

Eviction Data Analysis

City of Danville

VERP Planning Grant

2021



HousingForward
VIRGINIA



About this study

Developing an effective eviction prevention program means intervening with evictions prior to the court system's traditional intervention and assisting households at likely risk of eviction from experiencing the process to begin with. A successful eviction reduction program takes the place of the court process and assists both the tenant and the landlord in remedying a dispute early in the process. In order to be able to structure a program in this way, the City of Danville needs to know detailed information about the causes, locations and likelihood of eviction. An eviction prevention program must be proactive. This Study aims to provide the City with the information needed to build such a pro-active, preventative intervention.

About HousingForward Virginia

This report was written by HousingForward Virginia and is compiled of data developed by Connor White. HousingForward Virginia is Commonwealth's trusted resource for affordable housing data and actionable insights. Advocates, planners, developers, and mission-aligned organizations rely on us to help them build connections and advance their work. With our support, they're able to better identify needs, influence decision makers, and ultimately increase access to affordable housing for all.

HousingForward Virginia is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Richmond, Virginia. For more information, visit: housingforwardva.org

Defining Eviction

When a Virginia landlord files an eviction suit with a court (an *unlawful detainer*) for an alleged lease violation, they are seeking judgement from the court to be permitted to evict a tenant (an *eviction judgement*). This eviction judgement is what allows a formal, legal eviction of a tenant to take place, sometimes prompting a sheriff's deputy to ultimately physically remove the tenant from the housing unit.¹

But *eviction* as we often discuss it, is a much broader set of circumstances. An eviction can mean a household that leaves a unit once a landlord files an unlawful detainer with the court, knowing that their chances are slim that they will be granted the right to stay by the courts. An eviction can happen when a household leaves the unit ahead of the sheriff's removal, to avoid that painful experience. An eviction can happen before a landlord even files with the courts, if a tenant acts preventatively to avoid a court case appearing on their record.

What this means is that the measurement of eviction is challenging. We can only measure what we can see in the data and that is what proceeds through the courts. Because of this, the eviction rates we cite are likely a vast underestimate of actual evictions.

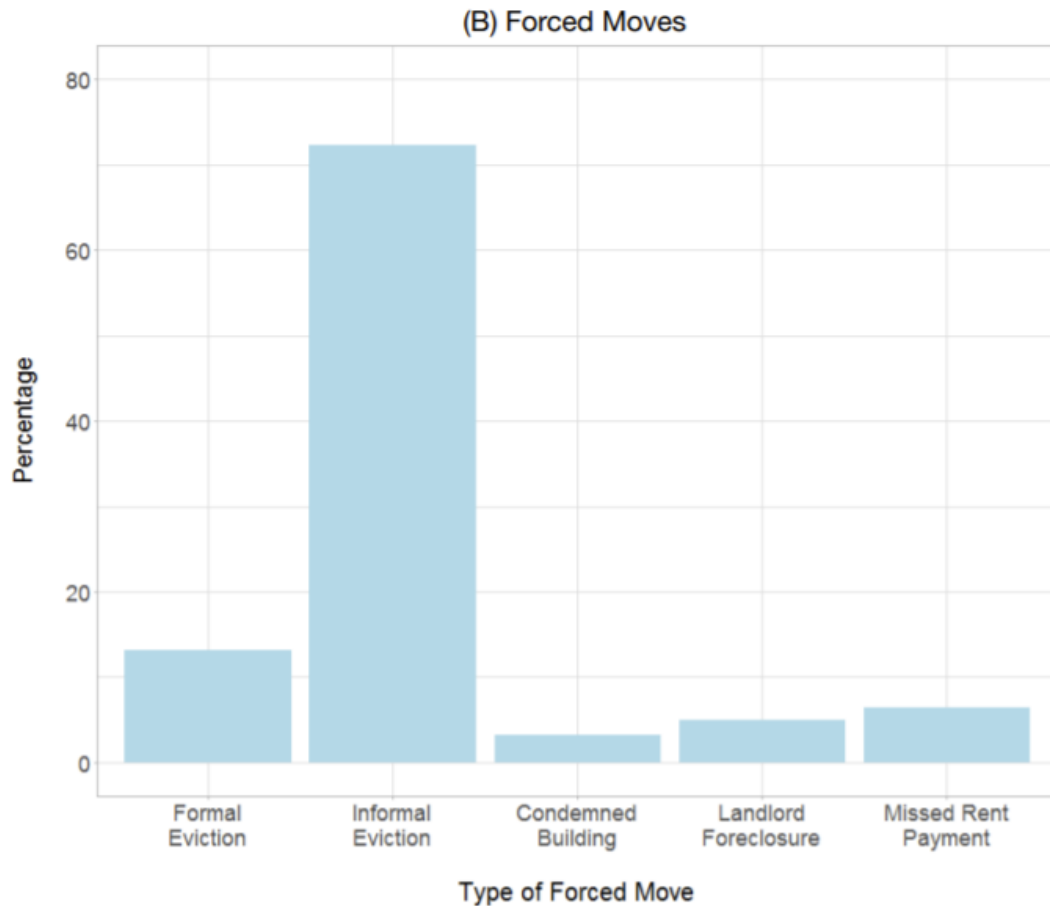
Matthew Desmond and Ashley Gromis research and reference this phenomenon in their 2021 article *Estimating the Prevalence of Eviction in the United States: New Data from the 2017 American Housing Survey* which includes the following chart²:

¹ It's important to note that not all landlords file eviction cases with the intent of evicting. Filing cases can be a property management tool to collect rent debt (also known as "serial filing").

² Gromis, Ashley, and Matthew Desmond. "Estimating the Prevalence of Eviction in the United States: New Data from the 2017 American Housing Survey." *Cityscape*, vol. 23, no. 2, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, pp. 279–90, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27039963>.

Exhibit 1

Type of Moves Among Households in the United States Who Rented Their Previous Residence (2 of 2)



Note: Only households' most recent moves within the previous 2 years were captured in these data.

Source: 2017 American Housing Survey

Defining Eviction Prevention

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHD) describes its goals around eviction prevention as: "... a local/regional coordinated systems approach to effectively prevent evictions... [that] will include creating a collective impact model where organizations that serve as a safety-net within the community collaborate to ensure households have early access to resources to stabilize their housing situations." DCHD has structured its pilot eviction *prevention* programs to be holistic, multi-faceted and early-interventions. They can fund back rent but they can also be used to stabilize households in a wide variety of other ways localities see fit. Some pilot programs pay for childcare, assist with transportation to work, pay utilities, etc.

This is distinct from eviction *diversion* programs which exist within the courts legal system and are funds used specifically to place a tenant back into good standing on rent with their landlord.

Diversion programs usually intercept the process at the time of the hearing of the case, and then move into a negotiated payment plan which, when completed, eliminates the eviction record.

