



# Water Crisis I

## Introduction

The town of Brown Trout Bay, outside of Riverbend City, is experiencing a crisis with the city's water supply. You are a social worker with the state department of health, and have been asked to travel to Brown Trout Bay and speak to residents about their experience in order to gather information on how best to help them.

## Newspaper Article

Review the article to learn more about the water crisis.

**The Riverbend City Courier**

---

### WATER CRISIS IN BROWN TROUT BAY DEEPENS

---

by Rebecca Collins

BROWN TROUT BAY - For a fifth week, the city of Brown Trout Bay has been rocked by concerns about the safety of the city's drinking water. The community of 3,000, located fifty miles from Riverbend City, is undergoing a public health crisis apparently linked to elevated levels of lead and other pollutant's in the city's water supply.

"This is a serious matter, and I will not rest until the people of Brown Trout Bay can drink their tapwater without fear," said Mayor Brian Nicollet, adding "and when the dust settles, we're going to get to the bottom of this."

Mayor Nicollet's comments come as public pressure on him increases to reinstate a previous deal under which Brown Trout Bay bought water from Riverbend City. Late last year, in a cost-saving move, Nicollet terminated that deal and Brown Trout Bay began drawing its municipal water from the nearby Du Chien River. The move was decried by environmentalists at the time, who noted that the Du Chien River had long been considered to be unacceptably polluted by contaminants from industrial facilities upstream. Nicollet, however, insisted that water quality had improved and that the city's water treatment plant, idled since the 1970s, would be adequate to mitigate what remained.

Within weeks of the water switchover, Brown Trout Bay residents began complaining of unpleasant smells and tastes, as well as discolored or cloudy water. City officials dismissed their concerns as "aesthetic," and insisted that the water posed no risk to public health. Quality Control officers at Brown Trout Bay's WeissCo corn processing plant, one of the city's largest employers, reported problems with the city water being supplied to the plant for industrial use. Their concerns were similarly dismissed at the time.

Shortly afterwards, pediatricians at Brown Trout Bay Memorial Community Hospital noted an alarming spike in Brown Trout Bay residents exhibiting symptoms of prolonged lead exposure. These symptoms include headaches, rashes, and hair loss. A press conference on the matter provoked a firestorm of public outcry. Brown Trout Bay city officials insisted that if lead levels in the water were elevated, it was just a seasonal variation.

Water samples from Brown Trout Bay taps have continued to show elevated lead levels, often reaching as high as 113 parts per billion. The highest acceptable value is 15 parts per billion. Residents of Brown Trout Bay have, when possible, avoided the city water supply. "It's nothing but bottled water for me and my kids now," said Sarah Humrickhouse, 39. "Even for my cat. City tapwater is poison right now."

Although pressure is mounting on Mayor Fitch to reinstate the city's water deal with Riverbend City, regardless of cost, there are concerns that such a move would have no benefit. "It's gone much further than just switching the water back," said Ellen Gormican, a professor of civil engineering at Beck University. "The leading theory for what's going on here is that the water from the Du Chien is so corrosive that it's leeching lead out of the very old pipe system in Brown Trout Bay. Once that damage to the pipes is done, it's done, and those pipes are going to continue to leech lead into any water that passes through them, no matter where it came from."

The office of the Governor has promised an investigation and assistance from the state department of health.

## City Plan

Talk to Brown Trout Bay community members to hear how the water crisis is affecting them.

**Gina Beyer, 28**, Brown Trout Bay

"I came in here to buy bottled water, and the store's completely sold out. This is ridiculous! Somebody needs to do something. Nobody I know is letting their kids drink city water now. My daughter's hair was falling out! I don't know what I'm going to do about the bottled water being sold out. I don't think my car will make it to Riverbend City to go to the store there. I can't just let my kids drink soda or whatever all the time. That's just trading one kind of poison for another. I don't know, I heard that if you boil the city water, that gets rid of the bad stuff. I just don't know what to do."

