

# marin city

## Historic African-American Enclave at Risk



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Cover Photograph Source: <http://marinretailbuzz.blogspot.com/2011/10/marin-gateway-shopping-center-lands.html>

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# Historic African-American Enclave at Risk

## Case Study on Gentrification and Displacement Pressures in Marin City, CA

### Introduction

Marin City, located north of San Francisco in Marin County, is a small, historically African American suburban community. In the following neighborhood profile, we describe the major demographic, housing, and commercial changes that have taken place in Marin City since 1980. In that time, the area's population has nearly doubled, educational attainment and median income have risen, and the non-African-American population has grown significantly.

The area is host to some of the only public housing units in Marin County, and there are concerns in the community of losing them. While the area has been stable in its housing stock overall, it has experienced significant commercial displacement: a popular weekly flea market was discontinued in 1996 when a large shopping center was developed.

For Marin City, signs of gentrification appear, but change has been gradual; the chief concern in this community is future displacement due to potential increases in population, interest in redevelopment and the continued pressures of being surrounded by affluent neighbors in one of the most exclusive counties in the country.

### Methodology

The case study relies on mixed methods to study changes in Marin City since 1980. The demographic and housing indicators presented in this case study are those associated with processes of residential displacement, and/or thought to influence susceptibility to such processes (Chapple, 2009). Data on these indicators are from the decennial Census for the years 1980, 1990, 2000 and from the American Community Survey (ACS) for the period 2009-2013. Census data from 1980 to 2000 is from the Geolytics Neighborhood

Change Database, and is normalized to 2010 Census. The case study area is Census Tract 1290 and all figures reported as Marin City are based on this area. Marin City includes a small area outside the tract that is not considered here.

Data on residential sales and housing permits was taken from the county assessors' office, thorough DataQuick. The study also uses records from the Department of Housing and Urban Development; newspaper articles; and informal resident interviews. Interviews with several community stakeholders were incorporated into the narrative based on questions regarding demographic, housing, and commercial change. The Center partnered with Marin Grassroots, a community-based organization serving Marin City, to learn the community's history and current concerns.

To verify and extend the data found in these secondary data sets, we conducted a "ground-truthing" exercise where, for sample blocks in the case study area, we conducted a visual survey of conditions on the ground to ascertain levels of investment and change; this analysis is found in an appendix. The data used in this report was validated through a "ground-truthing" methodology that involved a systematic survey via visual observation of all residential parcels on a sample set of four blocks within the case study area. The data gathered through ground-truthing was subsequently compared to Census figures and sales data from the Marin County Assessor's Office, which was obtained through Dataquick, Inc. Of the sample blocks' 169 parcels recorded in the assessor dataset, field researchers were able to match the parcel numbers of 60 percent and land use of 86 percent of matched parcels through ground-truthing. These results suggest that some error may exist in either the Census or Assessor's reported count of housing units and unit type, perhaps due to condominium conversions that may go unaccounted for. Finally, draft reports were reviewed by Marin Grassroots to guarantee accuracy.

## Geography

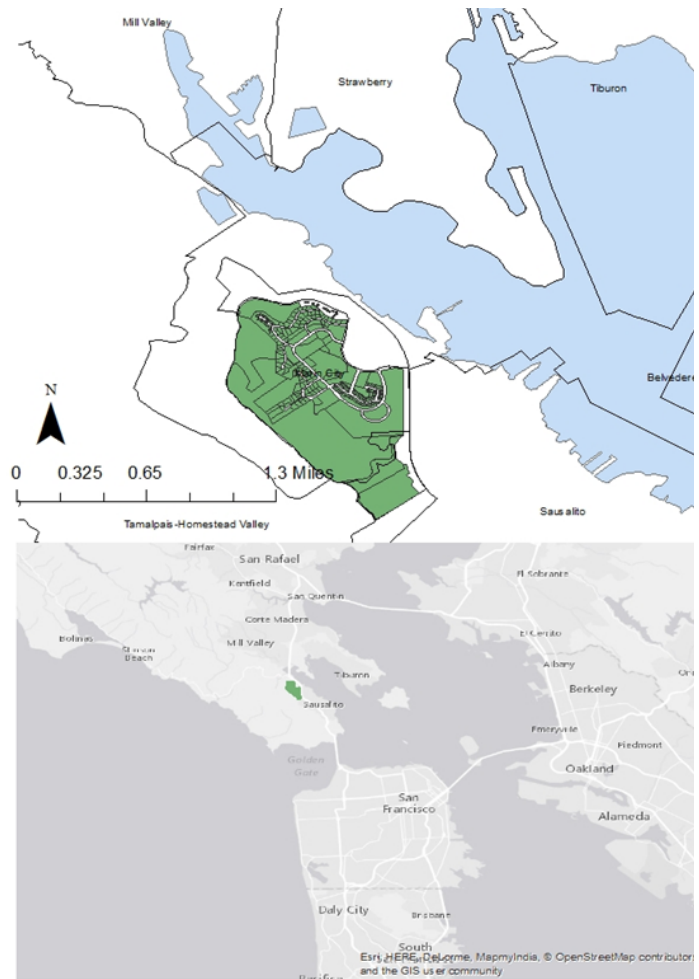
Marin City is a small neighborhood north of the San Francisco Bay, nestled between the cities of Sausalito to the south and Mill Valley to the north, Highway 101 to the east and the hills of Marin County to the west. The entire area is quite small—it is only 1.2 miles across and can be walked in approximately 15 minutes. It hosts some high-rise public housing, townhouses, single-family homes, and a shopping center, all with a suburban feel, and views of the Bay.

Marin City is located in Marin County, one of the richest counties in the United States, and is close to San Francisco. It is one of the few areas of poverty in Marin County, owing largely to its large stock of public and subsidized housing. Though the community is unincorporated, it does have a Community Services District that “provides public parks and recreation, street lighting, and refuse collection services to Marin City residents,” as well as leadership on planning- and education-related issues (Marin City Community Services District 2014).

## Historical Context: Waves of Housing and Demographic Change

The area now containing Marin City was “originally a grassy, crescent-shaped small valley...pastoral farmland dotted with oak trees...and a few ridge-top houses. But when the United States entered World War II, Marin City was developed to shelter approximately 6,000 of 20,000 shipyard workers” who worked in Sausalito at the Marinship Corporation (Marin Grassroots 2014). To work on the ships, workers were recruited from all over; “many were African-Americans from the Midwest and the South. Marinship became known as the best-integrated shipyard on the West Coast, with women and minorities making up a third of the workforce” (Marin Grassroots 2014).

