

**DATA YOU CAN USE**

FROM PEOPLE YOU CAN TRUST

# TURNING THE CORNER

## A Closer Look at Neighborhood Change Brewers Hill Highlights



Prepared by Data You Can Use, Inc.  
Milwaukee WI

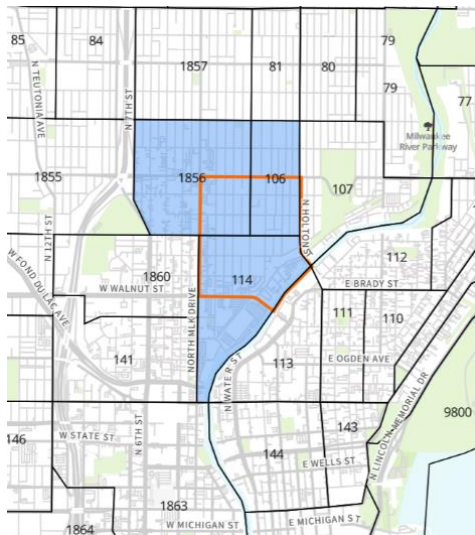
In conjunction with the Urban Institute's  
National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership  
Cross-site Study

With support from the Community Development Alliance

## Background

This Data You Can Use study is part of a larger national effort titled, *Turning the Corner: Monitoring Neighborhood Change for Action*, a project guided by the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) and the Funder's Network Federal Reserve-Philanthropy Initiative. Launched in January 2016, the project pilots a research model that monitors neighborhood change, drives informed government action, and supports displacement prevention and inclusive revitalization. The work was aimed at elevating the conversation about neighborhood change and gentrification and includes background research on the topic and learnings from other partner cities.

To further insights into understanding neighborhood change, Data You Can Use focuses on two Milwaukee neighborhoods associated with the fear of gentrification and displacement: the Brewers Hill neighborhood on the North side of downtown and the Walker's Point neighborhood on the South side of downtown. Data You Can Use gathered information using focus groups and key informant interviews with residents and business owners in Brewers Hill and Walker's Point. Additionally, [Turning the Corner report](#) looks at related local efforts in Milwaukee including MKE United, LISC- Milwaukee, the Department of City Development's Transit Oriented Development Study, and A Place in the Neighborhood, Milwaukee's Anti-Displacement Plan. Data You Can Use explored two key indicators of gentrification at the micro (census block) level (change in race and education levels) and two key indicators of displacement (changes in housing-burden for renters and homeowners) at the census block level in these neighborhoods. Consistent with the Data You Can Use mantra-- "no data without stories, no stories without data," -- this approach provides opportunities to judge the weight of the evidence in exploring neighborhood change. This document is a summary of the findings for Brewers Hill.



**Brewers Hill** is an area to the north of downtown and bordered by the Milwaukee River. The boundaries are Pleasant, Hubbard, and Reservoir on the South; North Avenue on the North; Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Drive on the West; and Holton on the East. The mentioned areas are indicated by the orange lines on the map to the left. The area of analysis includes adjacent neighborhoods. A historic designation was approved in 1985 and goes from Vine to Lloyd, Hubbard to King Drive. There was a neighborhood overlay conservation zone creating design standards in 2006.

Originally, German brew-masters settled in large homes built on top of the bluff along the river and walking distance to the breweries. The owners of the tanneries and breweries in the area built "worker cottages" so employees could walk to work. The workers, predominately Irish and Polish immigrants, lived in the small cottages that were the hallmark of Brewers Hill. In the 1920s, the area became increasingly diverse as the first African American families moved to the neighborhood. After World War II, the intersection of Third Street (now Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) and North Avenue was a major shopping district, rivaling the downtown shopping district. With the development of shopping malls, like Capital Count and Southgate, the Third Street and downtown shopping districts declined. When automobiles and highways allowed people to move to the suburbs and still have a reasonable commute to work, the white owners fled, and property deteriorated. Redlining, southern migration, racist banking and real estate practices lead to further concentration of the African American population in the area. In

the 1970's and early 1980's, Black property owners, particularly elderly residents on fixed incomes, began selling their homes. People who started purchasing homes in the neighborhood at this time were members of the arts community, craftsman and carpenters. Some of these "settlers", who provided feedback at a community focus group report that it was difficult to finance homes because of the lack of comparable historic properties, restrictions from the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requirements, and because of the city's "overly burdensome" process of buying a vacant lot at the time.

