

Community Members' Perspectives on a Community-Engaged Process for Supporting Vibrant Greenspaces in Detroit

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ABSTRACT

Greenspaces provide several well-being (Dinnie et al., 2013) and psychosocial benefits (Addy et al., 2004). Community-engaged research affords community partners a voice in the project (Cushman et al., 2004). This study assessed Detroit community members' perceived benefits of and suggestions for engaging with the community to support greenspaces. Through qualitative analysis, a three-step process for community-engaged planning was revealed. Findings highlight strategies that involve community members in this process to enhance community engagement and well-being.

Keywords: community engagement, qualitative methods, stakeholder perspectives

In recent decades, the impact of the natural, social, and built environments on people's health has been well established, where well-being has garnered significant attention as of late (Croucher et al., 2008; Kaplan, 1995). Research has shown that exposure to parks and other greenspaces may have a positive influence on people's health and well-being (Abraham et al., 2010; Addy et al., 2004; Dinnie et al., 2013; Evenson et al., 2016; Maas et al., 2009; Nutsford et al., 2013). For example, it has been revealed that individuals who live in proximity of greenspaces are less likely to experience psychosocial distress and physical ailment (e.g., Stigsdotter, 2010). Such results are encouraging considering recent societal trends, such as increased social disengagement, prevalence of mental disorders, and physical inactivity (Hallal et al., 2012; Putnam et al., 2000; Steel et al., 2014). Thus, it seems paramount to consider how greenspaces may be used to counteract these negative societal trends as a strategy to enhance people's well-being.

Greenspaces as a Strategy to Promote Well-being

Previous studies have revealed that greenspaces provide users with an array of physical and psychosocial benefits (Abraham et al., 2010; Dinnie et al., 2013; Douglas et al., 2017; Maas et al., 2009; Nguyen et al., 2021). For example, greenspaces may be restorative and buffer one's experience of stress through attentional and physiological processes (Hartig & Staats, 2006; Ulrich et al., 1991). Moreover, greenspaces provide opportunities for individuals to engage in leisure activities and social interactions, which may increase physical activity levels and foster a sense of community (Dinnie et al., 2013; Evenson et al., 2016). However, evidence also suggests that poorly maintained greenspaces may lead to higher levels of crime and other health risks (Sivak et al., 2021). For example, it has been reported that safety concerns regarding greenspaces and the surrounding neighborhood may discourage people from continued usage (Branas et al., 2011; Lapham et al., 2016). Such perceptions may be aggravated by the

presence of vacant lots and vegetation impeding visibility (Branas et al., 2011; Cohen et al., 2012; Sampson et al., 2017; South et al., 2015). Another barrier relates to a lack of facilities, programming, and attractive amenities, which may lead to feelings of detachment (Lapham et al., 2016). Moreover, Nguyen and colleagues (2021) have suggested that different groups may have specific preferences for greenspaces. For example, while adults may prefer built facilities with paved paths for exercising, youth prefer forested areas with unobstructed grounds for athletic, adventurous activities such as hiking, trail-running, or mountain biking. Such environmental features may result in psychosocial barriers to greenspace usage (Baur & Tynon, 2010; Cronin-de-Chavez et al., 2019; Dinnie et al., 2013). Thus, supporting and ensuring vibrant greenspaces are an important strategy to enhance individual well-being and strengthen communities, but must take into account community members' guidance.

While there is a considerable body of literature attesting to the benefits that arise from greenspaces, most studies have been conducted in relatively high-income areas (Beyer et al., 2016; Branas et al., 2011). What is more, it has been reported that residents in low-income areas perceive to have a lesser quantity and quality of greenspaces available (Hoffman et al., 2017). Thus, exploring the perceptions of stakeholders within communities that have experienced significant urban decline in infrastructure, such as Detroit, may offer valuable insight into the roles of greenspaces and the processes in which such spaces may be kept vibrant given the realities of population loss and a reduced tax revenue.

Detroit, Michigan

While Detroit remains one of the largest and most populous cities in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), it has experienced significant population loss and financial hardship during previous decades. At its peak, Detroit was home to the growing automobile industry, attracting a great influx of new residents seeking employment. A large

proportion of these new residents were Black, resulting in increased racial tension and housing segregation (Sugrue, 2005). Such sociodemographic changes would eventually impact the layout of the city and give rise to significant social issues. For example, while many White middle-class families relocated to the suburbs, Black families remained in the city and faced discriminatory housing policies (Sugrue, 2005). To make matters worse, the decentralization of the automobile industry intensified the population loss, lowering both property and wage taxes, culminating in Detroit filing for bankruptcy in 2013 (Schindler, 2014).