Both programs can pair together well, with prevention programs seeking to stave off the destabilizing effects of the eviction process and lowering the costs to the tenant, landlord and courts of addressing eviction. A good prevention program *prevents* eviction and creates stability for households.

Findings

In 2018, The Eviction Lab at Princeton University published research showing that Virginia was home to five of the country’s ten most evicting large cities in 2016. The data also indicated that several more jurisdictions within the state had eviction rates that were more than two to three times as high as the nationwide eviction rate of 2.3%, including Danville, which had an eviction rate of 7.2%. Princeton’s work revealed that the city’s landlords had filed 944 unlawful detainers and carried out 614 formal residential evictions per year on average between 2010 and 2016.

The Eviction Lab notes, however, that their figures may be underestimating the prevalence of eviction in Danville and other localities due to fluctuations in data collection over time. Analysis of court record data suggests that Danville’s eviction numbers may actually be higher. The data show that the city’s landlords filed 1,457 unlawful detainers and carried out 799 residential eviction judgments per year on average between 2016 and 2019. Dividing the number of evictions each year by the number of renter-occupied households in the city produces a citywide average eviction rate of 9.2%. While tenant protections enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic have seen some reduction in the number of evictions, Danville’s eviction rate in 2020 remained above the pre-pandemic national average (see Table 1).

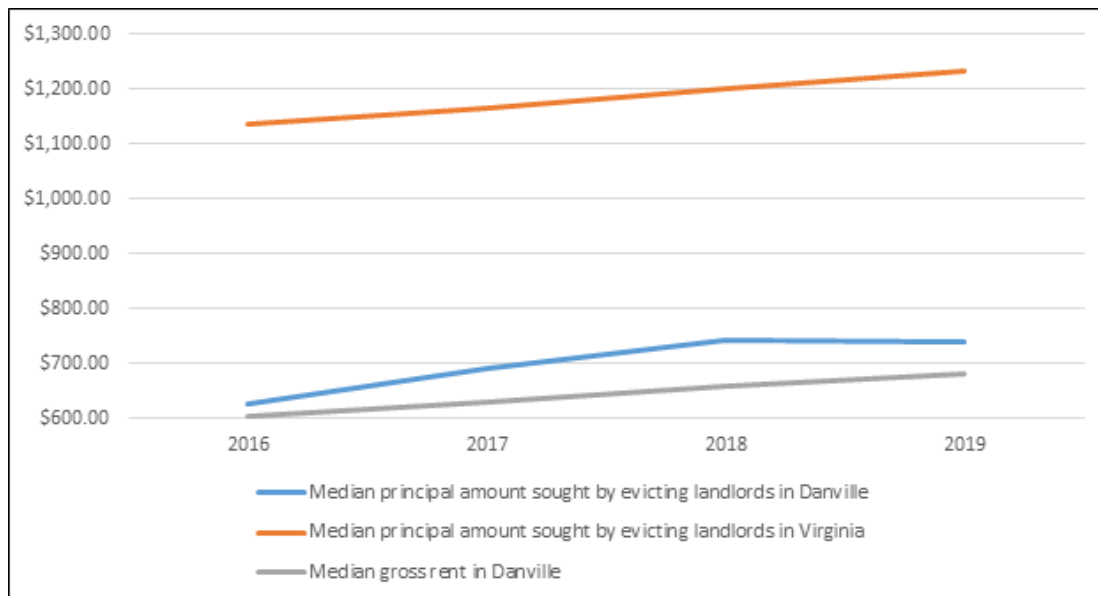
Court record data show that landlords in Danville evicted for an average principal amount of \$954.94 and for a median principal amount of \$699 on average between 2016 and 2019, while landlords in Virginia as a whole evicted for an average principal amount of \$1,958.86 and for a median principal amount of \$1,093.59 on average. Danville’s median gross rent increased from \$602 to \$682 during the same period of time³ (see Figure 1).

Table 1. Yearly Residential Eviction Filings, Judgments, and Rates in Danville

Year	Eviction Filings	Eviction Judgments	Renter-Occupied Households	Eviction Rate
2020	671	363	8,873*	4.09%
2019	1,213	695	8,873	7.83%
2018	1,534	829	8,601	9.64%
2017	1,625	872	8,673	10.05%
2016	1,456	798	8,588	9.29%

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2019 data.

Figure 1. Yearly Median Principal Amount Sought by Evicting Landlords in Danville and Virginia and Median Gross Rent in Danville



Eviction at the Landlord Level in Danville

On average, approximately 240 landlords file for eviction and 208 landlords win eviction judgments in a given year in Danville (see Tables 2 and 3). The majority of the city’s evictions are carried out by a relatively small number of landlords. About 15, or 7.3%, of landlords carry out a majority of evictions in the city each year (Table 4 provides an overview of the top half of evicting landlords for all years for which data were collected, and Tables 5 through 9 list the most evicting landlords for each year). There are 52 landlords that carried out a total of 10 or more evictions between 2016 and 2020 (see Table 10).

Individual landlord-level eviction rates are calculated by dividing the number of eviction judgments won by the number of rental units owned for a given landlord. Accurate eviction rates are only able to be calculated for landlords whose complete property holdings in the city is known. Accurate eviction rates cannot be easily calculated for landlords who also act as property management companies due to the elusive nature of their portfolios. It is thought that landlords with eviction rates exceeding 100% have likely filed for eviction from properties that they manage. Additionally, some landlords have sold properties preceding the collection of historical eviction data, with several landlords having sold their entire portfolio citywide within the past few years (these landlords show “0” units owned). Eviction rates cannot be collected for these landlords without the incorporation of historical property data.

A large share of Danville’s rental units is owned by the city’s most evicting landlords. Tax assessment data show that the 52 most evicting landlords own a combined minimum total of 3,146 rental units as of August 2021, which account for 35.5% of the city’s renter-occupied households (see Table 11). At least ten of these landlords have sold properties in the last five years, and incorporation of historical real estate data into this analysis would raise the share of total units owned further. Additionally, several landlords also act as property management companies, and inclusion of full portfolios managed by these companies would raise the share even higher.

Danville’s most evicting landlords bring a large number of serial filings to court. On average, 29.7% of eviction filings brought to court by landlords with 10 or more evictions in a given year are serial filings (See Table 12).

Six of Danville’s most evicting landlords own properties that are at least partially financed through the Virginia Housing Development Authority (see Table 13). The overwhelming majority of these properties are held by the Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority in the Blaine Square Apartments, Grant Street Extension, and Seeland Road developments.

Of the 52 most evicting landlords, 21, or 40.4%, of them have a Danville mailing address. An additional 4, or 7.7%, of these landlords have mailing addresses that are located immediately outside of Danville in Pittsylvania County. Therefore, 48.1% of these landlords have mailing addresses that are located in the immediate Danville area. 16, or 30.8%, of these landlords have mailing addresses that are located outside of the immediate Danville area. Skewing these figures, however, is the fact that 11, or 21.2%, of these landlords do not have mailing address information listed in the most recent tax assessment data due to factors such as property transfers (see Table 14).