Today, the greater Brewers Hill area is a neighborhood of younger White and Latinx residents, and older African-Americans; mostly single-family homes and duplexes; and a relatively high share of renters. Portions of the neighborhood are designated a Local and National Historic District, and while some residents report growing interest from investors in purchasing and renovating homes, others suggest that the majority of home sales are to home-owners rehabbing or updating previously rehabbed homes.

## The voices of residents and Business Owners

An important goal of the Turning the Corner project was to look for indicators of neighborhood change that can add context to existing quantitative indicators to alert planners to areas that may be in danger of displacement. Interviews and focus groups were held to collect input from people who know their neighborhood best. For more details, visit the [full report](#)

Long-term residents of Brewers Hill described a shift from a predominately African American neighborhood to one that is now predominately White.

They spoke of the influx of younger professionals, African American renters, and people with young children. There was concern that young families are moving out when their children reach school age. The residents also talked about seeing change in crime, housing, public space and traffic safety. According to participants, blatant prostitution and drug dealing were more common 15-20 years ago although there were current concerns about Brewers Hill being the scene of car break-ins and "mobile drug dealing". Participants also noted a decline in vacant properties, an increase in rehabs, and relatively quick sales. Residents indicated that they generally feel safe in their neighborhood, although parking and traffic congestion are becoming more of a problem. Some residents indicated that the closing of bars in the neighborhood is welcome change as it reduces noise and trash. Similarly, the opening of near-by grocery stores where fresh food is available is a welcome sign of

*"We lost a lot of families. It's clear they're moving because of the school district. There are long-term sustainability concerns."*

*"Gentrification? I don't see it. Good development is sometimes labeled gentrification."*

*"Crime has gone down, but mobile drug dealing has gone up."*

*"It's a place to raise family so close to downtown."*

*"Diversity depends on what block you live on."*

*"Business support is more about class than it is about race. Race drives but class connects people who have something in common. A black middle-class person has more in common with a white middle-class person."*

*"There's not enough to draw people into the neighborhood. Not enough interesting options. We need something more eclectic."*

positive change. The downsides are the lack of greenspace and high performing public schools.

Business owners in the Brewers Hill area identified an *increase in new black-owned businesses in the neighborhood*. The respondents stated that they served local residents and that there weren't enough businesses to draw outsiders into the neighborhood, especially in the evening because there is still a perception of danger. In addition to the lack of niche stores, respondents also identified a low incentive to

improve the exteriors of stores or invest in infrastructure. For more information on the perspectives of business owners, see the [full report](#).

While what happens in the city as a whole is important and of interest, neighborhood change is hyper-local and larger geographies often mask this change. Looking at neighborhoods, census tracts or even blocks helps uncover early signs of change. For more information, see the [Brewers Hill Data Portrait](#).

## Overall Indicators of Gentrification and Displacement

Based on the analysis of the other studies and the incorporation of the qualitative data, the following indicators were chosen by Data You Can Use to explore change at an even more micro level. The block groups included are identified in the methodology section.

Gentrification indicators are increases in:

- Percent of the population that is White; and
- Percent of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Risk of Displacement indicators are an increase in:

- Rental housing burden—renters paying more than 30% of their income for housing; and
- Homeowner housing burden--households that pay 30% or more of income for housing.