While Detroit successfully exited bankruptcy on December 10, 2014, and has since made a positive turnaround, it still faces significant social issues. For example, a recent report (Detroit Future City, 2021) indicated that the median income for those living within the city of Detroit was half compared to those living in the Metro Detroit Region. Moreover, only 5% of city residents lived within a middle-class neighborhood compared to 59% within the Metro Detroit Region. These social determinants are likely to lead to vast disparities in health outcomes, especially for marginalized social groups. A major issue that arises from Detroit's current circumstances is the significant degree of urban blight (Schindler, 2014).

In recent years, strategies have been employed to address the social, economic, and health inequalities that permeate Detroit. One such strategy has been to transform blighted areas of the city into spaces where residents may thrive, and communities are strengthened. While these vacant lots and properties tend to be a safety concern for residents, these spaces also may provide an opportunity to rethink their usage in ways that benefit residents' well-being.

Studies regarding the positive benefits of greenspaces have indicated that usage is related to both individual characteristics and community needs (Roe et al., 2016). As such, community engagement strategies have garnered attention as a useful approach in providing community residents with attractive

greenspaces that meet their needs. Engaging members of a community that has been historically neglected may not only provide greenspaces that address their psychosocial needs, but also provide an enduring sense of stewardship and community. In fact, there have recently been a number of initiatives with the goal of improving Detroit's aesthetics and residents' quality of life. For instance, the revitalization of Detroit's Riverfront area in 2003 (City Housing and Revitalization Department, 2021) expanded greenspaces and created greenways connecting different areas of the city, stimulating local businesses.

While important steps have been taken toward revitalizing greenspaces, it appears involving community members is a crucial step in this process. While community engagement seems like a straightforward notion, reaching community members, in particular marginalized groups (e.g., low socioeconomic status), has been a historically challenging task (National Institutes of Health, 2011). Thus, it is imperative to explore community members' perspectives and preferences for engagement with greenspace planning, particularly in areas that may have undergone considerable urban infrastructure decline.

Purpose and Aims of Study

The overall purpose of this study was to gather and present how community members in Detroit view the importance of greenspaces and the process to revitalize greenspaces, within which there were two specific research aims. The first aim was to explore community members' perceptions pertaining to the value of greenspaces in their community well-being. The second aim was to understand community members' ideas and suggestions for engaging with the community in order to meet their needs in improving and maintaining valued greenspaces within their community. The anticipated results are intended to inform future community-engaged research related to improving community well-being. These findings will help researchers develop a plan for how to engage key stakeholders in the process, in this case, of supporting vibrant greenspaces.

METHODS

Methodology

Community-engaged scholarship has varying forms and functions for research projects (Doberneck et al., 2010). This approach allows for knowledge-sharing among the various stakeholders needed to make researcher interventions transformative. Specifically, this project is applied research with the main goal of providing choice for our community partners and engaging them in as much of the process as possible (Cushman et al., 2004). As community-engaged research affords the opportunity for community development (Israel et al., 1998), it is a fitting approach for understanding the community partners' perspectives of the planning process for greenspaces. This approach is paired with the philosophical perspective of pragmatism, which aims to solve practical problems through cultivating multiple sources of knowledge (Morgan, 2014). With a pragmatic philosophy guiding this project, this study aims to offer practical solutions for community-engaged researchers generated by community partners.

Data Collection – Workshop Details

In October 2017, two members of the research team (AP and BD) held a community workshop titled "Parks and neighborhood priorities" with the stated intention to "...gain an understanding of how unmaintained parks relate to the broader neighborhood community. We are hoping to hear your thoughts and stories about how residents view and value their neighborhood parks." Attendees were invited based on their participation in existing community groups or government agencies in Detroit that pertain to parks, greenspace, nature, conservation, community development, local businesses and/or activism. Email invitations were sent to potential attendees. Then, using a snowball method, further invitations were sent.