Table 2. Number of Landlords Filing for Eviction per Year in Danville

Year	Landlords	Eviction Filings	Average Filings per Landlord
2020	173	671	3.88
2019	237	1,213	5.12
2018	257	1,534	5.97
2017	238	1,625	6.83
2016	230	1,456	6.33

Table 3. Number of Evicting Landlords per Year in Danville

Year	Landlords	Eviction Judgments	Average Evictions per Landlord
2020	124	363	2.93
2019	207	695	3.36
2018	217	829	3.82
2017	199	872	4.38
2016	198	798	4.03

Table 4. Number of Evicting Landlords with 10 or More Evictions in a Given Year in Danville

Year	Landlords	Share of All Evicting Landlords	Eviction Judgments	Share of Citywide Evictions
2020	8	6.45%	163	44.9%
2019	14	6.76%	376	54.1%
2018	15	6.91%	460	55.49%
2017	17	8.54%	532	61.01%
2016	14	7.07%	446	55.89%

Program Implications

As the City of Danville moves towards implementation of an eviction prevention pilot it should consider from the data:

1. The eviction rate in Danville is higher than the calculated eviction rate
2. In 2019, the median amount of an eviction judgement was \$738. There were 695 judgments that year, meaning a total of \$512,910 owed by tenants and lost by landlords. How could these costs be redirected through a VERP Pilot program and stave off these evictions? In their 2021 report *The Public Cost of Eviction in Richmond and Virginia: Response versus Prevention*. Dr. Ben Teresa, Dr. Kathryn Howell and Chesley DeLeon identify that the public cost of displacing one family is between \$7,000 and \$18,000 per evicted household annually. In the case of Danville, that public cost being borne now is between \$4,865,000 and \$12,510,000.⁴
3. Evictions in Danville are geographically diffuse.
4. Rental housing in Danville is low-density, the majority of it in single-family homes with over 237 landlords filing evictions in 2019.
5. The majority of the city's evictions are carried out by a relatively small number of landlords, approximately 15 for any given year.
6. The 2020 rent relief programs administered in Danville and the eviction moratoriums issued during the Covid-19 pandemic have clearly had a significant impact on evictions. Lessons from this time can be used to create longer-term strategies.
7. Approximately 7.3% (approximately 15) of the City's landlords perform more than 50% of evictions.
8. Based on interviews of VERP grantees and State-level officials, we recommend that Danville focus its VERP initiative on a targeted set of landlords or buildings, given the diffuse nature of evictions in Danville.

⁴ DeLeon, Chesley, Howell, Kathryn L., and Teresa, Benjamin F. "The Public Cost of Eviction in Richmond and Virginia: Response versus Prevention" July 2021 https://rampages.us/rvaevictionlab/wp-content/uploads/sites/33937/2021/07/CostofEvictions_Final.pdf

9. Outreach to tenants and tenant engagement has been identified throughout the State as a barrier to effective VERP implementation. Therefore, it is recommended that Danville attempt to use existing but alternative methods for tenant engagement for the VERP program. For example, instead of administering a program through the existing social services network, use instead the school system.
10. Because Danville is seeing the use of its current rent support programs in younger households with children, connecting the VERP program to the schools may also be useful.

Appendix

Additional Data Tables

Table 5. Landlords with 10 or More Evictions in 2020 in Danville

Landlord Name	Eviction Filings	Share of Citywide Filings	Eviction Judgments	Share of Citywide Evictions	Units Owned	Eviction Rate
WILKINS AND CO	58	8.64%	35	9.64%	22	159.1%
PARKER ROAD LLC	67	9.99%	32	8.82%	187	17.1%
DRHA	40	5.96%	26	7.16%	593	4.4%
ELLIS, PAM AND DAVID	25	3.73%	17	4.68%	66	25.8%
TRICOR REAL ESTATE	27	4.02%	15	4.13%	75	20.0%
MACHER, ROLAND	20	2.98%	14	3.86%	14	100.0%
MJRW INC	19	2.83%	12	3.31%	154	7.8%
SOUTHSIDE EQUITY LLC	18	2.68%	12	3.31%	27	44.4%

Table 6. Landlords with 10 or More Evictions in 2019 in Danville

Landlord Name	Eviction Filings	Share of Citywide Filings	Eviction Judgments	Share of Citywide Evictions	Units Owned	Eviction Rate
WILKINS AND CO	82	6.76%	67	9.64%	22	304.5%
DRHA	123	10.14%	64	9.21%	593	10.8%
PARKER ROAD LLC	136	11.21%	63	9.06%	187	33.7%
ELLIS, PAM AND DAVID	30	2.47%	24	3.45%	66	36.4%
MJRW INC	43	3.54%	24	3.45%	154	15.6%
PURDUM WOODS APARTMENTS	33	2.72%	20	2.88%	180	11.1%
B&S RENTALS	24	1.98%	18	2.59%	191	9.4%
RUXTON ASSOCIATES	40	3.30%	16	2.30%	138	11.6%
SOUTHSIDE EQUITY LLC	25	2.06%	15	2.16%	27	55.6%
TRICOR REAL ESTATE	21	1.73%	15	2.16%	75	20.0%
SOUTHWYCK HILLS APARTMENTS	26	2.14%	14	2.01%	116	12.1%
KHC ASSOCIATES LLC	27	2.23%	13	1.87%	60	21.7%
CLEAR POND APARTMENTS	79	6.51%	12	1.73%	106	11.3%

DANVILLE RENTALS LLC	24	1.98%	11	1.58%	24	45.8%
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Table 7. Landlords with 10 or More Evictions in 2018 in Danville

Landlord Name	Eviction Filings	Share of Citywide Filings	Eviction Judgments	Share of Citywide Evictions	Units Owned	Eviction Rate
WILKINS AND CO	147	9.58%	101	12.18%	22	459.1%
DRHA	110	7.17%	72	8.69%	593	12.1%
PARKER ROAD LLC	169	11.02%	63	7.60%	187	33.7%
RUXTON ASSOCIATES	74	4.82%	36	4.34%	138	26.1%
MJRW INC	46	3.00%	27	3.26%	154	17.5%
PURDUM WOODS APARTMENTS	40	2.61%	27	3.26%	180	15.0%
CLEAR POND APARTMENTS	113	7.37%	21	2.53%	106	19.8%
B&S RENTALS	23	1.50%	19	2.29%	191	9.9%
ELLIS, PAM AND DAVID	31	2.02%	18	2.17%	66	27.3%
SOUTHSIDE EQUITY LLC	27	1.76%	15	1.81%	27	55.6%
WALDEN, WILLIAM	24	1.56%	15	1.81%	60	25.0%
TRICOR REAL ESTATE	19	1.24%	14	1.69%	75	18.7%