	Evidence of Gentrification		Risk of Displacement	
	RACE % white	EDUCATION % w/ college degree	RENTER HOUSING BURDEN % renter housing burdened	HOMEOWNER HOUSING BURDEN % homeowner housing burdened
City	-3.7%	+5%	+16.3%	+14%
Brewers Hill	+31.8%	+23.3%	+1.7%	+4.8%

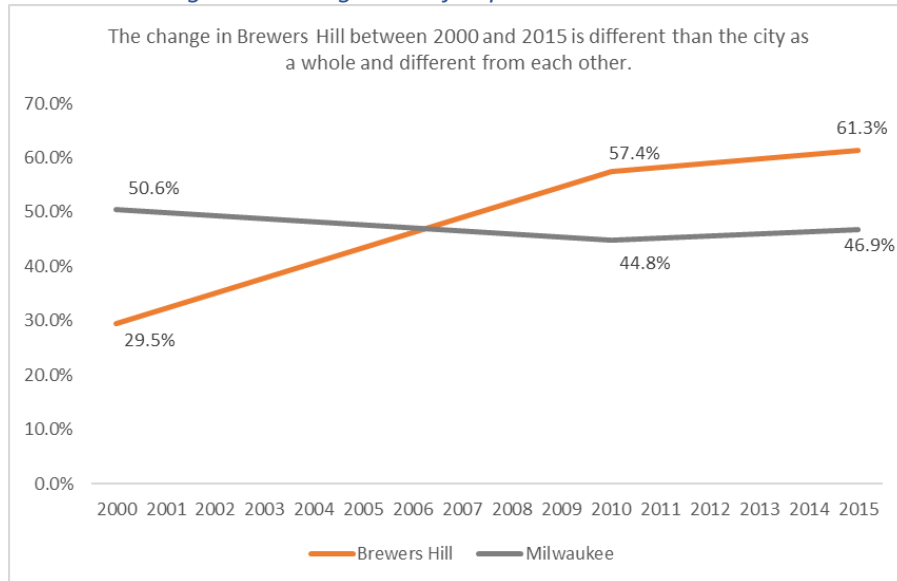
## Evidence of Gentrification at the Micro level

### RACE Percent of Population that is White (block group level)

	Total Pop	2000		Total Pop	2015		Percent change over time
		White	Percent		White	Percent	
City	614,529	310,734	50.6%	599,498	280,922	46.9%	-3.7%
Brewers Hill	1,912	564	29.5%	2,748	1,684	61.3%	+31.8%

Looking at the micro (block group) level, in Brewers Hill the percentage of the population that is White has changed more drastically than the City overall. The share of White residents in Brewers Hill doubled from 29.5% in 2000, to 61.3% in 2015, an increase of 31.8 percentage points. The following graph shows that the most dramatic change in Brewers Hill was between 2000 and 2010.