One stakeholder described Marin City in the years after the war (through the 1980s) as “one big house,” or “a family”: “There’s only one way into Marin City. You saw people regularly and you always had connectivity.” This tight-knit feeling, especially within the African-American community who had come mostly from



**Figure 1: Case Study Area (Census Tract 1290) in green, with vicinity map**

the South, according to the stakeholder, was challenged by two waves of displacement. The first, in the 1960s, came when the temporary housing built during World War II was torn down. While White families were able to relocate nearby in Marin County communities, African-Americans were kept from these same housing options due to restrictive, exclusionary covenants. Many eventually relocated back to Marin City, and still today the area is one of only a few in Marin County that hosts a sizable number of African-American residents.

Around this same time, “pole” houses were built in the hills of Marin City and were purchased by mainly African-American families. Two large rental complexes also opened in the 1960s and were occupied mostly by African American families. These homes ensured stability in the African-American population through the 1980s, when a second wave of displacement came. As the people who had bought the pole houses in the 1960s aged or passed away, their next-of-kin

found it difficult to afford purchasing the homes, which had increased in value significantly, according to Marin Grassroots. As a result, new families bought these homes, and these families tended to be White. Additionally, lower-income and African-American residents who became adults in the 1980s, and were readying to move out of their family homes found few available units in Marin City, and so moved to other places in the Bay Area like San Rafael, Novato, and the East Bay, according to Marin Grassroots.

In 2005, one of the rental complexes that had opened in the 1960s (Oak Knolls) was released from a HUD contract that subsidized rents, and the tenants in the building became owners, creating a cooperative, according to Marin Grassroots. As with the earlier trend with “pole” houses in the 1980s, the offspring of residents who had lived in these units since their opening decided to sell them instead of occupying them themselves, leading to racial turnover.

## Changes in Residents’ Education, Economic Well-Being, and Racial Breakdown

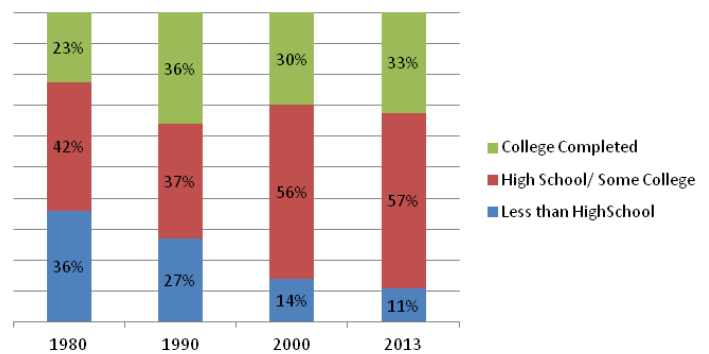
Marin City has had a near-doubling in population and, correspondingly, number of households. However, there has been minimal change in household size and type; average household size is 2.35 and almost 60% of households are families.

**Table 1: Change in Population and Households<sup>3</sup>**

Year	Total Population	Total Households
1980	1,366	600
1990	1,636	783
2000	2,502	1098
2013	2,320	988

*Source: US Census, 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2009-2013*

<sup>3</sup> Marin Grassroots expressed doubt that the 2013 household figure was accurate given their knowledge of the area; given the small sample size of the American Community Survey, it’s possible that the decline in population and households is due to sampling error.



**Figure 2: Educational Attainment of Population over 25, 1980-2013**

*Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey 2009-2013*

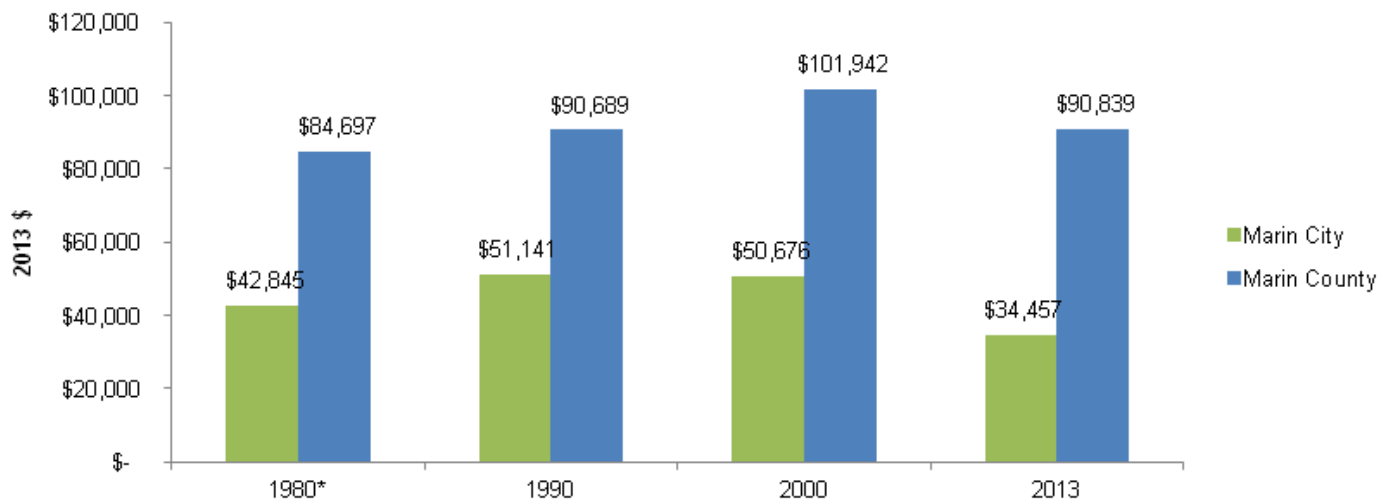
### Education

Marin City has seen a general upward trend in the years of education completed by its residents (Figure 2). The fact that so many residents have moved in over the same time period—and that most have been white (see below), a generally higher-educated group—suggests that most of this trend in educational attainment is due to new people moving in, not existing residents attaining higher levels of education.

