BIRMINGHAM, AL: NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH SCORECARDS

THE MAIN IDEA
Land-use and community planning decisions affect public health, for example:
- The availability and affordability of housing; the presence of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods;
- The range of transportation options;
- Levels of crime in a community; and
- Access to education, employment, and other essential goods and services.

THE PROJECT
Shape Bham aims to combine demographic and health information with input from stakeholders, to integrate health and equity into the Birmingham City planning process at the neighborhood level, with special attention paid to certain target populations such as seniors, children, and low-income communities.

The program established a uniform measuring tool or “report card” for assessing health and quality of life, which was piloted in 20 neighborhoods. The tool ranked the social, physical and economic environment in the pilot neighborhoods, based over 40 indicators and neighborhood input. The report card will be used to:
1. assess the state of Birmingham neighborhoods;
2. make recommendations to the community planning “framework” process; and
3. track the progress in neighborhoods as the city does its planning.

IMPACT
The multi-part process identified these community priorities: economic health; blight; employment opportunities; environmental hazards; educational opportunities; housing; natural area; health systems and public safety; social cohesion; neighborhood characteristics; and transportation.

Following the creation of report cards for the 20 pilot cities, the program was awarded $200,000 to do similar work in the remaining 79 neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY ROLE
Researchers conducted a Community Assessment, which included collecting community data through mapping, photographic analyses and the Rapid Health Impact Assessment. Using PhotoVoice, 12 residents from across the city collected over 300 photographs of elements in their environment that hurt their quality of life and health, such as damaged sidewalks and abandoned buildings in disrepair. After data collection, a community framework plan that included input from community members and local stakeholders was drafted. Project steering committee included community members.

MORE INFO ON BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY SCORECARDS:
- www.shapebham.com
- North Birmingham Community Framework Plan Final Document (March 2015)
- Scorecards for each of 20 neighborhoods
- August 2016 public engagement efforts

For information on community-based research projects, please see https://www.communityvoicesforhealth.org/tools-resources. These materials were created by Altarum, a nonprofit health solutions company, working in partnership with Public Agenda, and supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Please send any corrections or suggestions for improvement to Sabah at Sabah.bhatnagar@altarum.org.