Importantly, the workshop was conceived as an opportunity for the research team to begin the sustained process of relationship-

building and reciprocity with community stakeholders with the aim of guiding future research and intervention efforts from the group; in particular, the discussion data generated from the workshop were preserved to serve as a snapshot for analysis by other researchers. At the one-day event, a total of 27 participants attended from various community groups as well as a journalist, urban farmers, and local business owners. At the event, two presentations on restoration and health benefits were given to promote discussion.

Discussions were then facilitated by BD in three sections, using handouts and an open dialogue. Notes were taken of the entire discussion, and participants were encouraged to also write down responses to question prompts. All anonymous written responses and discussion transcript notes were compiled for the analyses. As the data were collected through a workshop and as a part of a larger study (STUDY00004438), this study and the raw data were determined to involve secondary data analysis by the institution's IRB as all data were de-identified prior to analysis. Two research team members (ADM and GC) were provided the de-identified information to complete a qualitative data analysis.

Data Analysis

This study used a five-step abductive coding process for the qualitative data analysis. The first step of abductive coding involved overarching theme creation with three researchers (ADM, GC, and KE) independently examining the data set as a whole. Each researcher presented their view of the data and proposed representative themes. Similarities and differences between researchers were discussed, with differences resolved through discussion until consensus was reached, leading to the creation of four higher-level themes (i.e., community value, accessibility, resources, and process) to be used as a coding framework. The second step used deductive coding to categorize lower-level raw data units (i.e., quotes, questionnaire responses, workshop discussion notes) into one of the four themes. Two researchers

(ADM and GC) worked collaboratively through the data line-by-line to code each raw data unit into a theme.

Once all codes were organized within the four themes, step three used inductive coding to create subthemes within each of the four main themes. Two researchers (ADM and GC) collaboratively grouped raw data codes into subthemes representing distinct ideas or elements within the larger main theme. Through this step, constant comparison between raw data, subthemes, and main themes was implemented to ensure trustworthiness and representativeness of the emerging structure (Patton, 2015). This step of inductive coding across themes highlighted the nested nature of two of our themes (i.e., accessibility and resources), which led to a revision of the four original themes into three. As researchers were working through subthemes, some raw data codes were moved to find a more optimal fit with another theme.

Step four used a "critical friend" (a trained qualitative researcher, not directly involved in previous coding stages) as an additional measure of rigor (Smith & McGannon, 2018). The critical friend's (KE) role was to actively challenge the rationale of grouping subthemes and justification for inclusion of specific codes within their allotted subthemes. This step allowed for further comparison across and within themes and led to minor changes with stronger organizational justification and description of themes.

The final step was a general review of the meaning and groupings of each subtheme, ensuring each effectively explained and contributed to the major theme. This step led to the grouping of themes within a sequence that reflected the desired process of engaging with a community when developing projects to support community well-being (i.e., gain input from community stakeholders to develop a plan, put the plan into action, and evaluate benefits of the greenspace project) and successive subthemes. This five-step process allowed for constant comparison and rigor checks to be used at multiple points of data analysis.

RESULTS

Three sequential themes emerged pertaining to the community-engaged process desired by stakeholders from Detroit when developing community well-being through greenspace projects: (a) gain input from community stakeholders to develop a plan, (b) put the plan into action, and (c) evaluate benefits of the greenspace project (see Table 1).

Gain Input from Community Stakeholders to Develop a Plan

This theme related to community members’ perceptions of important initial steps to include in order to effectively gain input from community stakeholders before taking actions to support greenspace vibrancy.

Decide on Key Stakeholders and Partnerships

Participants described the importance of including different community stakeholders (e.g., disenfranchised, youth, park neighbors)

in the process and developing partnerships with local organizations. Several members suggested an important step as identifying and developing partnerships with organizations that have experience working collaboratively with residents as learning from these local efforts could provide valuable insight when improving or maintaining Detroit greenspaces. Moreover, participants suggested establishing connections with associations (e.g., churches) that may represent the larger community as a way of engaging and providing ownership to community members. While connecting with local leaders was seen as an effective strategy, other community members warned that relying solely on them as a source of information, at the expense of local residents, represents a potential pitfall. Instead, community members discussed the importance of including users from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups in order to understand their perspectives and be more engaged across race and culture.