### Income

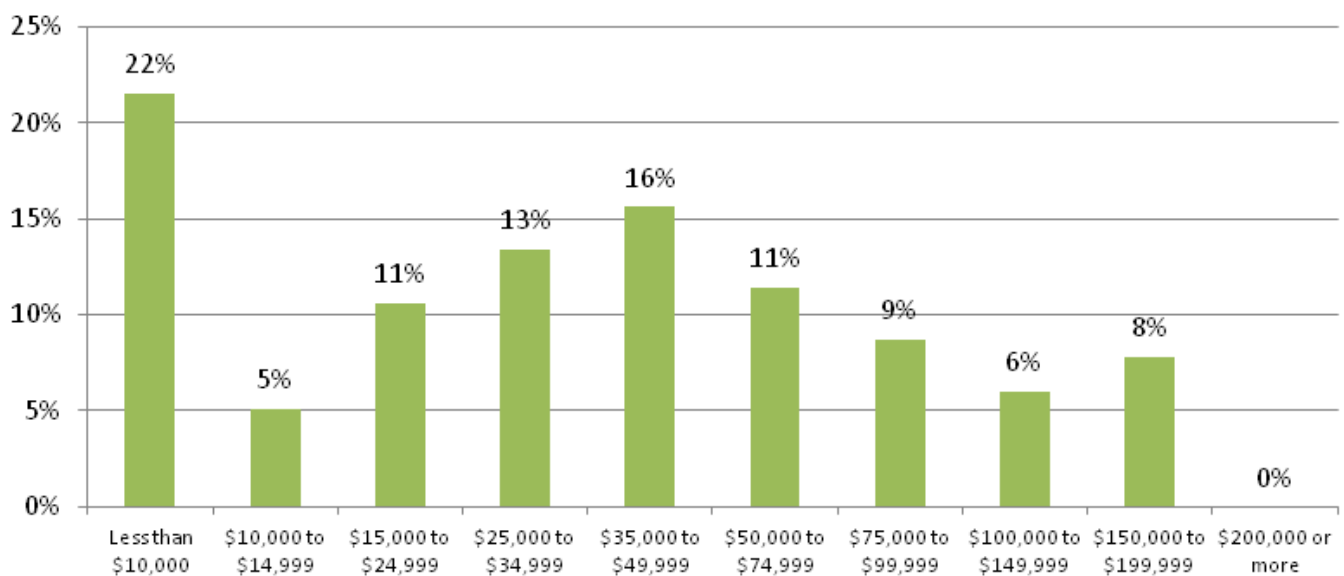
Median income increased by nearly 20% between 1980 and 2000, only to decrease even more dramatically in 2013, which is likely an effect of the recession (Figure 3). From this data, gentrification—in the most basic sense of higher-income people moving into a traditionally lower-income area—seems to have been proceeding gradually since 1980, though it appears to have slowed in recent years given the recent decreases in median income. Incomes in Marin City are much lower than Marin County overall.

Even with these changes in median income, the tract is still host to many low-income households; nearly a quarter of them earn less than \$10,000 (Figure 4).



**Figure 3: Median Income, Marin City vs. Marin County, 1980-2013, 2013 \$**

Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey 2009-2013. Note: Median income not available in 1980; average income shown.



**Figure 4: Income Distribution, by Households, Marin City – 2013, in 2013 \$**

Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey

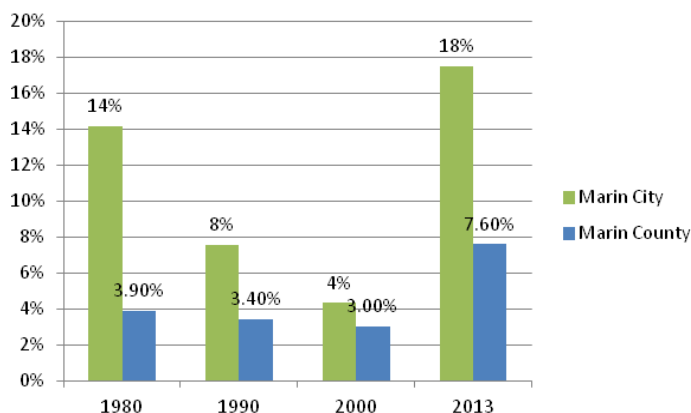
## Poverty

The percentage of residents living below the poverty level has decreased, and probably would have continued doing so into 2013 if not for the recession (Table 2). Again, given the population increase, this data is consistent with gradual gentrification.

**Table 2: Percent of Residents in Poverty, 1980-2013**

Year	Percent in Poverty
1980	29%
1990	26%
2000	23%
2013	35%

Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community



**Figure 5: Unemployment, Marin City vs. Marin County, 1980-2013**

Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey 2009-2013. Survey 2009-2013.

## Unemployment

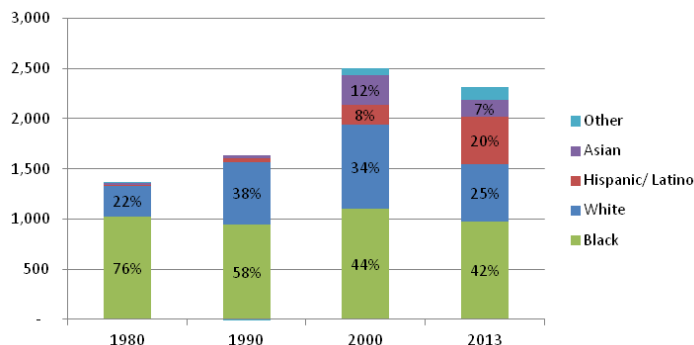
The unemployment rate in the area fell sharply from 1980 to 2000, only to increase in 2013, likely as a result of the recession (Figure 5).<sup>4</sup> The city has had consistently higher unemployment rates than Marin County.

## Race/Ethnicity

Marin City's population—and, especially, African-American population—grew in the build up to and during World War II (Marin Grassroots 2014). While many White families were able to move to other neighborhoods after the war, African-American residents remained, holding a solid majority in the area for many years; in 1980, 75% of the population was African American (Figure 6).

Figure 6 also shows the large population growth Marin City has experienced in the last 30 years; between 1980 and 2013, population nearly doubled, largely driven by the many Whites, Latinos, and Asians who moved in. However, between 2000 and 2013, many Whites left, and only Asians and Latinos increased their numbers; the number of African-Americans, however was stable. Together, these changes have meant that African Americans' relative share of the population has decreased.

<sup>4</sup> Local agencies have been using the figure 12.4%. The difference is likely due to different data sources or years of measurement.



**Figure 6: Population by Race/Ethnicity (1980 – 2013)<sup>5</sup>**

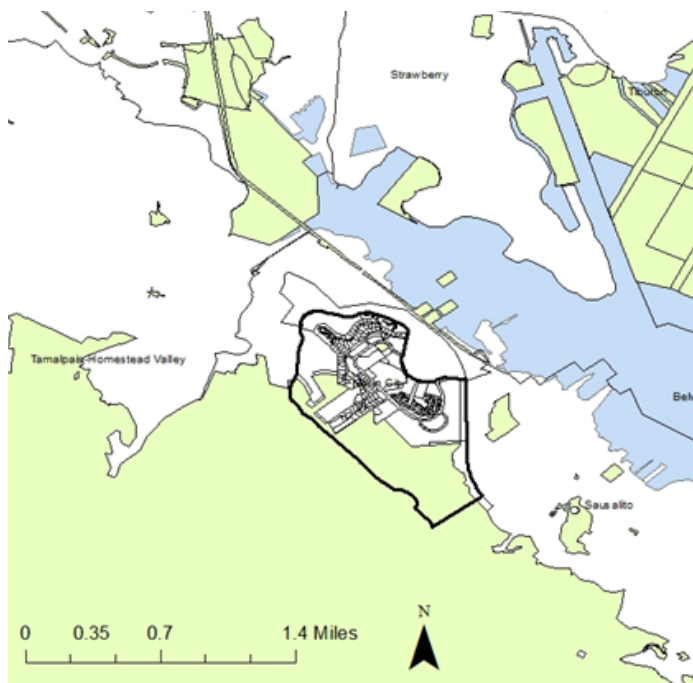
Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey 2009-2013.

