

Sherman Park Neighborhood Data Chat

Event Description

On December 10th, 2025, 16 Sherman Park residents attended a data chat hosted by Clean Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) in partnership with the Sherman Park Community Association (SPCA) at Bethel-Bethany United Church of Christ. This data chat was developed with support from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Taking Action with Data grant. The purpose of this chat was to give residents of Sherman Park the opportunity to voice their concerns, opinions, advice, and stories about the environmental health risks in their neighborhood, while also reviewing the environmental health risk data from Clean Wisconsin and MHD.

Data chats are conversations with the purpose of understanding local community member's opinions, perspectives, and interpretations of data. This locally tested model was developed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by Data You Can Use and centers the knowledge and lived experience of people who live in a neighborhood, adding context to quantitative data.¹

Topics Covered

Throughout the data chat, Clean Wisconsin, MHD, and 16 residents of the neighborhood explored data about the environmental conditions of Sherman Park. This included neighborhood-level data points on the built environment, pollution, and health outcomes. The chat also had dedicated time for reflection and discussion about any environmental issues that are not reflected in the data, which current programs are improving the environmental health of their neighborhood, and what programs residents wish existed to improve the environmental health of Sherman Park.

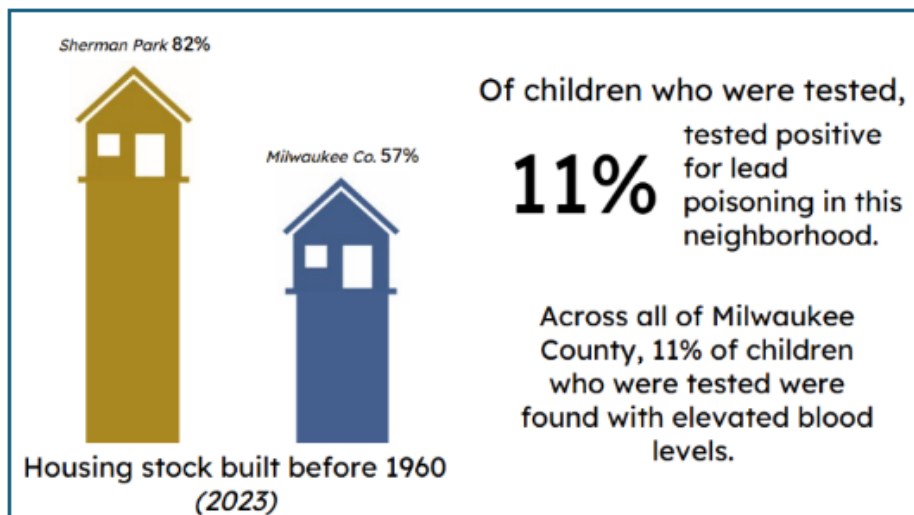


Figure 1. Slide presented to residents about the number of children who tested positive for lead poisoning & the percentage of housing stock built before 1960 in the Sherman Park neighborhood. *Data source: American Community Survey 2023; DHS 2020-2023.*

Lastly, given the existing relationship between Clean Wisconsin and SPCA, Clean Wisconsin's Resilient Communities Program Director spent time reviewing the green infrastructure program data for Sherman Park.

