does not mean you're a partner if you're not doing anything to help bring things into the community."

Sub-Theme: Power and Resource Sharing

"A partnership can't happen unless you come into a situation being open to collaboration and sharing power, sharing resources." (Pitt Researcher)

"Well to me a partnership it would be a situation where the people that are doing the research um just make it clear to the community that you know this is what we're doing, this is why we're doing it and we need you to participate because without research you can't find any solutions. So that's the first thing you have to do; you can't solve the problem till you figure out if there is one, and if there is, what it is, and you go from there." (Homewood Resident)

"I believe if they come in with an attitude, like, 'I'm here and you really don't count' attitude,' [that doesn't represent a true partnership]. (Homewood Resident)

"A genuine or true partnership is one where both parties benefit and both parties co-construct what you're working on. So, there has to be honest dialogue and open communication, so everyone feels comfortable to say what they feel and think. And there also has to be flexibility on both sides to change their plans based on the other person's perspective." (Pitt Researcher)

"[A genuine or true partnership] should be one that's going to benefit you...it should be working with you, not so much telling you what you have to do, but teaching you what you can do." (Homewood Resident)

Participants felt that researchers and community partners should share power equally throughout the study's duration. Ensuring that power is equal among researchers and participants prevents researchers from carrying out their own agendas without regard for the community. By sharing power and resources, researchers and community members can clarify research problems, as well as solutions.

Homewood residents also commented on how some researchers don't appear to be interested in community benefits, but only in their own research agendas. Therefore, the co-construction of research is integral to sharing power, as well as ensuring flexibility to adapt to community needs and goals. Finally, the need for open dialogue was emphasized.

Sub-Theme: Matching Research with Community Issues

A recurring theme raised by participants was the need for researchers to explore issues that are of concern to the residents of the community in which the research is being conducted. This practice contrasts with the typical procedure of researchers who often enter a community with their own predetermined research questions and hypotheses. Research can be a beneficial tool for a community if it accurately represents the needs of community members and yields tangible results. The residents of Homewood expressed a desire to see research studies that address the needs they have identified in their community.

A Pitt Researcher said it was important “to make sure the researchers come in prepared. To make sure the community can be engaged in an effective way. Pitt researchers need know how to do these things. The CEC can prepare researchers so they understand the roles community organizations, stakeholders and residents can play, and how to prepare them to play these roles.”

“So make sure whatever the project is, it's relevant to the community, whether it's health or whether it's education, whether it's income, whether it's training, housing, it's got to be relevant to the community.” (Homewood Resident)

“Is there any way that [Pitt researchers] can help us to see if the kids are improving [in our program]? That might be something that could be very useful to organizations like [ours] that don't have the resources. Because then [this] could get people to invest in [us]. (Homewood Resident)

“That's how to start to build a partnership ... where folks start to feel like they're contributing and they're being listened to, and that the end result is something they see as tangible and making a difference. Also, so they feel their voices have been heard, and that the people that are investing in them are genuine.” (Homewood Stakeholder)

Summary: Community Benefits

Community benefits ensure that there is mutual gain in the research process and that power and resources are shared. Confusion about the purpose of research has led to distrust between residents and institutions like the University of Pittsburgh. In order to ensure that the community is benefiting from research conducted in the community, researchers must be willing to share power and match their research interests with those of the community.

Summary and Recommendations

The results from this study as well as best practices in university-community research partnerships demonstrate that relationship building, transparency and accountability, and community benefits are essential to establishing genuine research partnerships. Ensuring that all parties have an equitable say in the development of the research is essential and research should have relevance to the community's needs and interests (London, et al., 2018). The results of this study emphasized that relationship building is dependent on reciprocity and trust, and that research should be both relevant and beneficial to the community. In order to reduce the levels of distrust surrounding academia and research, complete honesty and clarity must be included at every step (Hacker, 2013; Michener et al., 2013). London and colleagues (2018) compared active collaboration in research to the physical act of weaving, where the “warp is the formal structure and systems of accountability between partners which remains static and the weft is the dynamic process through which the partners contribute their unique knowledge, vision, and resources to the project” (p. 176). This suggests that researchers reverse the traditional trend of academic research by engaging communities and stakeholders in identifying what they would like from research and allowing participants to ask researchers about their motivation and intent.

To be transparent and engage in relationship building means that researchers must first educate themselves about the community of interest, learn how to respectfully engage and allow for continual reflection and adaptation throughout the project. As one University of Pittsburgh Researcher stated, “A true partnership respectfully works with folks to help uncover barriers.

[It] doesn't assume that we know the barriers and what they are for people. And we work toward how do we remove them."

The following recommendations are based on the results of this project and best practices and were developed in consultation with the CBPR Community Advisory Board and CEC staff.

- **Promote the use of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) or other Action-Based research methods and principles.** These approaches ensure that the researcher focuses on community inclusion at every step of the process. CBPR and Action research also include basic methods and principles to guide researchers in how to work "with" the community versus "in" or "on" the community, providing tangible mechanisms to ensure accountability, transparency and authentic engagement (e.g., through Community Advisory Boards, Memorandums of Agreement, etc.), sharing power and resources, and ensuring the results are relevant as well as widely disseminated to the community.
- **Establish a Community Research Task Force.** Develop a process where community members can bring research topics to the University and work with researchers to collaboratively develop, implement and utilize research in ways that provide tangible community benefits. This would flip the traditional research paradigm. This was echoed in the voices of several of this study's participants who commented that research projects don't always address the need in the community, rather they are often focused solely around the interest of the researcher.
- **Create more accountability and transparency.** Develop a process for reviewing how research projects can contribute to individuals in the community and the community as a whole. This could take several forms, including a designated person at the university who oversees and provides support, as well as a review board who could work with researchers to examine ways in which their research can benefit both individual participants as well as community stakeholders. For example, the Community Research Advisory Board (CRAB) in the Pitt Graduate School of Public Health advises researchers on how best to engage under-represented populations in research, and to foster collaboration among those populations and researchers interested in addressing health disparities. This type of approach could be adopted at university-wide level.

This report reflects the careful thought and intentionality behind the University of Pittsburgh's engagement within the Homewood community through the Community Engagement Center. Its findings reflect the shared history between the University and community and acknowledges the challenges that have persisted for many years and, in many instances, exist to this day. However, the information in the report also helps chart a course forward for Pitt faculty and researchers to re-evaluate and re-imagine what it truly means to enter into genuine community-university research partnerships. The thoughtful involvement of so many residents and stakeholders, and the push to evoke real feedback and input, lays a critical foundation moving forward for engagement that authentically values the community as an equal partner. While this report is just the beginning of developing best practices for the university's research engagement within the community, it is a shining example of how both parties can work together to learn lessons from the past and move into the future with compassion and understanding.

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