## Changes in Housing Patterns

Slightly more than half of occupied units in Marin City are (and have been consistently) located in building complexes that contain 5 or more units; a third are in buildings with 2-4 units, and the rest single-family homes. Marin City's housing stock grew steadily between 1980 and 2000. At the same time, the rate of new housing construction slowed: in 1980, 42% of the housing stock had been recently built (within the previous 10 years); by 2013, just 8.5% of the housing stock had been built since 2000.

The halt of growth in the housing supply is likely also related to the lack of developable land. Because Marin County protects large areas of land for conservation (see Figure 7), which restrict the city's growth outwards, the only open land available for development tends to be expensive-to-build sites, such as those with steep terrain. Given the opportunity, however, it is likely that developers would want to build expensive housing here, for both demand and supply reasons: there is potential demand for high-priced homes given Marin City's good location and views of the Bay, while on the supply side, land is scarce and often hilly, making construction more expensive.

<sup>5</sup> Note: 2000 was the first year in which survey respondents could select multiple racial/ethnicity categories. The jump in the Asian category in this year may represent residents who selected multiple categories rather than, for example, White Alone or Black Alone in years previous.



**Figure 7: Conservation Areas Restrict Marin City's Development**

*The shaded areas are parks or conservation areas where development is not allowed. Marin City is outlined with a dark line.*

Other pressures have halted development, too. According to one stakeholder, a proposed market rate residential development in Marin City during the last decade drew out much concern and opposition from some residents. This particular project was abandoned at least in part due to opposition from local high-income residents who wanted to protect their views. Now, the stakeholder says, few developers are looking to develop in the area. This is consistent with construction patterns: no new units have been constructed since 1998 (Dataquick 2014).

Adding to these development pressures, Marin County is notorious for having exclusionary policies and practices, including “strict zoning ordinances; restrictions on high-density, multi-family housing; insufficient outreach to non-English speakers; predatory lending practices; and negative stereotypes about low-income residents with Section 8 vouchers” (Green n.d.). In 2011, these came to a head when the county entered into a Voluntary Compliance Agreement with the

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) after “a routine audit showed the county wasn’t following fair housing and civil rights laws,” including not updating its main fair housing document “since 1994,” when it is “supposed to get refreshed every five years” (Rachel Dornhelm 2011). People of color in Marin County are largely concentrated in the Canal area of San Rafael and Marin City, which were both cited in the HUD agreement.

### Many Renters, Few Homeowners

Renters hold the vast majority in the area, at 78% in 2013 and historically hovering around 75% (Table 3). This is much higher than Marin County as a whole, where, in 2013, renters represented 37% of households.

The income distributions of renters and owners shows that renters skew towards lower incomes, while homeowners skew higher. This is consistent with the fact that over half the rental stock in Marin City is subsidized, as discussed below. However, the story is complex: 25% of renters earn more than \$50,000 (See Figure 8), while among owners, almost 40% earn less than \$50,000 (See Figure 9).

Note that the renter and owner data sets should not be compared directly; the renter and owner estimates for most income categories are not statistically significantly different, owing to the large margins of error. However, it is possible to see a trend in income distribution within each group from this data, and while that trend is roughly in line with the community narrative, the nuance is important.

**Table 3: Tenure in Marin City, 1980-2013**

Year	Rented		Owner-Occupied		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
1980	492	73%	178	27%	670
1990	592	72%	230	28%	822
2000	846	76%	274	24%	1120
2013	769	78%	219	22%	988

*Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2009-2013*



**Figure 8: Proportion of Renter and Owner Households By Income**

*Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey*

## Public Housing

As noted above, a large portion of the area’s rental housing stock consists of public housing units operated by the Marin Housing Authority. Golden Gate Village holds 292 units and housed 698 residents in 2010—nearly a third of the city’s population (Department of Housing and Urban Development 2014a). Marin City is also home to three additional subsidized housing projects. Combined with Golden Gate Village, Marin City has a total of 604 subsidized units—over half its rental stock—that house approximately 1277 residents (54% of the total population).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 4: Public and Subsidized Housing in Marin City**

	Units	Residents
Public Housing	292	698
Housing Choice Vouchers	123	256
Multi-Family Other	54	99

*Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (2014a)*

<sup>6</sup> Note that this figure is higher than the total of the figures in Table 4, since the number of residents housed at the Ridgeway Apartments and Doreatha Mitchell Apartments were not publicly available. The number of residents in these buildings were estimated based on the total number of subsidized units, a 94% occupancy rate, and a conservative estimate of 2 people per unit average. Data Source: HUD.

Stakeholders have many fears about losing this public housing stock. These are based on several factors. First, the public housing has unfriendly policies that have been systematically displacing long-term residents. For example, “eviction notices are given to residents who don’t pay their rent by the third of every month, when most recipients of social security haven’t received their payments yet” (Marin Grassroots 2014).

Another example concerns resident evictions, a problem that came to a head in a 2012 class action lawsuit in which tenants alleged “some tenants at the Golden Gate Village [public housing]...had their rent [attached with] charges such as maintenance, utility, late, and legal fees which were often disputed by the tenants or not permitted by their public housing lease,” including the costs of repairs that “were not caused by the resident” (Mark Prado 2012).

A third policy sought to encourage student school attendance by evicting tenants “if their children failed to attend school” (Nels Johnson 2013). The policy was proposed in 2013 but canceled in favor of a “voluntary program” to boost student enrollment (Nels Johnson 2013).

Maintenance is another major concern: at a May 2009 meeting of the Marin Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, one supervisor was “drowned out by jeers from about 25 Marin City residents, who said they believed supervisors had neglected repairs at the Golden Gate Village public housing complex as part of a

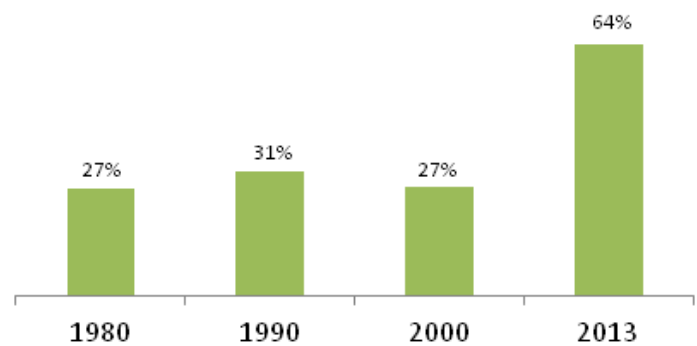
hidden plan to replace it with more expensive housing” (Rob Rogers and Jim Staats 2009). At that time, residents felt the housing authority had seriously neglected to make repairs, and the authority acknowledged that the complex needs “more than \$4 million in immediate repair and over \$15 million in other needs over time” (Rob Rogers and Jim Staats 2009).

