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West Side Study

Clint McManus

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West Side Study

Abstract

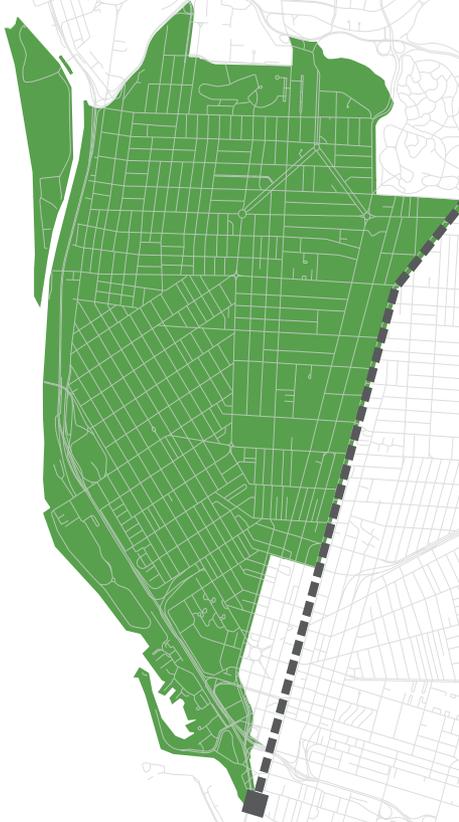
Buffalo, New York is no stranger to spatial segregation along racial and economic lines. Conventional wisdom throughout the region traces this historic divide along the length of Main Street, a north-south corridor. It is widely believed that Buffalo's affluent neighborhoods sit to the west, with low-income neighborhoods in the east. While Main Street serves as an easy point of reference, Buffalo's demographics are not binary. Even dividing the city into quarters is revealing, as shown in the figures on this page. The story of the West Side is particularly complex. This section of the city is much more diverse than North or South Buffalo, challenging the myth that the West Side is mostly White. Additionally, though the West Side boasts the highest rate of educational attainment, its poverty rate nearly mirrors the East Side, and its unemployment rate remains about the same as North and South Buffalo. This report explores and visualizes the demographic story of the West Side through data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. See the last page for data definitions and sources.