BOLTON REAL ESTATE	37	2.41%	12	1.45%	1	1200.0%
KHC ASSOCIATES LLC	39	2.54%	10	1.21%	60	16.7%
NORTH HILLS II LP	17	1.11%	10	1.21%	116	8.6%

Table 8. Landlords with 10 or More Evictions in 2017 in Danville

Landlord Name	Eviction Filings	Share of Citywide Filings	Eviction Judgments	Share of Citywide Evictions	Units Owned	Eviction Rate
WILKINS AND CO	180	11.08%	121	13.88%	22	550.0%
DRHA	179	11.02%	86	9.86%	593	14.5%
PARKER ROAD LLC	133	8.18%	43	4.93%	187	23.0%
B&S RENTALS	59	3.63%	36	4.13%	191	18.8%
ELLIS, PAM AND DAVID	40	2.46%	26	2.98%	66	39.4%
MJRW INC	66	4.06%	24	2.75%	154	15.6%
NORTH HILLS II LP	45	2.77%	24	2.75%	116	20.7%
RUXTON ASSOCIATES	82	5.05%	24	2.75%	138	17.4%
SOUTHSIDE EQUITY LLC	31	1.91%	23	2.64%	27	85.2%
HAUSER PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	28	1.72%	19	2.18%	119	16.0%

SCHEWEL FURNITURE CO INC	26	1.60%	19	2.18%	0	
KHC ASSOCIATES LLC	43	2.65%	18	2.06%	60	30.0%
WALDEN, WILLIAM	39	2.40%	18	2.06%	60	30.0%
PURDUM WOODS APARTMENTS	26	1.60%	15	1.72%	180	8.3%
STRATFORD MANOR APARTMENTS	14	0.86%	14	1.61%	89	15.7%
COLONIAL HEIGHTS APARTMENTS	30	1.85%	11	1.26%	0	
HILLVIEW PROPERTIES LLC	15	0.92%	11	1.26%	0	

Table 9. Landlords with 10 or More Evictions in 2016 in Danville

Landlord Name	Eviction Filings	Share of Citywide Filings	Eviction Judgments	Share of Citywide Evictions	Units Owned	Eviction Rate
WILKINS AND CO	155	10.65%	103	12.91%	22	468.2%
DRHA	146	10.03%	68	8.52%	593	11.5%
PARKER ROAD LLC	172	11.81%	63	7.89%	187	33.7%
ELLIS, PAM AND DAVID	34	2.34%	24	3.01%	66	36.4%

NORTH HILLS II LP	48	3.30%	24	3.01%	116	20.7%
MJRW INC	62	4.26%	23	2.88%	154	14.9%
HAUSER PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	46	3.16%	21	2.63%	119	17.6%
KHC ASSOCIATES LLC	50	3.43%	21	2.63%	60	35.0%
RUXTON ASSOCIATES	64	4.40%	21	2.63%	138	15.2%
WALDEN, WILLIAM	40	2.75%	20	2.51%	60	33.3%
B&S RENTALS	41	2.82%	18	2.26%	191	9.4%
PURDUM WOODS APARTMENTS	22	1.51%	16	2.01%	180	8.9%
SOUTHSIDE EQUITY LLC	16	1.10%	13	1.63%	27	48.1%
BOLTON REAL ESTATE	26	1.79%	11	1.38%	1	1100.0%

Table 10. Landlords with a Total of 10 or More Evictions Between 2016 and 2020 in Danville

Landlord Name	Eviction Filings	Eviction Judgments	Units Owned	Eviction Rate
WILKINS AND CO	622	427	22	445.5%
DRHA	598	316	593	12.2%
PARKER ROAD LLC	677	264	187	31.0%
MJRW INC	236	110	154	15.9%

ELLIS, PAM AND DAVID	160	109	66	34.8%
RUXTON ASSOCIATES	270	103	138	17.6%
B&S RENTALS	157	99	191	11.9%
PURDUM WOODS APARTMENTS	129	80	180	10.8%
SOUTHSIDE EQUITY LLC	117	78	27	61.1%
KHC ASSOCIATES LLC	178	69	60	25.8%
WALDEN, WILLIAM	113	60	60	23.3%
HAUSER PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	137	58	119	11.8%
NORTH HILLS II LP	110	58	116	12.5%
TRICOR REAL ESTATE	87	54	75	13.0%
CLEAR POND APARTMENTS	254	45	106	9.9%
STRATFORD MANOR APARTMENTS	41	38	89	8.4%
BOLTON REAL ESTATE	106	35	1	875.0%
MACHER, ROLAND	57	32	14	32.1%
NGUYEN, THIEN QUANG	29	25	62	10.1%

TURNPIKE TOWNHOMES	52	25	100	5.5%
COLONIAL HEIGHTS APARTMENTS	50	22	0	0.0%
WESTOVER MANOR VA LLC	54	21	89	5.3%
DANVILLE RENTALS LLC	44	20	24	15.6%
HYLER, JOHN T	33	20	0	0.0%
SOUTHWYCK HILLS APARTMENTS	41	20	116	4.3%
K&T DEVELOPMENT LTD	35	19	19	22.4%
PLEASANT VIEW LLC	24	19	26	16.3%
SCHEWEL FURNITURE CO INC	26	19	0	0.0%
GOODMAN, PAUL	26	18	0	0.0%
NEWNAM, BOB	19	18	54	6.9%
POWELL, WILLIAM KENNETH	19	18	42	9.5%
REDD PROPERTIES LLC	27	18	24	15.6%
HILLVIEW PROPERTIES LLC	22	17	0	0.0%

WESTMORELAND SCHOOLFIELD SENIOR APARTMENTS	28	15	65	5.4%
FIRST CHOICE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	24	14	0	0.0%
DABBS, JOSEPH JR	14	13	24	12.5%
DODSON REALTY	26	13	0	0.0%
EAGLE MANAGEMENT CO LLC	19	13	18	18.1%
EJ PROPERTIES	18	13	0	0.0%
MEEKS RENTALS	14	13	16	18.8%
MUMFORD, PAUL C	31	13	0	0.0%
ROSE, OTIS B III	39	13	13	25.0%
EJ HYLER LLC	13	11	108	2.5%
M&A CONTRACTING	14	11	4	68.8%
PHELPS, RICHARD EDWARD	12	11	28	9.8%
STERLING TRACE APARTMENTS	53	11	48	5.7%
VENTURE REALTY GROUP	14	11	20	7.5%
WESTWOOD PROPERTIES LLC	19	11	0	0.0%

BAYLOR, LAWRENCE L III	32	10	8	21.9%
J&M RENTALS	19	10	3	83.3%
OMEGA ENTERPRISES OF VA LLC	14	10	22	11.4%
ROGERS, PAUL K	12	10	15	16.7%

Table 11. Number of Rental Units Owned by Landlords with a Total of 10 or More Evictions Between 2016 and 2020 in Danville