In the early 2000s Golden Gate Village had been falling steadily in its maintenance inspection ratings, which are a rating from 0-100. A score below 60 is failing. Scores at the complex fell from 70.03 in 2003 to 59.35 in 2005 to 51.8 in 2006. However, after this it ticked back up to 58 in 2009 and 61 in 2010 (Department of Housing and Urban Development 2014b). Some repairs are happening: \$905,000 was allocated in 2012 for “kitchen improvements” and “energy efficiency measures” as part of the Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Department of Housing and Urban Development 2011). However, residents’ complaints indicate that a much larger scope of repairs is necessary. On a recent visit to the complex, trash was littered around the buildings and the driveways were in disrepair.

A resident of the complex and a long-time community organizer in the neighborhood described an inherent flaw in the building’s design: it sits on a hill on the other side of which is the Pacific Ocean. When the fog rolls in each morning, it tends to linger on the hill; mildew is therefore to be expected from such an arrangement, and the resident reports that it is widespread. Besides its role in these bad conditions, the placement of the building on the hill also adds to residents’ worries that it will be demolished in favor of private development, since the hill provides nice views of the Bay, and there is so little land to develop in Marin City.

## Housing Cost Burden

Median rent rose sharply during the 1980s and 1990s, from \$445 to \$1200 by 2000. Though it has held stable during the last decade, the percentage of rent-burdened households (those whose monthly housing costs exceed 35% of their gross monthly income) has risen to 64% in 2013 from 27% in 2000 (Figure 9). Given the stability in rent levels over this time, the rise in the number of households who are rent-burdened is likely due to the decrease in median income (to \$34,457 in 2013 from \$50,676 in 2000) and increase in unemployment (to 18% in 2013 from 4% in 2000). This is concerning in terms of displacement pressures on low-income renter households.



**Figure 9: Percent of Renters that are Housing Cost Burdened**

Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey 2009-2013

Note: Cost Burdened defined as paying more than 35% of income on housing costs.

**Table 5: Number of Housing Units Owned and Rented by Whites, African-Americans**

Year	White Owned	Black Owned	White Rented	Black Rented
1980	53	93	115	276
1990	143	74	227	317
2000	135	103	336	287
2013	91	107	317	310

Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; American Community Survey 2009-2013.

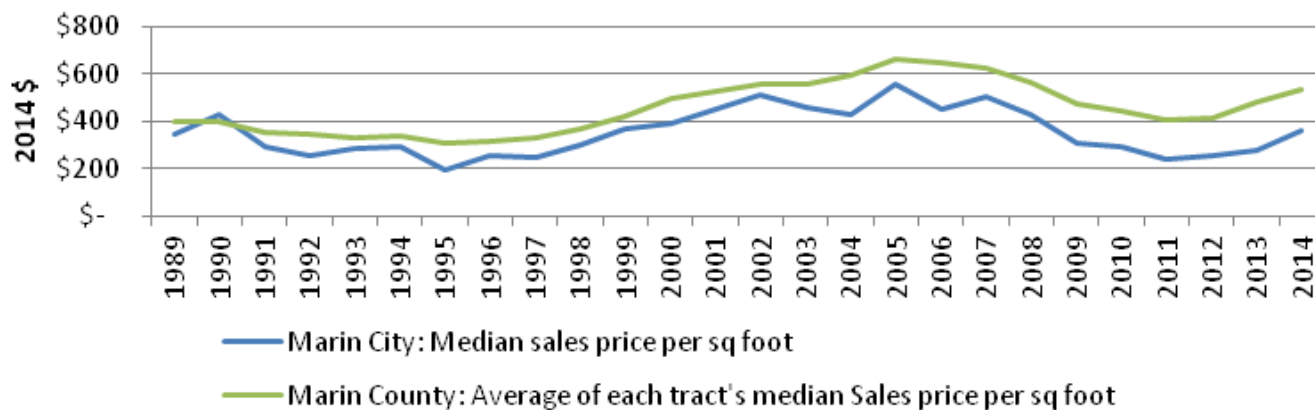
## Home Ownership

In the 1970s and 1980s, many single-family homes were developed in the hills of Marin City. Referred to as pole houses, they traditionally were owned by “older black families” (Marin Grassroots 2014). However, in recent years, the homes have turned over—sold to higher-income, white families, according to Marin Grassroots. Consistent with this change, the number of homes owned by African-Americans decreased between 1980 and 1990; however, it increased again in 2000 and is currently about the same as it was in 1980 (Table 5).

For low-income renters, purchasing a home has moved further out of reach: home sale price per-square-foot has followed the trends of the larger Marin County area, gradually increasing, with a slight dip from the recent housing crash (Figure 10). However, since this zip code encompasses Sausalito and Muir Beach,

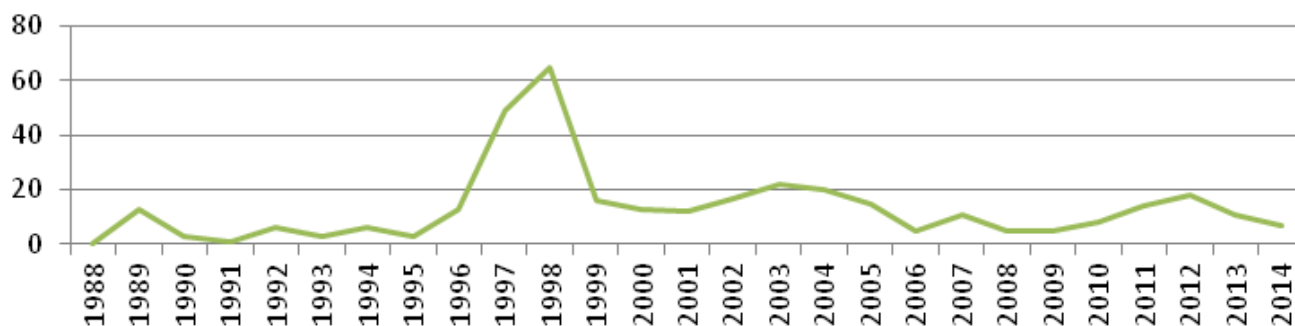
limited conclusions can be drawn about housing sale prices in Marin City alone. Interviews with local stakeholders, however, suggest that single-family units in this area do sell at high prices. Concurrent with these price increases, the percentage of mortgage-burdened households has risen steadily.

The number of homes sold has held steady in Marin City, except for a spike in the late 1990s, when a swath of townhomes came on the market (Figure 11, 12). A current resident remarked that ownership of these homes has been stable since their construction, with minimal turnover. These figures are not inconsistent with the trends in Marin County overall (Figure 12).



