

Menomonee Valley Neighborhood Data Chat

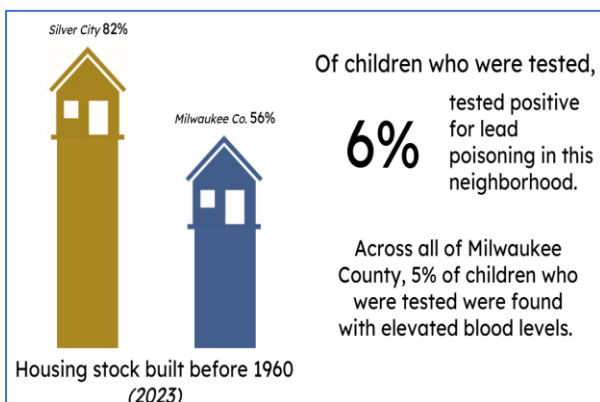
Event Description

On March 31st, 2026, 20 Menomonee Valley residents attended a bilingual data chat hosted by Clean Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) in partnership with MKE Fresh Air Collective (MKE FAC) at the Urban Ecology Center Menomonee Valley Branch. 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 the Menomonee Valley, specifically Silver City, Burnham Park, & Muskego Way, 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, MKE FAC, & 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, MKE FAC, and 20 residents of the nearby neighborhoods explored data about the environmental conditions of Silver City with the assistance of a translator. Data from the nearby neighborhoods of Burnham Park and Muskego Way were available to participants, but for time purposes we only reviewed the Silver City neighborhood data. This included neighborhood-level data points on the built environment, pollution, and health outcomes. The chat also 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 the Menomonee Valley. In partnership with MKE Fresh Air Collective, the organization shared their air quality and radon programs, and we included built-in time for residents to take MKE Fresh Air's air quality survey. At the conclusion of the chat, short-term radon test kits were distributed to all participants.



The Silver City neighborhood was prioritized given the need to expand outreach to the South Side of Milwaukee. There is a current gap in environmental health data and information due to the closure of 16th Street Community Center's environmental health program.

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 Silver City neighborhood. *Data source: American Community Survey 2023; DHS 2020-2023*

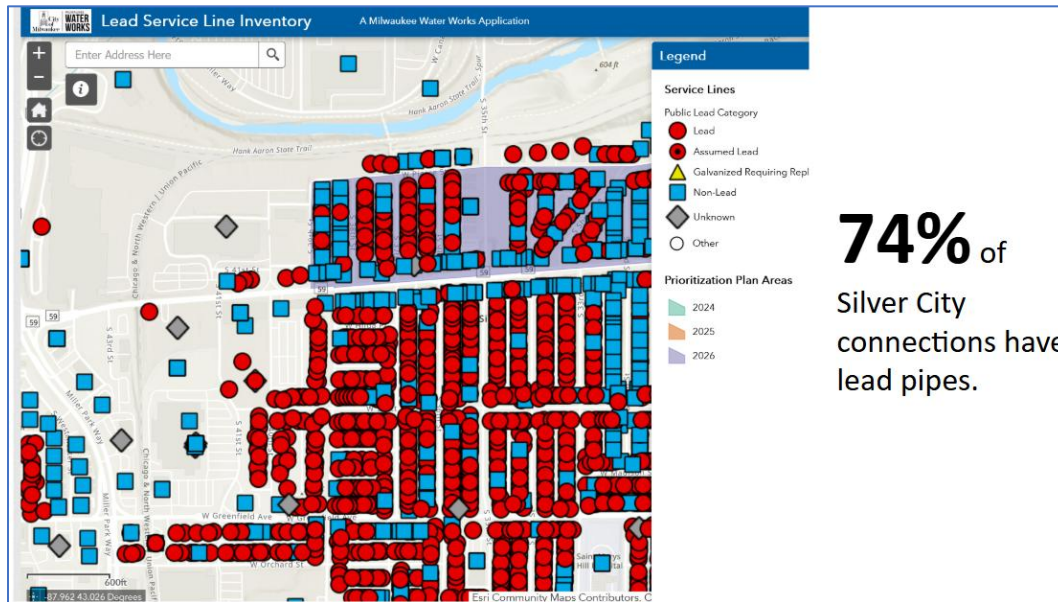


Figure 2. Slide presented to residents about possible sources of lead poisoning in the Silver City neighborhood. This map shows which addresses have lead service lines, which have the potential to contaminate clean water entering homes with lead particles from those pipes.

Data source: City of Milwaukee Water Works, Lead Service Line Inventory Dashboard, April 2026.

Themes

Some themes that emerged include:

1. **Water quality monitoring** - Residents asked how often the water is monitored and tested in Milwaukee, and if we will be notified when a violation occurs. Residents also asked if the notifications sent out about boiling water are connected to the water quality and testing.
2. **Lead pipes & the safety of drinking water** - Many residents raised the concern of lead pipes and drinking water. If the water quality is good, but it goes through a lead pipe, what does that mean for community safety? Residents also asked how to be notified about lead pipes, and any programs that exist to replace them.
 - a. Questions were raised about renters vs. homeowners, and landlord responsibility when it comes to lead pipe replacement.
3. **Air quality raised questions** - Residents recognized the wildfire smoke that occurred last summer, and how the air quality was visible. Community members also asked about how this air quality impacts our safety.
4. **Radon is a core concern** - Many residents were curious about what radon is, where it comes from, and what to do when levels are high. We discussed mitigation systems and how to get them installed, and what testing resources are available.

5. **Hazardous sites awareness** - Residents raised concern over why hazardous sites in the area do not have warning signs, and that there is a need for more communication around what hazards are present. Residents voiced that it's important the community knows that there's contamination nearby.
6. **Local, tangible projects are needed** - Residents mentioned local parks cutting down trees and the need to replant any trees that were cut down. There was also interest in how we can improve green spaces in the neighborhood.
7. **Efforts being made to protect vulnerable groups** - Multiple residents raised questions about what Milwaukee Public Schools are doing to protect children's safety when it comes to radon testing/awareness and general air quality.
8. **Spreading the word** beyond the chat- Residents asked about the potential of future data chats and discussed the need for educational events or materials. Residents mentioned that they were not previously aware of the health risks of negative air quality but have previously heard of water quality concerns.

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). 18 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 know how air quality in my neighborhood can 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	1.78	1.78	1.88	1.65	1.71
Average score after data chat	3.83	3.94	3.94	3.88	3.82
Percent of participants reporting increase in knowledge	94%	100%	100%	94%	88%

Resources and Next Steps

Following up on the 3/31 data chat, Clean Wisconsin and MHD will be:

- Following up with residents who received a radon test kit about conducting and returning the test
- Continuing to look for collaboration opportunities with MKE Fresh Air Collective on radon and air quality issues in Milwaukee

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.

¹ 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](#)