**Julia Sabado, 68**, Brown Trout Bay

"This is terrible. I just don't know what I'm going to do. The water's bad, but my son drives bottled water down from Riverbend City every few days, and I drink that. But I have other problems. I retired earlier this year, and my plan was to sell my house and use the money to pay off my debts and move to a retirement community in Florida. But no one wants to buy a house in Brown Trout Bay now that the water is full of lead! No young family wants to move here. I called my son to talk to him about it the other day and just cried for 20 minutes. I'm stuck in a worthless house with water I can't drink and there's nothing I can do about it."

**Lloyd King, 51**, Brown Trout Bay

"I'll tell you what. Coming in to town to buy bottled water every couple of days is enough of a hassle, especially when you get here and find out they're all sold out. But that ain't even the biggest problem I've got. I had a good deal set up selling beef directly to a couple of fancy butcher shops in Riverbend, for customers who wanted to pay a lot of money for beef that was raised nearby. But both of them have called me and told me that their customers are really nervous now about buying meat from cattle that come from near Brown Trout Bay. Nothing I can say can change their mind. I'm going to have to find another place to sell beef, and I know it ain't going to be for anything near the price. Some days I feel like just sitting down and drinking a bunch of Brown Trout Bay tap water, just to make it all go away."

**Carlos Vega, 9, and Marisa Vega, 31**, Brown Trout Bay

**Carlos:** "I keep getting this rash and it's really itchy and mom takes me to the doctor and they give us this slimy stuff to put on the rash and it helps a little but then it comes back. I really don't like it."

**Marisa:** "I don't want to scare my son, but I am very concerned about this. My child is sick! What mother wouldn't be worried when her son doesn't stop breaking out in a horrible rash? But there's more than that. Carlos is a good student, but he is having a lot of trouble in school since this all started. He has trouble concentrating when he is in

class because of his rash. And many nights he can't sleep because the rash is bothering him so much... and then the next day he can't pay attention in school and keeps acting out because he's so tired. This water is ruining our lives.

**Sonny Campbell, 48**, Brown Trout Bay

"I've had about enough of this horse manure. It's a load of garbage every time you turn on the TV. The mayor, the governor, all saying "Oh, we're going to help the people of Brown Trout Bay" and then nothing happens. We keep having sewage that gives you headaches coming out of our taps and there's no money to fix it, in the meantime the state kicks in millions of dollars for a performing arts center in Riverbend City. Really lets you know who matters. I'll tell you what. They can only push us so far. If there's enough of us left alive at the next election, we're gonna vote every one of those bastards out of office. Or worse. I see my sons's hair falling out in clumps, I start thinking about when it gets to be time for people to grab their guns and rise up. And I guarantee you I ain't the only one thinking this way."

## Conclusion

Having spoken to some people in Brown Trout Bay who are being affected by the water crisis, what are your initial observations? In particular, which which theoretical frameworks do you think seem appropriate to apply at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels?

Your response will appear in the Leadership Profile.

## Credits

Subject Matter Expert:

**Ruth Ahlman**

Media Instructional Design:

**Keith Pille**

Instructional Design:

**Aaron Keshner**

Interactive Design:

**Anthony Willow**

Project Manager:

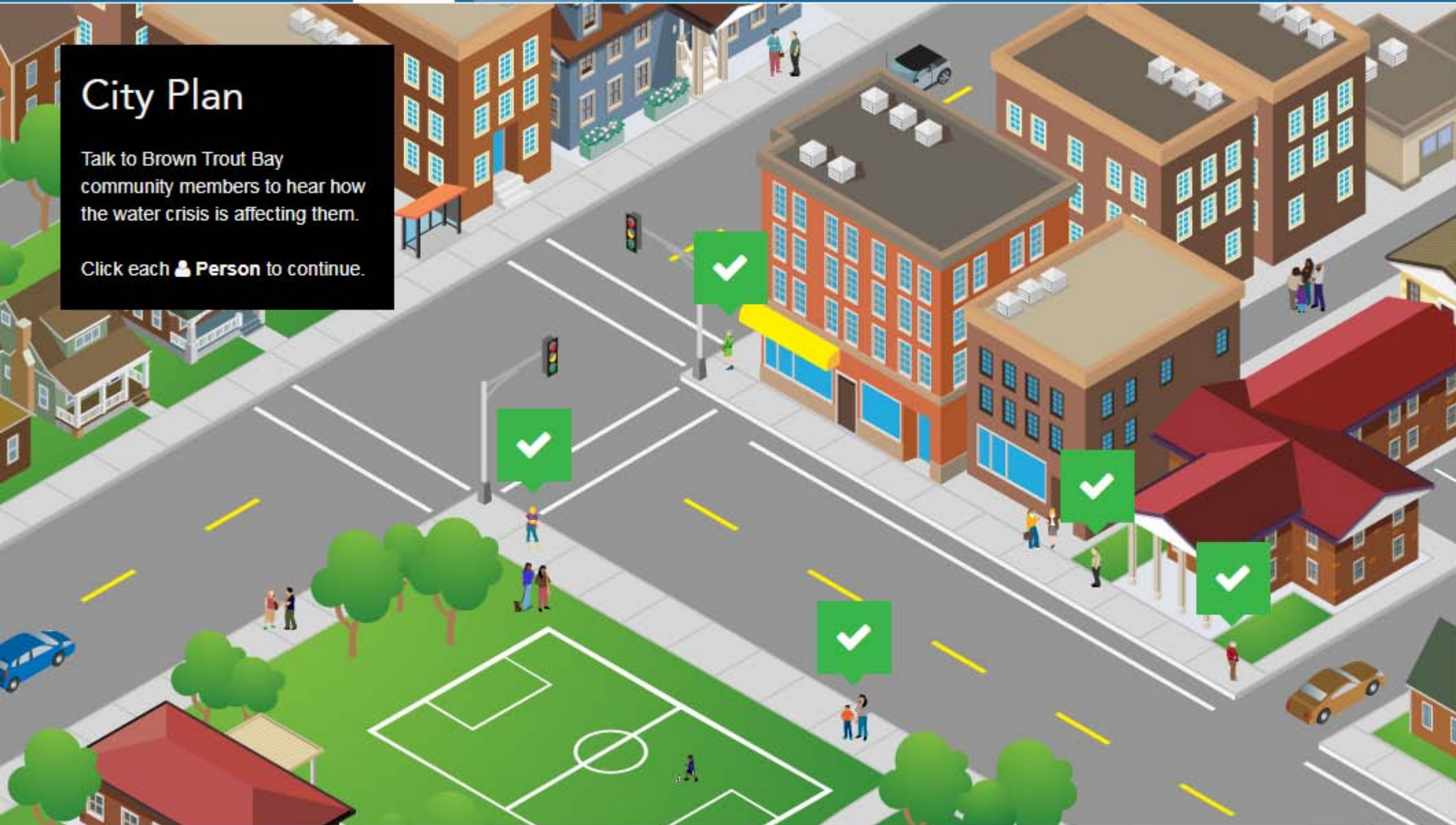
**Catherine Baumgartner, Marc Ashmore**

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>)

## City Plan

Talk to Brown Trout Bay community members to hear how the water crisis is affecting them.


Click each  **Person** to continue.



Continue to  
[Conclusion](#) 

# City Plan

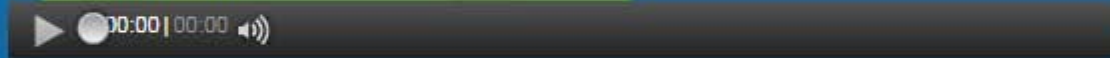
Talk to Brown Trout Bay community members to hear how the water crisis is affecting them.

Click each  **Person** to connect.

Julia Sabado



**Julia Sabado, 68**  
Brown Trout Bay



[View Transcript](#)



Continue to  
**Conclusion** 