**Figure 10: Median home sales price per square foot, 1989-2014**

Source: Dataquick (2014)



**Figure 11: Number of Homes Sold: Marin City**

Source: Dataquick (2014)



**Figure 12: Townhomes in Marin City**

A late 1990s development of townhomes along Terrace Drive in the middle of Marin city. Photo: Mitchell Crispell.

One stakeholder in the area indicated that ownership units in Marin tend to be largely out of reach for low-income and even middle-income families, and, due to the high cost of home ownership here, the children of low-income families who have worked their way up the economic ladder tend to move to other cities in the Bay Area in order to buy a home.

Despite a lack of affordable homeownership options in Marin City, the community is wary of developing mid-ranged housing options due to concerns about displacing or marginalizing existing low-income residents. This is a current topic of concern for the community.

Several residents interviewed outside their homes—one in the hills and others in the center of the city, including one who has lived in her home since it was built in the late 1990s—remarked that the population has been stable in recent years, particularly in terms of the owners of townhomes and single-family homes on the hill.

## Commercial Changes

Even though it is a small, suburban community, Marin City is host to a large commercial center. The changes at this site are examples of commercial and cultural displacement.

In the 1950s, “residents developed a small-business hub in the neighborhood with black-owned stores and black service providers” (Marin Grassroots 2014). In 1980, residents “organized the Marin City Community Development Corporation, purchasing in the process the last remaining 42 acres of undeveloped Marin City property—the ‘bowl’—where a windswept flea market took place every weekend for over a decade” (Marin Grassroots 2014). But, following growth in the city’s housing supply, in 1996 the Gateway Shopping Center was developed on the site of the flea market, displacing it despite community protest (Marin Grassroots 2014).

The change meant a loss in the “entrepreneurship opportunities” the flea market provided to local residents, and though “some locally-owned small businesses received reduced rent in the new shopping center for approximately five years,” when it switched to market rent they were unable to afford to stay (Marin Grassroots 2014). The shopping center has struggled to retain tenants, according to a local resident stakeholder. Several stores have come and gone, including a Best Buy, and many of the stores are vacant; on a recent weekday, most of the shopping center’s vast parking lot was empty, though the Starbucks in the middle was crowded.



**Figure 13: The Gateway Shopping Center**

*The site of the former flea market, on the left side, is now the Gateway Shopping Center, a sea of parking spaces, empty big box stores, and a few successful businesses—Outback Steakhouse, CVS, Ross, Starbucks, etc. In the middle-right, the high-rise Golden Gate Village public housing buildings are visible, nestled into the hills. Just to the left, out of the frame, is Highway 101 and the bay.*

*Photo: Mitchell Crispell.*

The flea market had earned about \$1 million per year for the Marin City Community Services District (CSD), “which supported many after-school and recreational programs for local families” (Marin Grassroots 2014). Although a community benefits agreement with the new shopping center also included a small contribution (as a percent of revenue) towards the CSD, the shopping center has not made money and so, as a result of the redevelopment, the community lost both its flea market and the revenue it earned (Marin Grassroots 2014).

As a local community organization writes, “the shopping center was approved as a promising development that would create hundreds of jobs for residents, but the reality was very different as the limited number of jobs created were low-wage ones or demanded higher education degrees” (Marin Grassroots 2014). One public employee stakeholder remarked that, in an ideal world, the community would take ownership of the local shopping center such that it can develop better opportunities to serve the local residents—something along the lines of the former flea market.

## Conclusion

Over the last 30 years, Marin City has experienced gradual change: population has grown, the proportion of African-Americans has decreased, and median income and educational attainment have increased. Yet even with these changes, other aspects of the community—like homeownership—have remained more stable. Therefore, current concerns regarding displacement do not appear to be as high of a priority compared to other community issues, largely because of the unusually large core of public and subsidized housing that provide stable homes for many of the community’s low-income families.

But there is a constant fear that these public housing units will be lost, given the area’s high land value and views of the Bay, as well as recent unfriendly policies and deferred maintenance. Residents’ experience with the loss of the flea market—which, unlike the current shopping center, was successful and provided local residents economic opportunity—has primed them for the experience of displacement.

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## Appendix A: Ground-Truthing Analysis

To tell the story of gentrification and displacement in Marin City, we relied on data from the assessor's office, Census data on demographic and other change, several other secondary data sources, and qualitative policy reviews and interviews with key stakeholders. However, secondary data sources are incomplete, at best, and outright wrong, at worst. Therefore, we employ a “ground-truthing” methodology to verify the validity of these datasets. The ground-truthing, which is described in more detail below, essentially consists of walking from structure to structure on a few sample blocks and taking detailed notes on several variables, like number of units, state of maintenance, and more. With this data in hand, we can compare the story of gentrification the secondary data sources are telling with data obtained “on the ground,” while also increasing the richness of our narrative overall from the visual observations we make on the blocks.

In this memo, we discuss three sample blocks in the case study area. For each, we first present the secondary data sources—assessor and Census. We analyze this data to ascertain the nature and extent of recent neighborhood change on those blocks. Next, we describe the ground-truthing data and offer a similar analysis in terms of neighborhood change, but this time based solely on the ground-truthing. Finally, we reconcile the two data-sets: are they telling the same story? Where are the discrepancies? What do those discrepancies reveal?

### Methodology

For this analysis, we selected blocks from the case study area that seemed to have experienced recent change, based on secondary data (see Figure A1). We consulted with a community-based organization familiar with the area to choose blocks they thought were illustrative of the varying amount of change occurring in the area.

To prepare this memo, we consulted the following data sources:

**Assessor Data:** Using a dataset purchased from Dataquick, Inc., we accessed assessor and sales data from the County of Marin, which is current as of August 7, 2013.

**US Census Bureau:** We also consulted block-level decennial Census data from 2000 and 2010.

**Ground-truthing data:** This information comes from a visual observation of each structure on the block by walking around and noting the building's type (multi-family, single-family, business, etc), the number of units it appears to hold, and a long list of signs of recent investment, like permanent blinds and updated paint, as well as signs of perceptions of safety, like security cameras. The parcel numbers used to organize this data come from the Boundary Solutions data set, which is current as of May 1, 2013.

The ground-truthing methodology is based on one used by Hwang and Sampson (Hwang & Sampson, 2014), who used Google Street View images to analyze neighborhood change in Chicago. We created an observation tool based on their work and, with that in hand, conducted a pilot ground-truthing of several blocks in one of the case study areas (the Macarthur BART station area of Oakland, California). The research team revised the methodology based on this pilot; the final observation tool appears in the appendix.

On November 11, a researcher with the Center of Community Innovation performed the ground-truthing analysis in Marin City. The researcher walked the blocks there with Esther Williams, a lifelong resident, and John Young, director of a community organization and former resident, who provided perspective on the buildings and neighborhood.