Keywords

Buffalo, Data/Demographics/History, Demographics and Data, Report, Other, PDF

West Side Study

A review of demographics
in Buffalo, New York



Clint McManus, October 2016



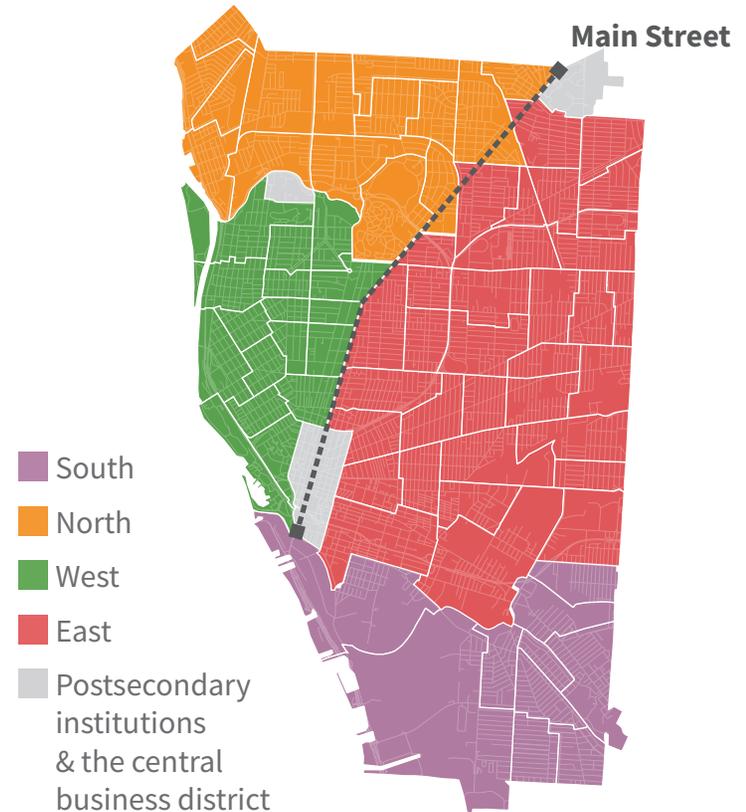
Buffalo Is Not Binary

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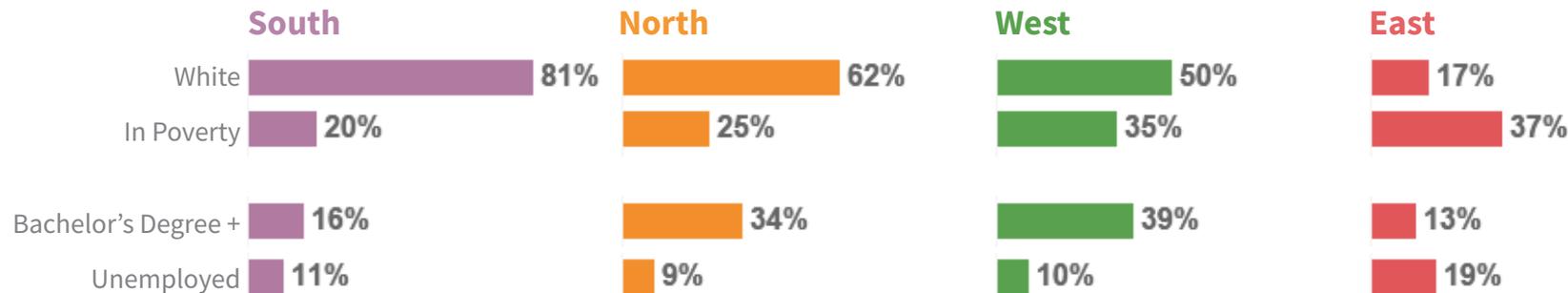
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City of Buffalo