*Figure 1. Change in % of Population that is White*

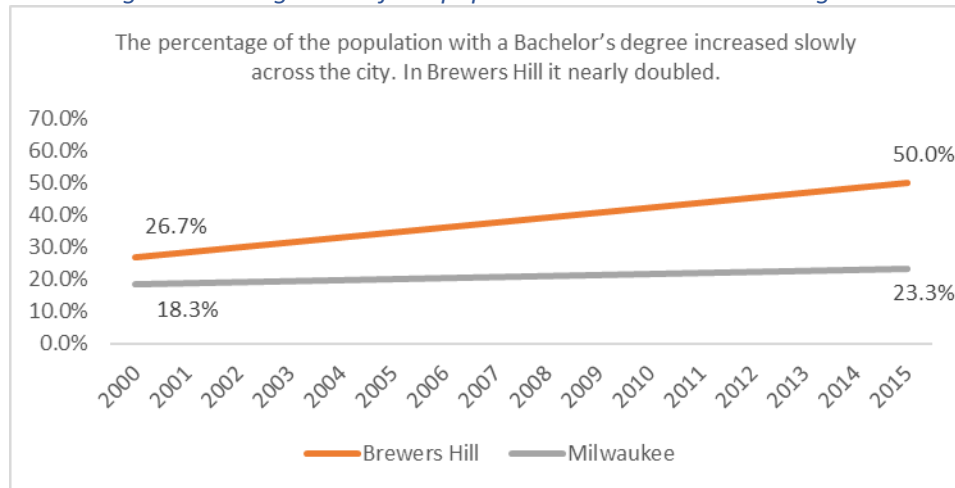


**EDUCATION Percent of Population over 25 with a College Degree (block group level)**

	Total Pop over 25	2000		Total Pop over 25	2015		Percent change over time
		College Degree	Percent		College Degree	Percent	
City	353,505	64,742	18.3%	364,339	84,836	23.3%	+5.0%
Brewers Hill	992	265	26.7%	2,102	1,050	50.0%	+23.3%

At the micro (block group) level, the percent of Brewers Hill residents with higher education degrees saw dramatic change from 2000 (26.7%) to 2015 (50.0%), an increase of 23.3%.

*Figure 2: Change in % of the population with a bachelor's degree*



## Evidence of Risk of Displacement at the Micro Level

### HOUSING BURDEN

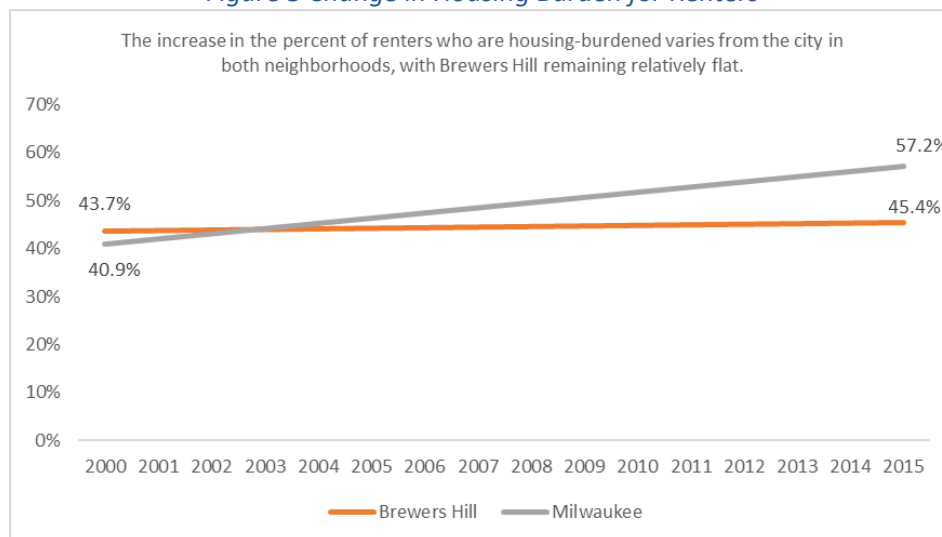
A household is considered “housing burdened” if the residents pay 30% or more of household income on rent or a mortgage. Housing burden differs in renter and owner-occupant households (for more details see tables 9-14 in the [data portraits](#)).

#### Renters who are Housing Burdened (block group level)

	Total renter households	2000		Total renter households	2015		Percent change over time
		Housing burdened	Percent		Housing burdened	Percent	
City	120,830	49,376	40.9%	127,436	72,844	57.2%	+16.3%
Brewers Hill	623	272	43.7%	857	389	45.4%	+1.7%

At the micro (block group) level, the percent of renters who are housing- burdened in Brewers Hill was relatively stable during this time period; with 43.7% in 2000 and 45.4% in 2015, representing a slight increase of only 1.7%.