Table 1. *Thematic Structure of Findings with Representative Quotes*

Themes	Subthemes	Quotes
Gain Input from Community Stakeholders to Develop a Plan	Decide on Key Stakeholders and Partnerships	“I would suggest you make contact with organizations that are already on the ground. They have members that care about these issues. For example, Southwestern Detroit Environmental Vision works with pollution and greening, so their membership already cares about these topics.”
	Engage with Stakeholders	“The needs and experiences across socio-economic classes are different. Understand, acknowledge, and respect the differences so neighborhoods and park spaces can be designed, owned, and influenced by the end users.”
	Provide a Climate of Ownership for Stakeholders During the Process	“Give the community ownership over the process. Figure out ways to give people that ownership so they can determine what happens. They are going to figure out ways to maintain and police it. The separation comes from the belief that ‘it’s the city’s job’.”

Table 1 (continued). *Thematic Structure of Findings with Representative Quotes*

Themes	Subthemes	Quotes
	Assess Community Needs	“Residents are telling us over and over again: ‘We just want a swing set right here, the park isn’t broken.’ This is a very straightforward need that doesn’t seem very exciting to funders, but is fundamental and very important to residents.”
	Listen to Stakeholder Concerns	“Everybody and their brother is there – there’s crime there – so it’s a double-edged sword. You want more people to be using the park, but you also want to maintain a balance.”
Take Action	Coordinate Roles and Responsibilities with Stakeholders	“In many cases, small parks (and repurposed vacant lots) have become community challenges, and the use of them is contingent upon community stewardship.”
	Consider Greenspace Context and Purpose	“What purpose should these spaces serve for the community? If there aren’t neighbors around and it’s a more vacant area, then yes, a grassland makes sense. If it’s an area that’s heavily populated, what other amenities do they want to see within the park? And having infrastructure is one thing, but having programming that the community wants to see. If safety is an issue, then what type of policing needs to happen to make sure our parks are safe and accessible to everyone?”
	Maintain Greenspace	“I think that the question of programming, maintenance, and capital improvements are all part of the same picture. It’s only now that we are beginning to look at them collectively.”
Evaluate Benefits of the Greenspace Project	Opportunity for Outdoor Activities	“The parents of these kids want a place for their kids to play. We have some vacant lots that were turned into playgrounds by the parents, who went out and found used swingsets and other equipment.”
	Enhancement of Well-Being	“...if we want to raise the quality of life for Detroiters all around the city, parks were a very important factor in that.”

Note. This table demonstrates raw data (i.e., a participant quote) pertaining to an example for each subtheme. Subthemes are further described in the results section.

Engage with Stakeholders

Community members described the importance of giving residents a voice rather than making assumptions when addressing neighborhood concerns. Participants expressed that, when connecting with communities, both a “savior complex” and a lack of sensitivity to neighborhood concerns represent considerable obstacles. Participants rejected the usual “top-down” approach and believed that community members should be seen as experts in their own space. Therefore, community members should be included in the process. Furthermore, community members spoke of how neighborhoods should not be seen as an aggregate, but rather as composed of different users whose perspectives and experiences should all be taken into account during the process.

Community members also suggested that any actions in the community should be taken in a steady manner and be respectful of resident concerns and common procedures within the community. The need to work with existing local organizations was once again mentioned as a way to reduce redundancies and strengthen concentrated efforts. Last, residents revealed barriers to effectively engaging with the community, which mainly included neglecting to incentivize resident involvement (e.g., via stipends, offering food) and feelings of fatigue associated with repeated meetings and discussions.

Provide a Climate of Ownership for Stakeholders During the Process

Community members discussed how giving people ownership over the process and including them in the decisions relative to changes in their neighborhoods could provide a sense of stewardship. Participants suggested generating feelings of ownership could be accomplished by interfacing with community members that may be affected by the improvement or maintenance of greenspaces, and not just perceived community leaders. In addition, increasing community-based partnerships and creating local jobs could bring those at the margins of society (e.g., underprivileged, at-

risk youth, unemployed) into a central stewardship role.

Assess Community Needs

Community members expressed the importance for projects to meet the specific needs of local residents. In this case, community members discussed the need for more amenities and programming in greenspaces. In some cases, communities may need small-scale rather than large-scale changes in greenspaces (e.g., adding picnic tables). Additionally, more programming (e.g., cultural events, sports, and recreation for children) and strategically placed amenities were suggested as factors that could help attract and spread people out throughout the space.