	Number of Landlords	Units Owned	Share of City's Renter-Occupied Households
All landlords	52	3,146	35.5%
Ten most evicting landlords	10	1,618	18.2%

Table 12. Number of Serial Eviction Filings Brought to Court by Landlords with 10 or More Evictions by Year in Danville

Year	Eviction Filings	Serial Filings	Serial Filings Share
2020	274	37	13.5%
2019	713	194	27.2%
2018	916	270	29.5%
2017	1,036	321	30.9%
2016	922	289	31.3%

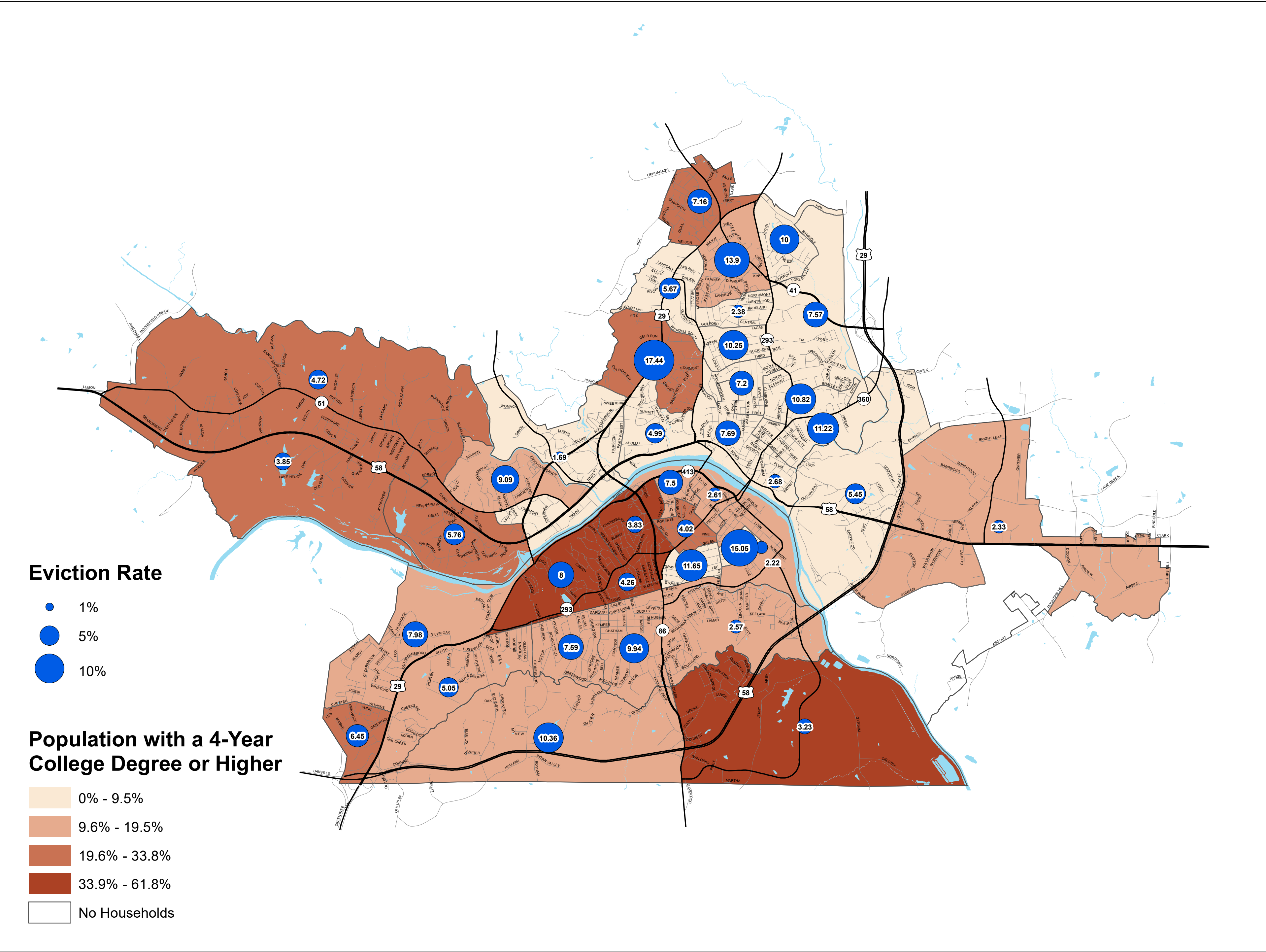
Table 13. Number of Properties with Virginia Housing Financing Owned by Landlords with a Total of 10 or More Evictions Between 2016 and 2020 in Danville

Landlord Name	Properties
DRHA	114
NORTH HILLS II LP	1
CLEAR POND APARTMENTS	1
SOUTHWYCK HILLS APARTMENTS	1
WESTMORELAND SCHOOLFIELD SENIOR APARTMENTS	1
STERLING TRACE APARTMENTS	1

Table 14. Breakdown of Landlords with a Total of 10 or More Evictions Between 2016 and 2020 in Danville by Mailing Address