**Figure A1: Map of Marin City with three Ground-Truthing blocks in green**

*Note: All of the blocks fall in Marin County Census Tract 1290.*

## Unmatched Parcels

The ground-truthing exercise is meant to provide an additional set of data to verify conclusions reached through analyzing assessor and Census data. Complicating this effort is that the data sets do not have the same set of parcels (Table A1). All data reported from the assessor data (Dataquick) includes all parcels in that set; likewise, all data reported from the ground-truthing data collection includes all parcels in that set (which is based on parcels from Boundary Solutions).

**Table A1: Parcel Mismatch Among Datasets**

Block	# assessor parcels matched to ground-truth parcels, of total assessor parcels	# ground-truth parcels matched to assessor parcels, of total ground-truth parcels
1000	31 / 54	32 / 33
1004	38 / 50	38 / 49
1005	33 / 34	34 / 34

## Ground-Truthing Overview

Marin City is small—one could probably walk the length of it in 30 minutes or so. With only one road in to the community from Highway 101, it can seem like a cookie-cutter suburb, and parts of it are, like the multi-

ple townhome developments and a standard shopping center in the middle. However, the area is also host to older, diverse homes in the hills and a significant stock of subsidized housing—604 units. Nearly half of these are in a collection of high-rise buildings called Golden Gate Village, which feature great views out on to Richardson Bay, a small inlet of the San Francisco Bay. Driving with Esther around these buildings, the researcher noticed a lot of trash, severely damaged driveways, and dirty, poorly maintained buildings.

People along the route commented that the area was mixed racially and had been stable over time. Throughout the tour of Marin City, Esther and John happened upon nearly a dozen people they knew. These interactions gave the impression that Marin City is not only small geographically, but socially; there seem to be rich social networks in the area.

## Block-By-Block Analysis

For two variables—land use and number of units—comparisons are made on a parcel-by-parcel basis; only parcels that appear in both data sets are used for this comparison (Table A4). Census data is not provided on a parcel level, and so includes all households surveyed by the Census. For each block, the data sets align well in terms of total number of units, number of units for each parcel, and land uses.

**Table A2: Sales History and Assessed Value of Residential Parcels**

Block	Median Year of Construction	Median Year of Last Sale	Percent Sold 2010-2013	Median Sale Price	Median Sale Price Per Square Foot	Assessed Value Per Square Foot (2013)
1000	1965	2005.5	30%	\$396,000	\$286	\$219
1004	1997	2001.5	20%	\$245,750	\$163	\$195
1005	1996	2000.5	26%	\$229,000	\$154	\$197
Marin City	1979	2002.5	21%	\$287,500	\$207	\$193
Marin County	1973	2003	22%	\$552,000	\$307	\$258

*Source: Dataquick, 2014*

**Table A3: Indicators of Neighborhood Change: Census Data/Demographics, 2000-2010**

Block	Population Change (Percent Change)	Average Household Size (Percent Change)	Percent Change in Percent White <sup>7</sup>	Percent Change in Percent Hispanic	Percent Change in Percent Black	Percent Change in Percent Family Households	Percent Change in Percent Rental Units
1000	-24%	1%	55%	1085%	-33%	-11%	-5%
1004	62.6%	33%	407%	1715%	-71%	21%	-15%
1005	-85.7%	-15%	16%	-55%	-11%	3%	-74%
Marin City	-6%	Not Available	-25%	88%	0%	11%	17%
Marin County	2%	1%	-7%	40%	-7%	1%	3%

Source: US Decennial Census 2000, 2010. Note: Marin City is defined as Marin County Census Tract 1290.

**Table A4: Summary of Parcel Matches and Primary Land Use**

Block	Primary Land Use, based on Ground-truthing data	Percent Land Use Matched	Total Number of Units on Block			Percent of Parcels whose Number of Units match between Assessor Data and Visual Observation
			Assessor Data – Dataquick	Visual Observations on Ground-truthing	Census Data: Total Housing Units – 2010	
1000	Single-family residential	74%	81	71	87	65%
1004	Single-family residential	97%	105	104	133	95%
1005	Single-family residential	88%	32	34	33	100%

Note: Percent Land Use Matched and Percent Units Matched take as their denominator only those parcels for which a land use or number of units was indicated by both assessor data and ground-truth data.

## Block 1000: Single Family Homes in the Hills

### Secondary Data

The homes on this block are older than those in Marin City and Marin County, but have the most recent median year of last sale of the three blocks surveyed and the surrounding area; 30% were sold between 2010-2013. These homes also post a high median sale price per square foot, at \$286, compared with \$207 in Marin City, though it is still lower than Marin County's \$307 figure. Together, these data points indicate recent turnover and investment.

Looking at Census data for the block, it actually lost population between 2000 and 2010, perhaps related to a decrease in the percent of family households. The block also experienced an increase in the percent white and a decrease in the percent black (the extraor-

dinarily high percentage increase in percent Hispanic is due to the proportion increasing from 0% to 5%). These changes, except for the population decrease, are consistent with gentrification.

### Ground-Truthing

This block, up a large hill, is host to older, bigger, more varied single-family homes than those in the "flats" area of Marin City (such as Blocks 1004 and 1005 below) as well as a 21-unit townhouse development and a large cooperative. Here, there were fewer people walking around.

<sup>7</sup> Note: For the blocks, this figure refers to all Whites of one race, including those that are Hispanic. For the Marin City and Marin County figures, it refers to Non-Hispanic Whites. The "Percent Change" figures all compare percentages over time; for example, in Marin City, the percent Non-Hispanic White in 2000 was 34%, which decreased to 25% in 2010—a -25% change.

Most parcels (64%) on this block had a level of maintenance of above average, or were new, while the rest were below average or poor. There were not more than a few signs of investment, disinvestment, nor perceptions of safety on this block. The only signs were: 21% of parcels have security alarm signage (some concern about safety) and 24% have fencing for aesthetic purposes (some investment). Public investment on the block included municipal lighting and bus stops.

### **Comparison**

The two data sets paint similar pictures of a block with recent investment and turnover.

### **Block 1004**

#### **Secondary Data**

This block was almost wholly created in the mid-1990s when the townhouse development was built; this is clear from the median year of construction being 1997. Since construction, the homes have showed only some turnover, with a median year of last sale of 2001.5 and 20% sold between 2010 and 2013. The homes here sell for less than those in the hills on Block 1000, with a median sale price per square foot of \$163. Between 2000 and 2010, the block experienced population growth—likely related to an increase in the average household size, which may be related to a dramatic increase in the percent Hispanic, who tend to have larger households—and percent white increased while percent black decreased. So even though there has been only partial change in the last few years, in the ten years prior to that, there was a lot of demographic change.