While community members desired amenities and programming, they underscored the need to be aware of what resources (e.g., financial) are available and consider how greenspaces will be maintained in the long run. Participants also discussed how specific societal trends, such as people spending an increasing amount of time indoors and perceptions that greenspaces are “not for us,” may have altered community members’ relationship to greenspaces. Participants highlighted how goals for the greenspace are important to consider. If the goal is to re-engage community members with greenspaces, trends and community members’ relationship with greenspaces needs to be considered when developing new programming, services, and amenities.

Listen to Stakeholder Concerns

It is integral to a community-engaged process to hear the concerns of the community members. Allowances should be made for community members to express their own concerns; if some topics are needed to start a conversation with stakeholders, ask about community connection to the greenspace, current use of spaces, and safety. In this specific study, community members expressed their belief that the Detroit community was disconnected to greenspaces. They felt that greenspaces are not accessible with respect to

their needs and that the community does not want to engage with these spaces. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a specific obstacle was re-engaging neighborhood residents with greenspaces to combat the increasing tendency to spend time indoors, with community members suggesting that a considerable amount of community involvement would be necessary to accomplish this goal.

Members of the community expressed another concern for the misuse of greenspaces by community members (i.e., antisocial and unlawful behavior). Community members discussed antisocial behaviors as when greenspaces were being used as racetracks, had ATVs and dirt bikes, and had dogs off-leash. They also stated that unlawful behavior was occurring in the greenspaces through hiding and selling drugs, loitering, and illegal dumping (e.g., tires, mattresses, cement). The ways community members were misusing greenspaces led to concerns regarding social (e.g., crime) and environmental (e.g., pollution) safety. Social safety pertained to residents' feelings concerning others in their community, stating no police response, guns, and cars speeding were significant problems. Additionally, safety concerns surrounded the built environment of non-maintained areas (e.g., tall grass), dark or dimly lit areas, and dumped dogs (dead or alive), as well as the physical environment, such as pollution (e.g., soil, water).

Take Action

Community members highlighted key aspects to take action were effectively coordinating roles and responsibilities of stakeholders across the process, considering the greenspace context and purpose, as well as maintaining the greenspace.

Coordinate Roles and Responsibilities with Stakeholders

This category demonstrated how the members of the community could play an active role in supporting greenspaces (e.g., block cleanups). Community members brought up stewardship when they stated that

a neighbor should be a steward, owner, and user. For instance, more upkeep (i.e., mowing, planting, taking care) was occurring when neighbors' front yards were adjacent to greenspaces. However, they were concerned that the same people or even whole organizations could not upkeep the greenspaces all the time, as a result of lacking coordination and communication between these users. Participants suggested that members of the community could be used as "eyes on the street" and deal with loitering by coordinating with the police who could come and disperse loiterers. They also noted a lack of staff and amenities in greenspaces, hoping that jobs could be open to teenagers within the neighborhood. Community members also expressed the importance of volunteers in their greenspaces to maintain them, put in playscapes, and provide programming for children.

Consider Greenspace Context and Purpose

Community members discussed the importance of being aware of the characteristics and needs of the neighborhoods and how programs and amenities should be tailored with these in mind. Participants spoke about the need to be flexible and responsive to the community when implementing changes and taking action to transform an "ideal" park into an "alive" park. Community members emphasized there are no ideal fixes when improving greenspaces, as different communities and residents may want or need something different, especially in neighborhoods with distinct social, spatial, and economic characteristics. Furthermore, members emphasized equity, suggesting that each greenspace may need a varied amount of resources to be properly supported and maintained.

Community members raised questions about the public budget to maintain these spaces, as community members shared how greenspaces have been defunded at a governmental level and that there has been limited funding for park employees. They offered solutions to lacking funding by requesting support from businesses and raising bonds to fund the greenspaces that can be

implemented. Moreover, members suggested that funds be shared by, and dispersed to, a wider variety of greenspaces, not simply the largest ones. They brainstormed ways to overcome budget constraints and suggested hiring neighborhood residents to maintain parks as a possibility.