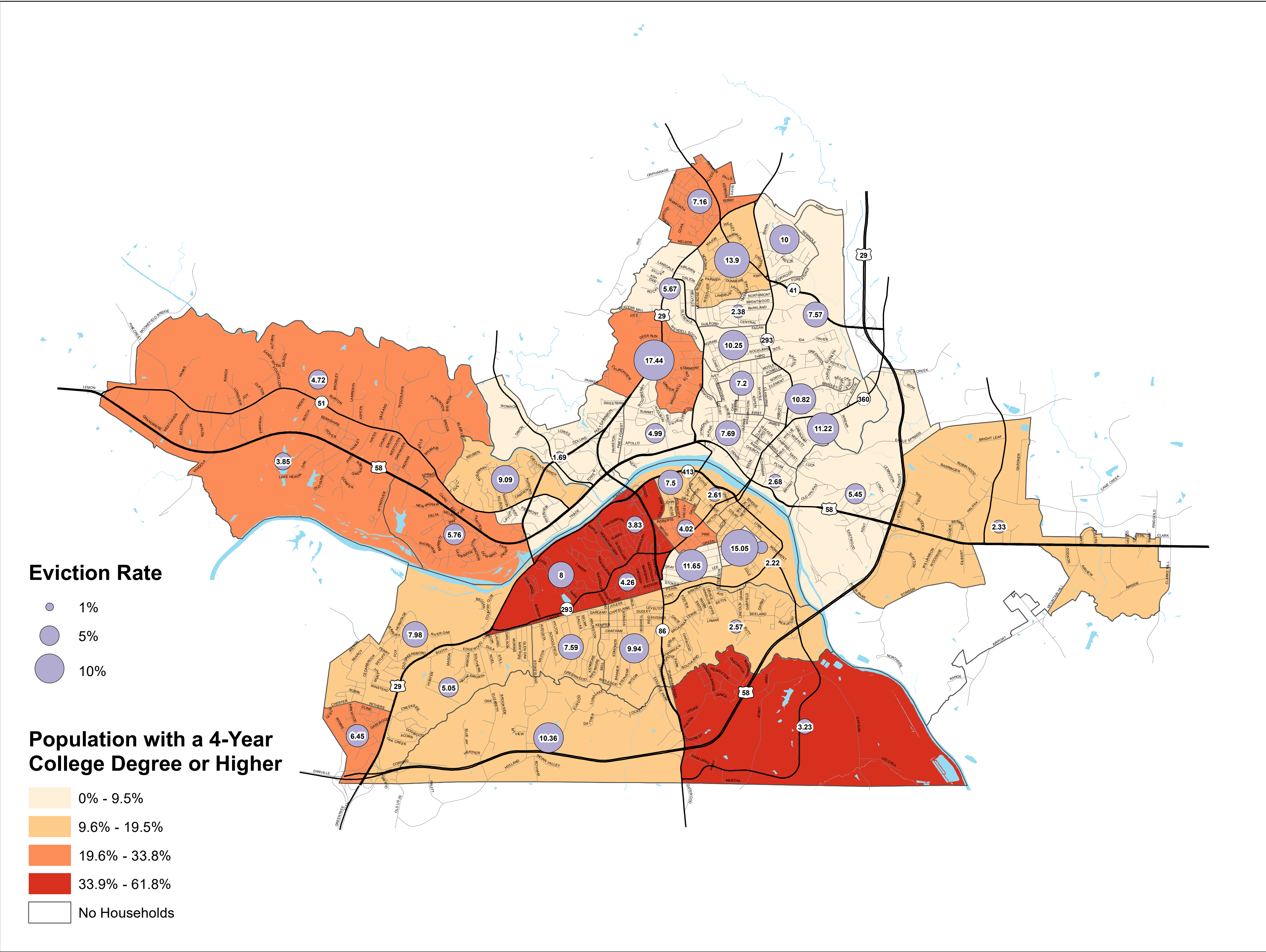
Landlord Mailing Address	Number of Landlords	Share
All landlords	52	100%
Within Danville	21	40.4%
Within Pittsylvania County	4	7.7%
Within Virginia, excluding Danville and Pittsylvania County	9	17.3%
Outside of Virginia	7	13.5%
No address information due to property transfers	11	21.2%

Eviction Rate and Educational Attainment by Block Group in Danville, Virginia



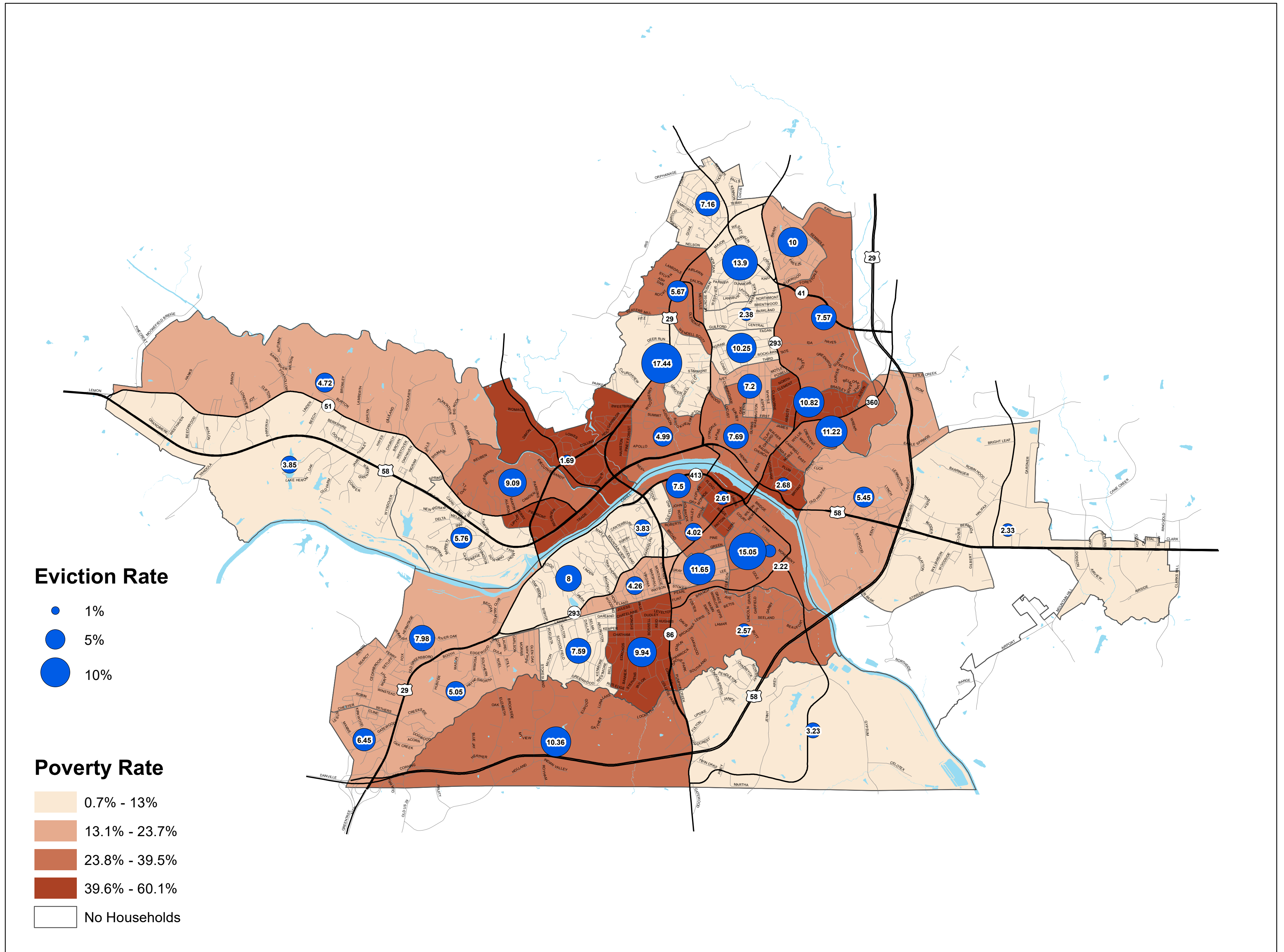
Eviction rates from Eviction Lab, Princeton University, www.evictionlab.org, 2016 data
 Educational attainment rates from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016 data