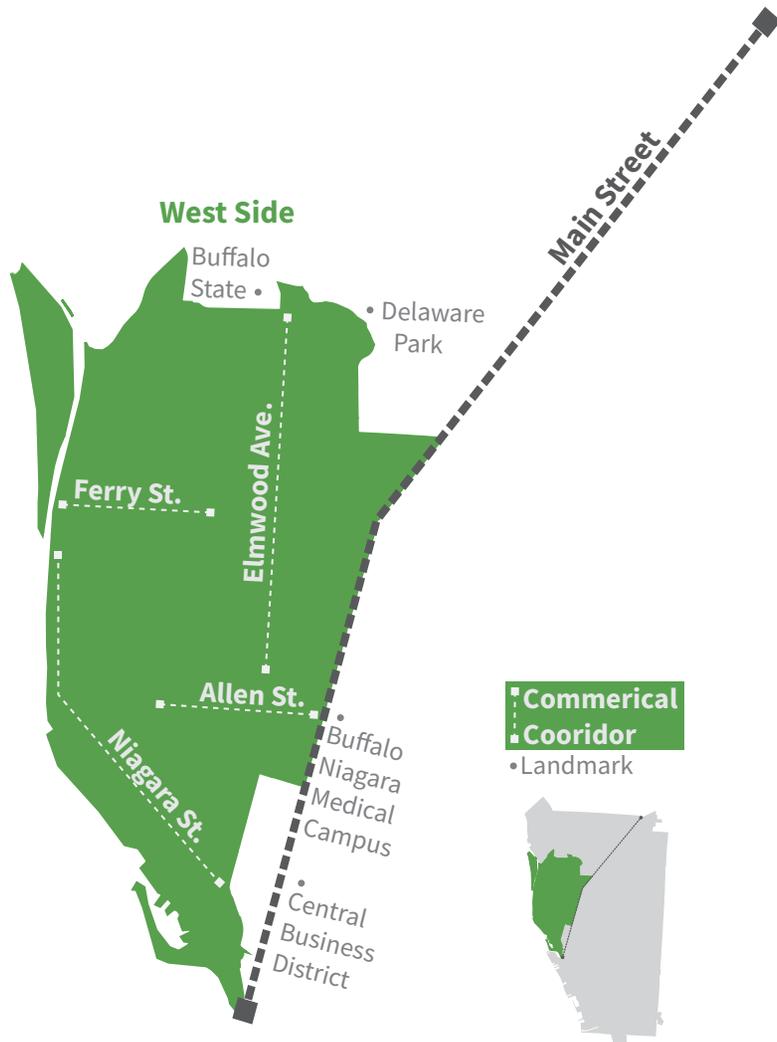


Socioeconomic Indicators

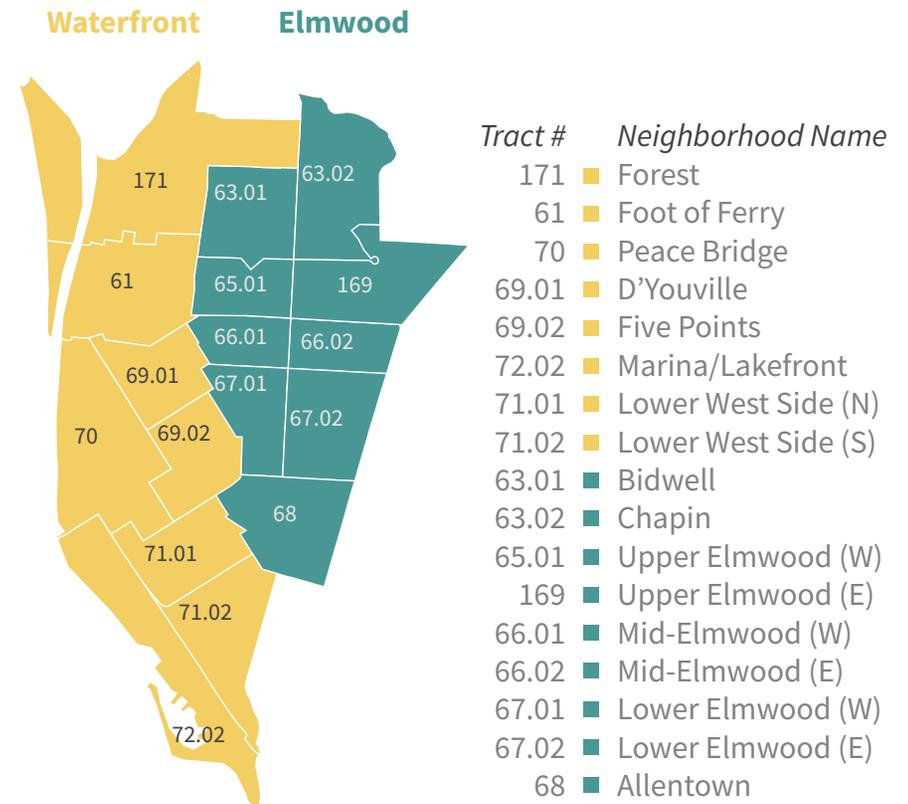


Buffalo's West Side

The neighborhoods of the West Side are often considered the pioneers of Buffalo's renaissance. They span from the Scajaquada Creek in the north, to the central business district in the south. Like walkable, amenity-rich neighborhoods across the urban United States, the West Side has benefited from rising property values and a growing small business scene while risking displacement of residents that cannot afford the ballooning cost of living.



Though commonly grouped as one, the neighborhoods of the West Side have a distinct dividing line that runs north and south. For the purpose of this report, the 17 Census Tracts of the West Side have been grouped as two separate neighborhoods. The tracts near Lake Erie and the Niagara River sit on one side – the Waterfront. These include the area surrounding Buffalo State College and D’Youville University with Niagara Street, Grant Street and portions of Ferry Street as main commercial corridors. To the east, the Elmwood tracts are bordered by Main Street. Revolving around Elmwood Avenue and Allen Street, these neighborhoods include Bidwell and Chapin Parkways and are near the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and Delaware Park.