Maintain Greenspace

Considering the urban or neighborhood space around a greenspace was seen as important in the process. Community members viewed there to be an unnecessary emphasis on greenspace design rather than attempts to re-engage people around the spaces. They felt that the physical environment of greenspaces was not being maintained (e.g., tall grass), and further suggested monitoring of soil lead levels and saturation to maintain plant growth (e.g., perennial plants). Community members suggested that planted areas needed distinction and were often mistaken as weedy lots and, thus, vulnerable to dumping. Therefore, community members suggested amelioration of the physical environment by reducing pollutants and litter and the addition of possible signage.

Members of the community brought up various ways the built environment of greenspaces needed to be maintained within the neighborhood, discussing how programming, maintenance, and capital improvements should all be seen as interconnected. They highlighted ways to improve neighborhood quality overall, such as increasing sanctions for landowners that demolish vacant homes. They feared that the prevalence of abandoned homes was diminishing the value of the properties adjacent to greenspaces. Community members also stressed the importance of the government listening when members submit maintenance requests for the greenspaces, such as the removal of amenities perceived to attract greenspace misuse (e.g., loitering).

Evaluate Benefits of the Greenspace Project

This theme demonstrated the importance of following up with community

members to understand their view of greenspaces in Detroit, evaluating the benefits greenspaces have for community well-being. This final step in the project planning process is to re-engage with the community to understand the impact on community members as well as what the project has afforded them.

Opportunity for Outdoor Activities

Members of the community viewed greenspaces as a way to connect with nature and experience trees, leaves, foliage, and animals. Community members highlighted how greenspaces could improve the aesthetics of the neighborhood and help to purify the air. In addition to connecting people to the beauty of nature, greenspaces also afforded environment-related activities that the community could engage in, such as learning about the environment, conducting nature studies, planting, and growing vegetables. Greenspaces supported community members' psychological well-being by allowing for rest and connection to nature (e.g., wildlife, plants, fresh air).

Greenspaces also benefited the community by providing a space where unstructured leisure and structured recreation could take place. Community members stated that the greenspaces were often used as a place for structured programming for kids. They shared stories of sports being played and events being planned that engaged neighborhood children in structured games and activities. Although structured recreation was discussed, community members also stressed the importance of leisure. In addition to greenspaces being a place for children's play, members of the community also emphasized that parks promoted physical and outdoor activities (e.g., kite flying, bird watching). They also stated that the greenspaces were a positive amenity for neighborhoods when there were picnic areas and dog parks that were accessible. These opportunities support social well-being for community members at different ages with varying interests (e.g., youth programming, family gathering).

Enhancement of Well-Being

Community members perceived greenspaces as having a specific and critical role in enhancing their mental well-being. They described greenspaces as a calming space to “recreate,” “relax,” “re-imagine,” and find “respite.” Members of the community stated the need for these spaces as an antidote to ill-being (e.g., mental stress reduction). Greenspaces were important to elevate their quality of life by increasing their sense of belonging and safety while decreasing mental stress.

Greenspaces improved their social well-being by providing ample opportunities for community members to socialize. They described greenspaces as a gathering place and a much larger piece of the community, noting that families were moving into the areas as there were more children in the neighborhood and stressed the importance of a space for families to engage. Greenspaces were valued in the role of preserving neighborhoods, increasing home values, and increasing residents’ feelings of connectedness. Community members expressed how greenspaces were a place to get together, socialize, connect with, and meet new neighbors. They also stressed the importance of having a neutral space for community building (e.g., block parties and picnics).

DISCUSSION

In seeking to gather and present Detroit community members’ suggestions for perceived value of greenspaces and important aspects of community engagement, findings highlighted three themes relating to a community-engaged process to implement. Synthesized, community members offered a community-engaged process for how planners may support vibrant greenspaces by using resources (e.g., social capital, volunteerism, ideas) to connect the community and by providing valued spaces that support members’ needs and well-being.

The first aim for this study was to explore community members’ perceptions pertaining to the value of greenspaces in their community, particularly in reference to well-

being. The use of greenspaces has been previously associated with enhanced user well-being (Besenji et al., 2014; Stone & Roberts, 2020). The findings of this study, particularly the third theme to evaluate the benefits of the greenspace project, shows how crucial it is to the community-engaged process. This final step of the process assesses whether or not the greenspace fulfills the desired objective (e.g., foster well-being). In past research, greenspaces have been found to facilitate positive nature interactions and learning experiences (Colléony et al., 2020; Mumaw et al., 2017). Overall, our findings suggest that the psychological, social, physical, and environmental benefits of greenspaces offer an opportunity for a healthy lifestyle. However, to support individuals’ well-being, greenspaces need to be accessible, welcoming, appropriately programmed with basic amenities, and integrated within the community (Seaman et al., 2010). Therefore, to support a valued greenspace within the community, it is imperative to survey community members and understand contextual aspects that would impact the use of greenspaces as well as evaluate the actual use of the greenspace.