Eviction Rate and Educational Attainment by Block Group in Danville, Virginia



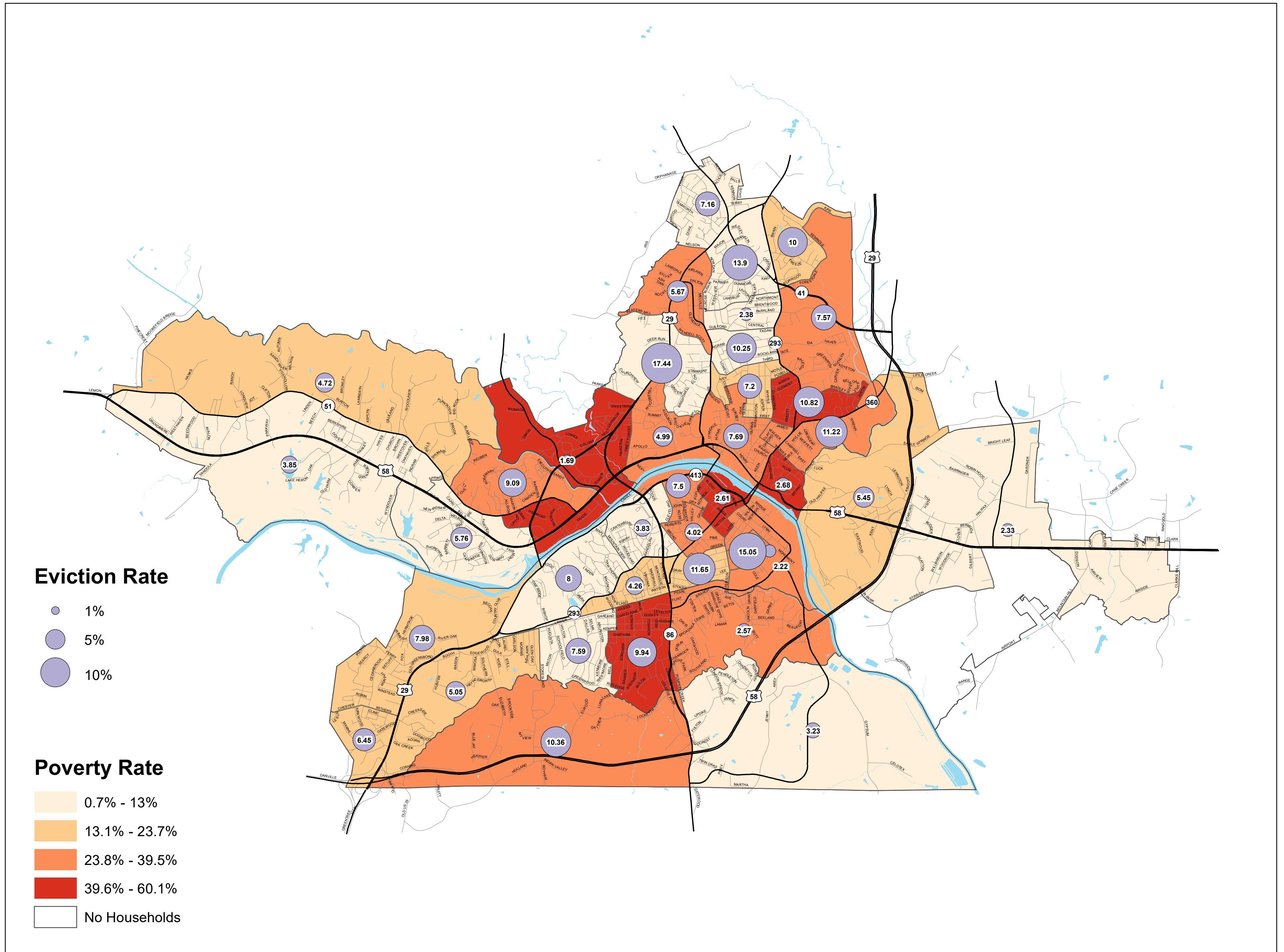
Eviction rates from Eviction Lab, Princeton University, www.evictionlab.org, 2016 data
 Educational attainment rates from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016 data

Eviction Rate and Poverty Rate by Block Group in Danville, Virginia



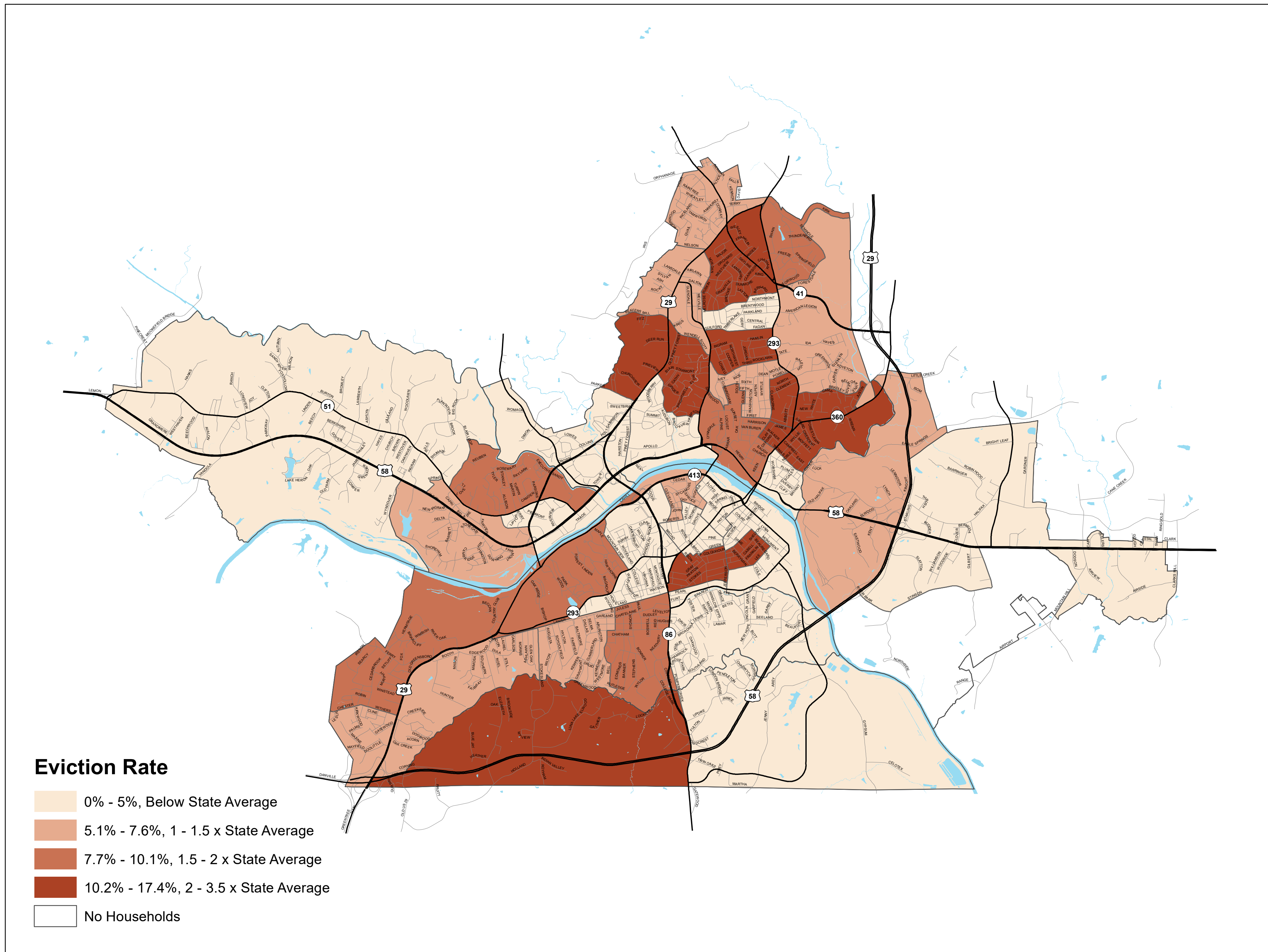
Eviction rates from Eviction Lab, Princeton University, www.evictionlab.org, 2016 data
 Poverty rates from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016 data