Economic Indicators

The tracts of the Waterfront and Elmwood are split by more than an invisible north-south line. Census data show an economic divide as well (as seen in the figures below).

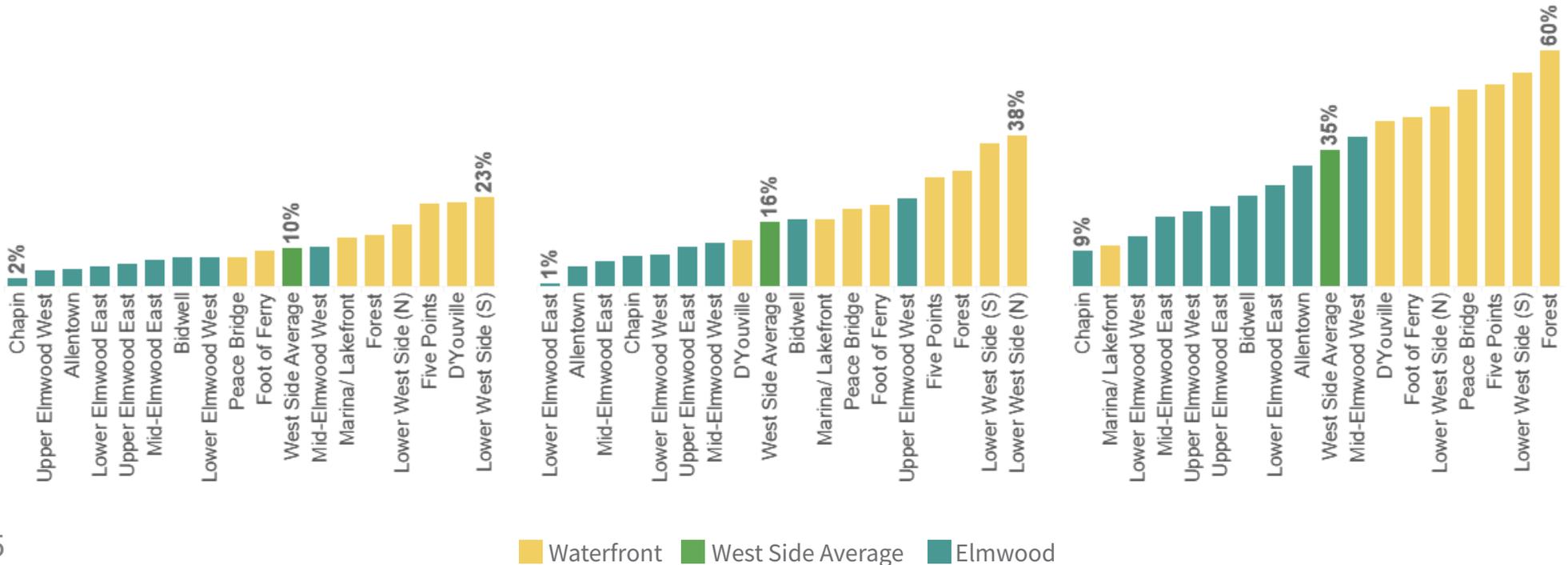
Basic measures of poverty show critical differences between the Census tracts of Elmwood and the Waterfront. All but one Waterfront tract has a higher poverty rate than the West Side average. On the other side of the coin, only one Elmwood tract has a higher poverty rate. In other words, 88% of Waterfront tracts have higher rates of poverty.

The Census numbers reveal similar findings for households that receive SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits and households that are headed by single mothers. Around 88% of Waterfront tracts have higher rates of single mother-headed households than the West Side average. Meanwhile, 75% of Waterfront tracts have a higher unemployment rate.