*Figure 3 Change in Housing Burden for Renters*



### HOUSING BURDEN AMONG HOMEOWNERS

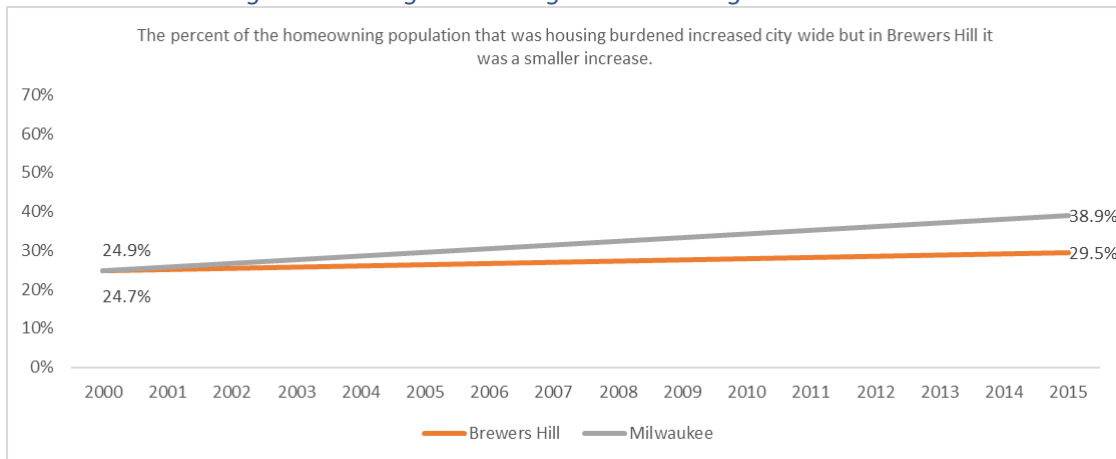
Overall, a greater percentage of Milwaukee, renters are housing burdened (57.2%) than homeowners (38.9%). The percent of housing-burdened homeowners in Milwaukee was 24.9% in 2000 and 38.9% by 2015, an increase of 14.0 percentage points.

#### Homeowners who are Housing Burdened (block group level)

	Total homeowner households	2000		Total homeowners	2015		Percent change over time
		Housing burdened	Percent		Housing burdened	Percent	
City	56,351	14,051	24.9%	68,141	26,534	38.9%	+14.0%
Brewers Hill	93	23	24.7%	502	148	29.5%	+4.8%

At the block level, Brewers Hill homeowners experienced less of an increase than the City with 24.7% in 2000 and 29.5% in 2015, a 4.8% increase.

Figure 4. Change in housing burden among homeowners



## Looking ahead

As Milwaukee continues the conversation about neighborhood change and designs strategies to promote equitable development, there are some additional concepts and indicators that could help elevate the conversation and sharpen the strategies. One avenue to continue to pursue would be a conception of class regardless of color. Gentrification may be tied to income, but it is also tied to education. The percent of the population with a bachelor's degree is a commonly used indicator, while indicators of wealth are generally not included. It's also possible that changes in indicators of occupation are under-utilized in the analysis of gentrification and displacement. Further complicating the conversation around gentrification is the cacophony around the word "diversity" with little agreement about what it means. For more details on the concepts and indicators, check the full report, and the [neighborhood data portrait of Brewers Hill](#).

Finally, to reduce both the fear and the reality of displacement, there are several "protective factors" that can be put in place. Some of the important protective factors that were identified include:

- Informed conversations—making sure the "right" people are included
- Active neighborhood organizations—providing a forum for residents and businesses
- Responsive political representatives—local elected leaders who pay attention to constituents
- Neighborhood schools that are actively engaged in the community and a
- Diversity of housing options

## For More Information

For full report: [https://www.datayoucanuse.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2019/04/Turning-the-Corner-Full-Report.pdf](https://www.datayoucanuse.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2019/04/Turning-the-Corner-Full-Report.pdf)

For the Brewers Hill neighborhood data portrait: <http://www.datayoucanuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Brewers-Hill-Neighborhood-Portrait.pdf>

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