Eviction Rate and Poverty Rate by Block Group in Danville, Virginia

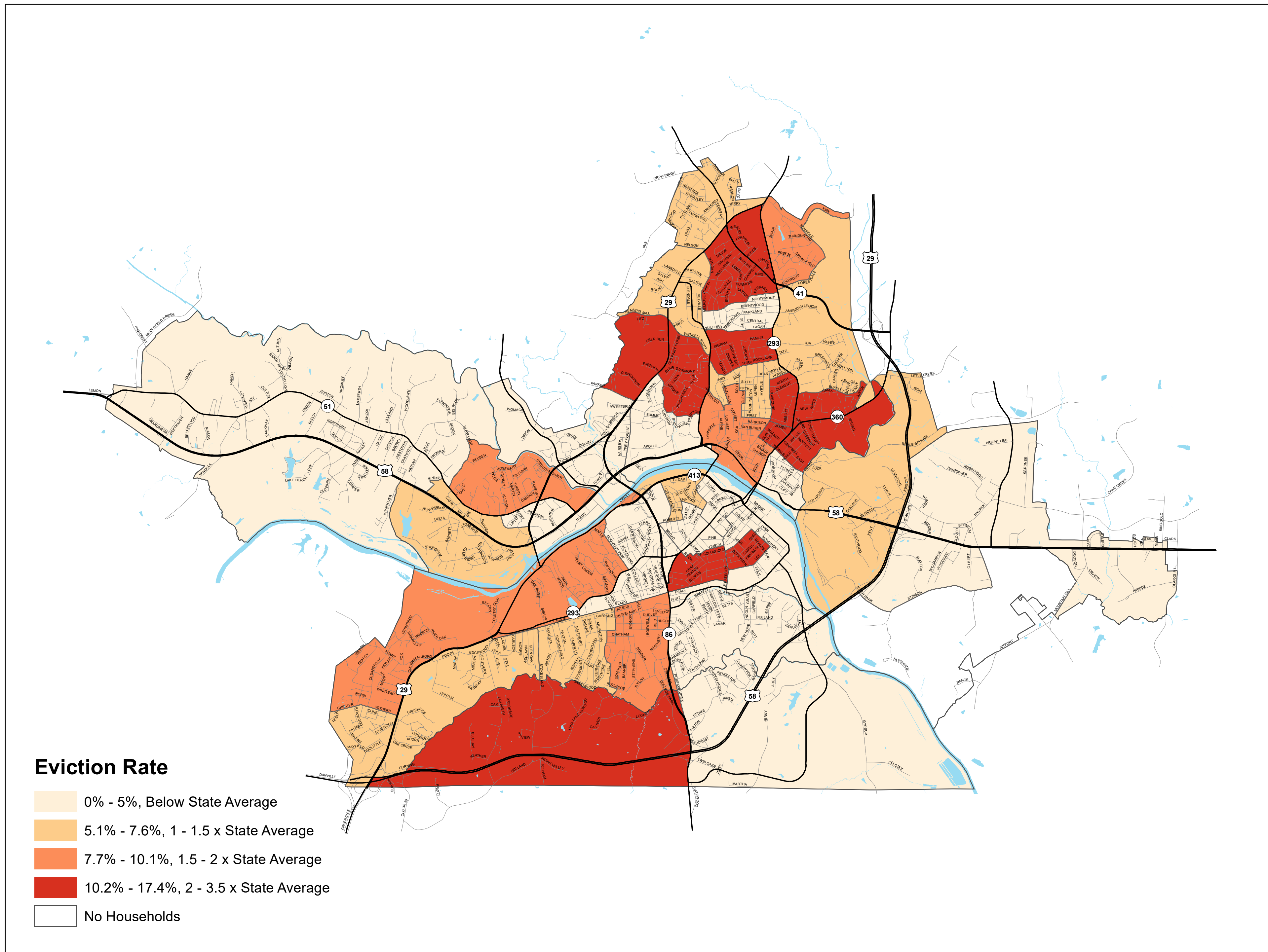


Eviction rates from Eviction Lab, Princeton University, www.evictionlab.org, 2016 data
 Poverty rates from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016 data

Eviction Rate by Block Group in Danville, Virginia



Eviction Rate by Block Group in Danville, Virginia



Methodology

Deanonimized court data were retrieved from Virginia Court Data. These data underwent a cleaning process before being used for analysis. Plaintiff names were manually cleaned to correct administrative errors in the court data. Some plaintiffs appeared under multiple names due to inaccuracies (typos, varying abbreviations, etc.) and were standardized so that each plaintiff had one unique name.

Court data were aggregated to show eviction cases at the household level, rather than at the individual level. The Eviction Lab at Princeton University notes in their methodology report that “not all household members are listed as defendants when eviction cases are filed in court. Court records do not reveal how many individuals, particularly children or other household members not listed on a rental lease, are affected by eviction”.⁵ It is not clear to what extent the available court data account for individuals who are not leaseholders that are facing eviction. Therefore, eviction judgments were counted at the household level, for which more complete data was available.

Court data were deduplicated to remove true duplicate cases (cases with matching key variables) and serial filings (consecutive filings by a landlord against a tenant). The Eviction Lab at Princeton University describes serial cases as “multiple (real) eviction filings by a landlord on the same tenant... [that] suggest the tenant did not in fact vacate the premises” and refers “to the outcome of the most recent case within a set of serial cases to determine whether an eviction appeared to have taken place”.⁵ Therefore, consecutive eviction filings (filed within the same calendar year) by a plaintiff against a single defendant, and as appearing to have taken place in the same ZIP code, were deduplicated. The most recent judgment in each set of serial cases was retained and used to determine whether an eviction occurred.

Residential and commercial eviction cases were delineated by checking defendant names against a set of strings that suggested the defendant was a non-residential entity (business, school, church, etc.).

⁵ Eviction Lab, Princeton University, www.evictionlab.org.