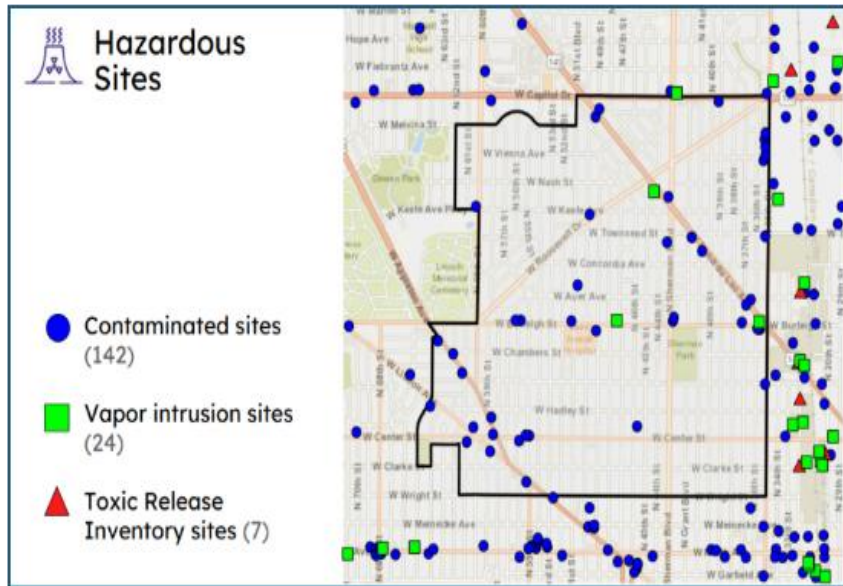


Figure 2. Slide presented to residents about hazardous sites in the Sherman park neighborhood. This map shows the locations of factories, manufacturing facilities, and other operations that could be emitting harmful pollution into the air, soil, or water. *Data sources: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking*

System, August 2025 & EPA Facility Registry Service (FRS) Dataset, August 2025.

Themes

Some themes that emerged include:

1. **Data and lived experience don't always match** - Residents were surprised at the number of vacant lots in Sherman Park. Vacant lots are defined by the city as parcels of land that are not occupied by a structure or left unoccupied for an extended period of time.
2. **Pollution data raised both concern and questions** - People were surprised at the number of hazardous and contaminated sites nearby and asked, "Where exactly are these, what's being done, and who can I contact?". Folks were also curious about brownfield sites in their neighborhood.
3. **Is there a connection between the environment & our health?** Residents were curious if MHD had completed any tracing of health conditions and diseases related to hazardous air pollution and sites.
4. **Lead poisoning & radon are core concerns** - Multiple residents voiced health concerns associated with older houses in Sherman Park, especially-lead paint hazards. The decrease in public awareness and advertising for home radon testing was also discussed, and residents were curious about the availability of radon test kits.

5. **Equity and vulnerable populations** - Residents expressed concern for vulnerable populations in Sherman Park, such as children, who may be impacted by environmental conditions and pollutants more than others.
6. **Local, tangible projects resonate most** - Residents discussed the need for bike infrastructure in Sherman Park that runs East/West, as well as the importance of green infrastructure to reduce flooding & water bills for people's homes.
7. **Spreading the word** - Residents asked about the potential of future data chats, and how we can communicate these events and data to decision/policy makers.

Evaluation Results

Participants ranked their agreement with each of the following statements before and after the data chat on a 1-4 scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree). 13 participants completed the evaluation.

	I know where to find data and information on the environmental conditions in my neighborhood.	I know how the environmental conditions in my neighborhood impact my health.	I can identify areas of environmental concern in my neighborhood.	I can identify projects, policies, or initiatives that can improve the environmental health of my neighborhood.
Average score before data chat	1.62	2.31	2.15	2.00
Average score after data chat	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.42
Percent of participants reporting increase in knowledge	92%	83%	92%	83%

Resources and Next Steps

Following up on the 12/10 data chat, MHD will be:

- Donating air quality monitors to SPCA and Bethel-Bethany United Church of Christ
- Developing plans to distribute radon kits to Sherman Park community members

Clean Wisconsin and MHD will continue hosting data chats citywide and exploring ways to improve the distribution and outreach of the neighborhood-level data gathered, including Clean Wisconsin's environmental health neighborhood profiles. They will also continue to work collectively to engage with local neighborhood organizations and residents to incorporate their lived experiences with pollution and environmental health risks into data.

ⁱ Cohen, M., Rohan, A., Pritchard, K., & Pettit, K. (2022). Guide to data chats: convening community conversations about data. Urban Institute. [Guide to Data Chats: Convening Community Conversations about Data](#)