Unemployed

Single Mother Households

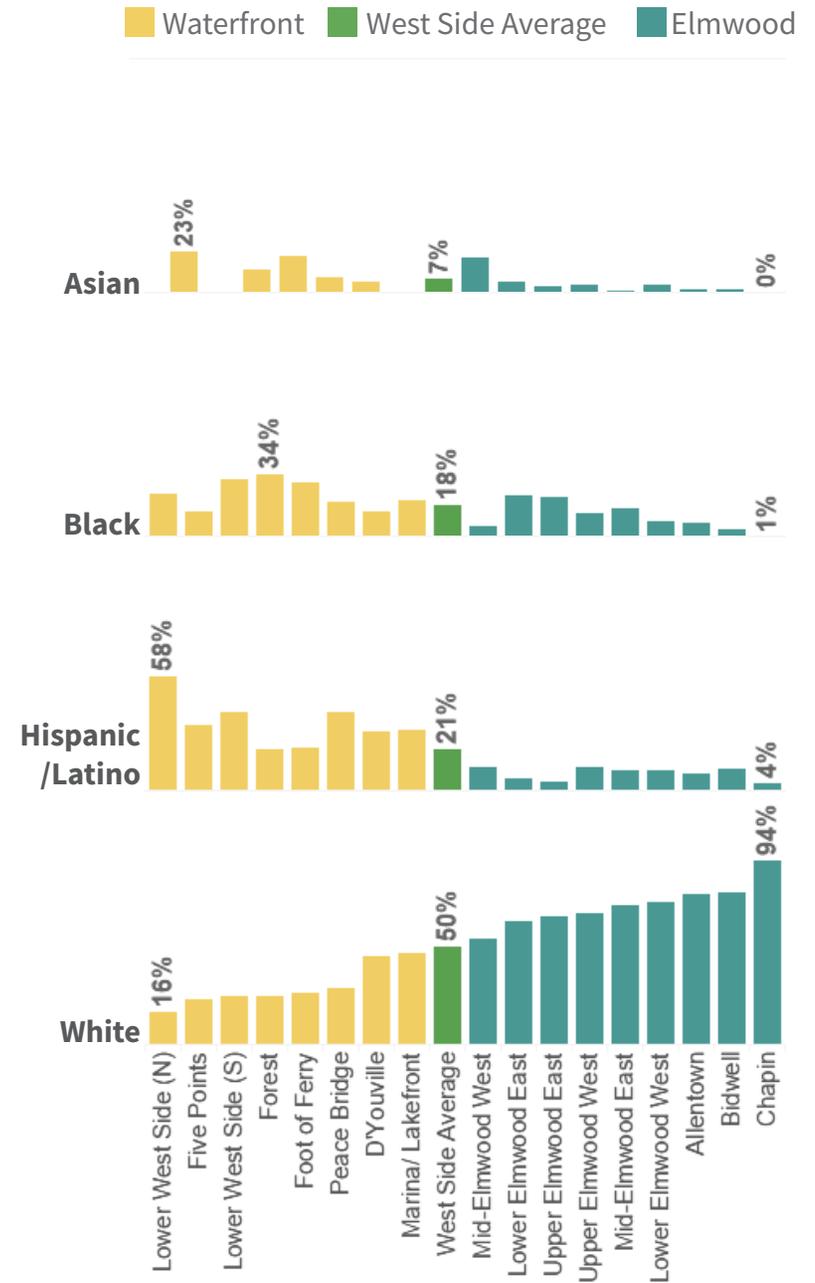
In Poverty



Racial Makeup

Waterfront tracts and Elmwood tracts also have distinct racial compositions (as seen in the figures on this page). In all nine Elmwood tracts, the portion of White residents is higher than that of the entire West Side. All nine Elmwood tracts also have a lower portion of Hispanic/Latino residents. Conversely, all eight Waterfront tracts have a lower portion of White residents and a higher portion of Hispanic/Latino residents than the West Side as a whole.