The second aim for this study was to understand community members’ ideas and suggestions for engaging with the community regarding greenspaces. Community members mentioned several well-established strategies consistent with the literature on community engagement (National Institutes of Health, 2011), such as establishing partnerships with local organizations that have the mission of working collaboratively with community members, establishing horizontal rather than vertical relationships with both community leaders and greenspace users, and providing incentives for resident involvement. These results suggest community engagement efforts should be of the highest priority for agencies and organizations looking to revitalize and re-engage community members with greenspaces, or any other community-centered projects.

Community engagement was a recurrent theme where community members’ narratives

centered around the importance of having the needs of those residing near greenspaces taken into consideration by government agencies and those responsible for greenspace planning and maintenance efforts. In consonance with the fact that people's preferences concerning greenspaces and physical activity vary (Lee et al., 2015; National Institutes of Health, 2011; Payne et al., 2002), community members also suggested the input of different social groups be taken into consideration. This diverse representation would not only facilitate the effective maintenance of greenspaces but also empower social groups that are commonly marginalized.

Literature on greenspaces and user experience shows that examining community members' views of how and why greenspaces are not being used is important when making them more accessible to the population (Stone & Roberts, 2020). Our findings demonstrate what community members view as considerations for greenspaces. We posit that including community input into the decision-making process, relative to local greenspaces (e.g., amenities, design, planning), may work to enhance the aspects that will ensure effective actions. For example, misuse of greenspaces may be corrected through environmental maintenance strategies (e.g., cutting grass, landscape care, planting). Therefore, it is prudent to invite the community to engage with the greenspaces as well as encourage members to create and maintain their spaces as a community (i.e., stewardship).

Echoing the words of Detroit's community members, the process of revitalizing or maintaining greenspaces is not a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Greenspaces may serve different functions, community members may value different aspects, and neighborhoods have distinct characteristics. Dinnie and colleagues (2013) also found such results when comparing two different yet similarly designed parks in Scotland. While one park was described as a natural meeting place, where social interactions were common, the other was a place where people just passed through to get to the bus stop or a supermarket.

This suggests that when implementing new amenities or programming, the needs of the community members and characteristics of the neighborhoods should be considered.

Implications for Future Community-Engaged Research

Community engagement researchers should inform projects with the lessons learned from this study. There are several partnership-related issues that can arise within this nuanced domain (e.g., lack of trust/respect, inequitable distribution of power/control, conflicts over different emphases on task and process; Flicker et al., 2008). Findings suggest ways researchers may avoid these issues. Researchers should first gain input from community members, where they can (a) include multiple and diverse voices, (b) view stakeholders as experts of their spaces, (c) listen to and respect community concerns, (d) provide ownership to partners over the process, and (e) assess community needs. Next, researchers should act in collaboration with partners, where they can (a) coordinate roles and responsibilities with appropriate stakeholders, (b) tailor efforts to needs of specific neighborhoods, (c) sustain funding for ensuring effective implementation, (d) set up resources for maintenance, and (e) evaluate benefits and outcomes to make any needed changes.

CONCLUSION

When supported with the input of community members, vibrant greenspaces may have an important role to play in community well-being. However, simply making greenspaces available is not enough; community stakeholders need to be re-engaged with these spaces. Thus, we propose that a community-engaged process that considers stakeholders' needs, as suggested by the participants of this study, is crucial when revitalizing urban spaces such as greenspaces. Including community stakeholders in the process of shaping urban greenspaces may help address real issues and make these spaces attractive and accessible. While we have

presented suggestions for future community-engaged processes that could be applicable to various contexts, it is worth highlighting that this is an idiosyncratic endeavor—every community has its own needs—and, thus, steps to the plan may be added or modified when necessary. Nevertheless, including community stakeholders in the process of supporting greenspaces and beyond may prove to be crucial to foster community well-being.

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