#### **Ground-Truthing**

This block consisted almost entirely of single-family-attached homes developed in the 1990s. They were in good shape, well maintained and with attractive landscaping. Most homes had signage indicating security systems—Esther reported there have been some robberies—though the area felt very safe. The streets

are pleasant, with minimal vehicle traffic and a little activity even on a Tuesday morning; there was always someone walking by.

Residents on the street were diverse racially and in terms of age. Passing residents commented that the blocks have been pretty stable in terms of ownership changes; one resident had lived in her home since it was built and said her neighbors had only changed over once in that nearly-20 year period.

In the center of Block 1004 there is a park with a basketball court and open space. It did not seem well-maintained. On the rest of the block there is a church and a large apartment/townhouse complex.

A challenge of the groundtruthing methodology on this block was that most of the homes were nearly identical—in design, but also in terms of upkeep, security signage, etc. These features of the homes are likely not a result of individual residents' investment or disinvestment but of the relative newness of the development overall and the homogeneity of the block. In its sameness, the usual signs of gentrification are difficult to spot.

70% of parcels had an above average level of maintenance, while the rest were average with just one below average. There were almost no signs of investment nor disinvestment on this block. In terms of perception of safety, 41% of parcels had security alarm signage; however, this may be less of an indication of a concern around safety and more related to the townhomes coming standard with security features. The only public investment on the street was municipal lighting.

### **Comparison**

The data sets paint similar pictures: a block that has experienced only some recent change and is mostly stable. However, the Census data is intriguing and unexplained by the ground-truthing: how did the white and Hispanic population increase so much, if the homes truly did not change ownership much since they were built? Perhaps this change mostly happened in the rental housing stock on the block.

## Block 1005

### Secondary Data

The assessor data tells a nearly identical story for this block as it did for Block 1004: median year of construction in the mid-90s, median year of last sale a few years later, and 26% sold between 2010-2013, at similar prices as Block 1004.

Census data, on the other hand, is very different than on Block 1004. Population decreased here between 2000-2010, and the percent white increased only slightly, while percent Hispanic decreased instead of increasing. Perhaps these points are different than on Block 1004 because this block does not have a large rental building like Block 1004 does.

### Ground-Truthing:

See the above overview for Block 1004; it applies to this block, too.

Most parcels on this block had an average level of maintenance (66%) with the rest split evenly between above average and below average levels. There are no signs of investment. In terms of disinvestment, 26% of parcels had peeling or fading paint. 50% had security alarm signage, which is likely related to this being standard, as on Block 1004. The only public investment was municipal lighting.

## Comparison

As with Block 1004, the assessor and ground-truthing data are aligned, but the demographic change does not tell a clear story.

### Conclusion

The secondary data sets and ground-truthing data tell the same basic stories for each block. On one block, 1004, all three data sets are needed to fully understand the changes: assessor data and ground-truthing data together show the stability in owner-occupied housing, while the Census data draws attention to the large demographic shifts; given the assessor data, these are likely explained by changes in the residents of the rental units on the block. Absent any of these three sources, the picture would be incomplete.

In terms of comparing data sets, unmatched parcels was not a major concern. Parcels generally matched in terms of land uses and number of units, and the total number of units was fairly consistent across three data sources.

Finally, the quality and age of buildings was comparably assessed by both methods, while perception of safety and public investment cannot be ascertained from the secondary data sources but only from ground-truthing. The limited number of signs of ethnicity across all blocks made it difficult to ground-truth demographic data.

## WORKSHEET: Visual Demonstration of Neighborhood Change

Instructions: Physically walk predetermined neighborhood blocks and note evidence of deterioration or improvement using Section One. Parcel or building specific information should be collected in Section Two. Each block should be named according to its main corridor (indicated on your map as the street with parcels on both sides). Bring a camera to take a photograph of each building.

\*One whole worksheet should be completed for each block section

Block Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Observation date and time : \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Start \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_ AM/PM End \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

### SECTION ONE: Block Overview and initial impressions

1. The primary land use for the block face is:

- ☐ Residential
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Institutional (school, hospital, churches):
- ☐ Industrial
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Public investment + existing public infrastructure:

- ☐ transit stops
- ☐ municipal street lighting
- ☐ on street residential permit parking
- ☐ street furniture (including parklets)
- ☐ bike racks
- ☐ public trash cans
- ☐ parking pay machines
- ☐ newly paved streets
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

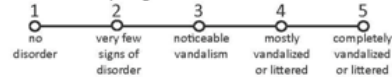
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe any visible people, noting race or ethnicity, age, number, and activities they might be engaged in:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The # of signs discouraging disorder such as neighborhood watch, anti-littering/loitering/drug use/vandalism/graffiti: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Physical disorder such as garbage, litter, graffiti, or vandalism by degree of observations:



6. Please describe indicators of international or immigrant presence (note ethnicity, signs in a foreign language, or locally-owned foreign/ethnic business).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Additional notes on block overview: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION TWO: Block/Parcel Data

\*located on the following pages

Using your pre-printed parcel map, carefully walk the block and record your observations for each building. Allow for ~1.5 hours of field time. Be sure to take a photograph of each building for comparison with past year data later. 📷

APN/Parcel # \_\_\_\_\_ Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. Does the building appear to be well-maintained?



2. The # of units the structure appears to have: \_\_\_\_\_

The # mailboxes \_\_\_\_\_  
The # doorbells \_\_\_\_\_

3. The # vehicles off-street vehicles present \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ no off-street parking
- ☐ existing driveway or parking lot
- ☐ existing garage

4. Notes on visible people, building, and outdoor space; incl. implied information about household size and composition:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Building type and units:

- ☐ Multi-family - apartment building
- ☐ Multi-family - house
- ☐ Single family - attached
- ☐ Single family - detached
- ☐ Mixed use
- ☐ Public or subsidized project housing
- ☐ Unknown or other

6. Other building/occupant characteristics:

- ☐ Abandoned
- ☐ For Sale sign
- ☐ For Rent sign
- ☐ Blinds or curtains - permanent
- ☐ Blinds or curtains - temporary
- ☐ Cracked windows
- ☐ Bars on windows
- ☐ Boarded windows
- ☐ Dirty windows
- ☐ Metal security door
- ☐ Vegetable garden
- ☐ New addition
- ☐ New or maintained paint
- ☐ New or updated front door
- ☐ Ongoing renovation/construction
- ☐ Fencing (check all that apply):  
New \_\_\_\_\_ Old \_\_\_\_\_ For safety \_\_\_\_\_ For aesthetics \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Security alarm signage
- ☐ CCTV/Security cameras
- ☐ Children/toys visible
- ☐ Peeling/fading paint
- ☐ Spraypaint/graffiti
- ☐ Litter or debris
- ☐ Beware of Dog, Private, No Trespassing signs
- ☐ Signs of ethnicity

Figure A2: Ground-truthing data collection worksheet