Although the Black and Asian populations are not as clearly split, there is still a higher percentage of Black and Asian residents in the Waterfront. In total, 25% of Waterfront residents are Black and 10% are Asian compared to 12% and 5% (respectively) in Elmwood.

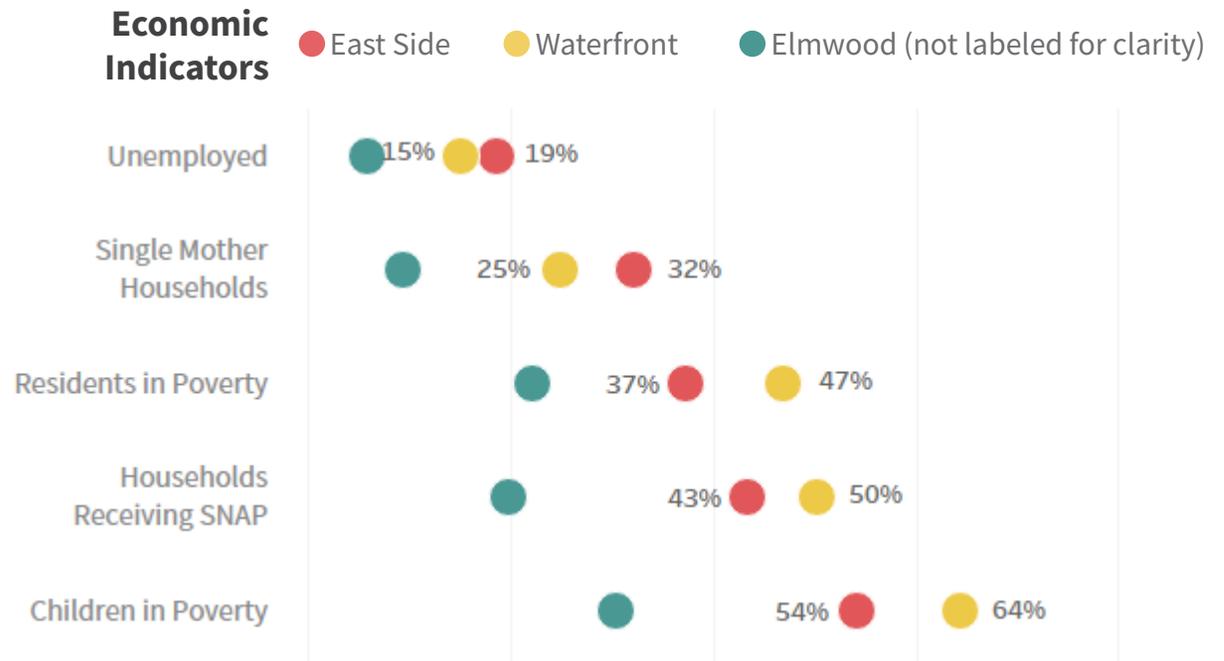
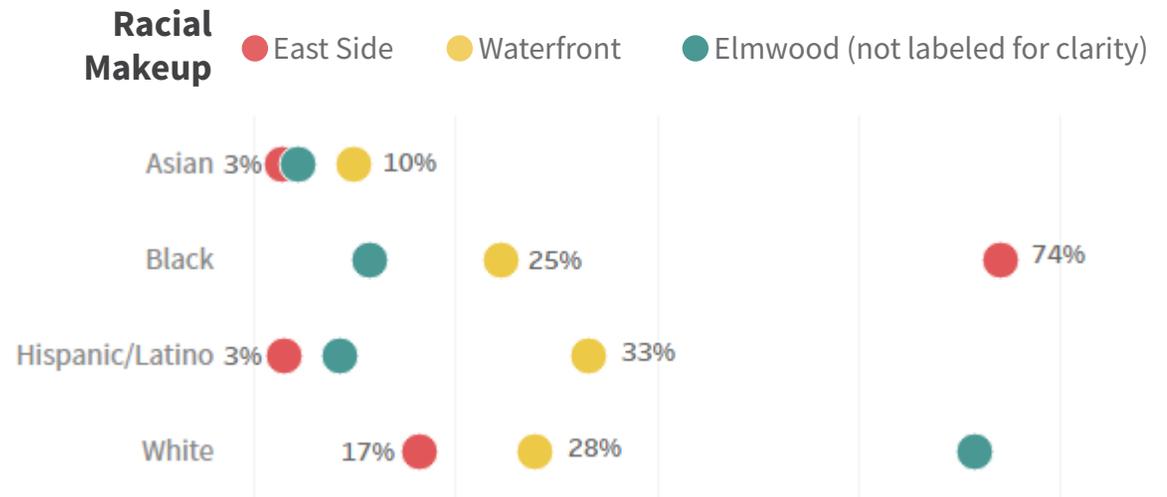


East-West Comparison

This deeper dive into the demographics of West Side Census tracts also puts Buffalo’s East-West conventional wisdom to the test. By teasing apart the differences within the West Side, we can compare both Elmwood and the Waterfront to the East Side.

In terms of race and ethnicity, three distinct types of populations emerge. As a group, Waterfront tracts are much more diverse than both Elmwood and the East Side, with the highest percentage of Asian and Hispanic/Latino residents. The Waterfront also has the second highest percentages of Black and White residents by far. On the other hand, the East Side and Elmwood both have high concentrations of one racial group – Black residents on the East Side and White residents in Elmwood.

When it comes to economic indicators, Elmwood tracts fare best in every category. However, when comparing the East Side with the Waterfront, neither is definitively in better economic shape than the other. While unemployment rates and the percentage of single mother households are lower in the Waterfront, SNAP enrollment, and poverty are lower on the East Side.



Report analysis and design by Clint McManus using American FactFinder, Tableau, Adobe InDesign and Adobe Illustrator.

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2014 5-year estimates).

Census Tracts Shapefile Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Downloaded from census.gov/geo/maps-data/.

Roads Shapefile Source: Copyrighted by HERE North America LLC © 2013 and licensed to the New York State Office of Information Technology Services. Downloaded from [NY.GIS.GOV](https://nygis.gov/).

Map Projection: NAD 1983 New York State Plane West

Census Tracts:

North 45, 46.01, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52.01, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58.01, 58.02, 59

East 14, 02, 15, 16, 17, 23, 24, 25.02, 27.02, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33.01, 33.02, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39.01, 40.01, 41, 42, 43, 44.01, 44.02, 47, 52.02, 166, 168, 170

South 1.1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 163, 164, 167

West (Waterfront) 61, 62.01, 63.01, 63.02, 65.01, 66.01, 66.02, 67.01, 67.02, 68, 69.01, 69.02, 70, 71.01, 71.02, 72.02, 169, 171

West (Elmwood) 63.01, 63.02, 65.01, 66.01, 66.02, 67.01, 67.02, 68, 69.01, 69.02, 70, 71.01, 71.02, 72.02, 169

Data definitions:

Race/Ethnicity: All race/ethnicity categories are determined by the U.S. Census Bureau and self-reported by American Community Survey respondents. In this report, all Asian, Black and White respondents do not consider themselves of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.

Unemployed: Individual age 16 or older in the civilian labor force who (1) was neither “at work” nor “with a job, but not at work” during the current week, and (2) was actively seeking work for the last 4 weeks, and (3) was available to start a job.

In Poverty: A person who lives in a household that does not meet the U.S. Census Bureau poverty threshold for their household size in the last 12 months.

In Poverty (children): A person under the age of 18 who lives in a household that does not meet the U.S. Census Bureau poverty threshold for their household size in the last 12 months.

Bachelor’s Degree +: Individual age 25 or older with a bachelor’s degree, a graduate degree (including a doctorate), or a professional degree.

Households receiving SNAP: One or more of current household members received SNAP benefits during the last 12 months.

Single mother households: Households with children in which the primary householder is a single mother with no husband present.