

## **SOUTH SIDE WEEKLY**

# **A Reason To Stay: Why Some of Pilsen's Young Adults Live With Their Parents**

*As housing prices skyrocket in a gentrifying Chicago neighborhood, living in the family home is one way for young Latino adults to stay in their community.*

by **Alonso Vidal** and **City Bureau**     July 3, 2025

Bibiana Saucedo, center, tends to one of the family's chickens inside their Pilsen home. Saucedo, 23, lives with parents Claudia and Luis Saucedo and uses part of the space as a studio while she pursues an art career. Credit: Alonso Vidal for City Bureau

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**B**ibiana Saucedo's middle-of-the-night art sessions usually end with exhausted brushes and fresh paint scattered around her family's Pilsen home.

She stays up late so her inspiration doesn't wane, said Luis Saucedo, her proud father, who despite having done technical drawing his whole life, said he never understood the possibilities of art until he saw his daughter's work.

"No one messes with her when it comes to art. Take art away from her and forget it—you're unleashing the lioness," he said.

Bibiana Saucedo, 23, recently graduated from Columbia College with a bachelor's degree. She has been doing "art gigs here and there," but if she weren't living with her parents, she doesn't know if she would be able to afford living in Pilsen, the neighborhood where she was born and raised. At home, she also has the space to work on her art.

"I think right now, it is unaffordable to move out," Saucedo said.

Nationally, living with family has become an increasingly common option for young adults who cannot afford rising rents and housing costs, according to a [2023 study](#). Around 57% of young adults ages 18-24 lived with their parents in 2024, with the rates increasing slightly since the start of the pandemic, according to federal [Current Population Survey](#) data.





Bibiana Saucedo showcases her in-house art space, where she spends late nights working. Credit: Alonso Vidal for City Bureau

While Chicago has higher-than-average numbers of young adults living with their parents, Pilsen's unique combination of a largely Latino population of multigenerational households and rapid gentrification contributing to rising housing costs makes it stand out among the city's neighborhoods. In 2021, when tax bills were calculated using new assessments, the median tax bill in the Lower West Side jumped 46%, driving up rent and pricing out generations of local families.

Wages aren't keeping up with the cost of living, and the housing supply in the neighborhood isn't keeping up with demand, said Winifred Curran, professor of sustainable urban development at DePaul University, who has extensively researched Pilsen. At the same time, some young adults say living at home isn't a drawback—it helps them save money, contribute to the family household and stay close to loved ones.

### **'The minute that home gets lost, it creates a gap'**

Siblings Alejandro Reyes, 20, and Leslie Ocampo, 19, have lived in Pilsen since they were kids. They now live with their younger brother, Kevin Ocampo, 16, in an apartment their parents divided from their property a few years ago, while their parents and 6-year-old brother live next door.

The older siblings work and contribute to household costs, staying close to family as they take on adult responsibilities. "My parents said it was time for us to start being independent, for the three of us—the older siblings—to live on our own," Reyes said in Spanish.

Multigenerational housing is common among Latino families, and has been a frequent way for families to stay together and make housing more affordable, housing experts, nonprofit leaders and researchers told City Bureau. In 2021, 58% of young Latino adults lived with their parents, the highest share of any ethnic group, research shows.

But the changes in Pilsen's population have left the neighborhood with soaring housing prices, higher-income households, new housing that is less suitable for larger families, and fewer Latinos and Latino children, research shows.





Leslie Ocampo, 19, (left) and Alejandro Reyes, 20, live semi-independently, sharing a subdivided space with one younger sibling next door from their parents. The siblings help contribute to the family's household costs. Credit: Alonso Vidal for City Bureau

Between 2010 and 2020, the proportion of households in Pilsen making less than \$50,000 decreased by about 30 percentage points, and those making over \$100,000 more than tripled, [according to the DePaul Institute for Housing Studies](#).

“These wealthier newcomers are likely better equipped to absorb rising tax burdens and rents, while longtime lower-income residents, especially those on fixed incomes, are more likely to be overwhelmed and potentially displaced,” researchers said in a 2023 report.

Many of the young adults who have moved to Pilsen in recent years are from high-income families, mostly white students from nearby universities, contributing to increasing rent prices, said Carolina Sternberg, professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at DePaul University. Higher-priced, multi-unit developments have replaced older properties and driven out Latino families since the 1990s [according to her research](#), although neighborhood leaders have consistently [fought large-scale development efforts](#) in order [to preserve affordable housing](#).



“The minute that home gets lost, it creates a gap,” said José Muñoz, [CEO of La Casa Norte](#), which provides housing and support services in multiple communities. “That opportunity doesn’t exist for them anymore, and it definitely doesn’t exist for them to live in that neighborhood.”

As kids, Reyes and Ocampo said they used to buy everything, from clothes and toys to food and kitchen appliances, at “*la tiendita de Doña Elva*,” a corner store near their house. That store, along with the woman affectionately known as Doña Elva, are gone; in its place is an apartment complex hosting many white families and students, Reyes said.

“It got really depressing here,” Ocampo said about the neighborhood. “Before, it was really beautiful, but now everything is gloomy. Nobody wants to go out.”

Her brother agreed. In recent months, two of their neighbors moved out because they couldn’t afford rent, Reyes said.

“The calm, the peace—it used to feel comfortable to go outside and enjoy playing with other kids, but not anymore. It feels different, like it’s uncomfortable to be out,” Reyes said. “Seeing different people outside that you don’t know.”

“*Como güeros*,” like white people, Ocampo said in Spanish. “It’s like there are almost no Hispanics or Latinos here anymore.”





A statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe in the Reyes-Ocampo living room. Credit: Alonso Vidal for City Bureau

Dinner at the Reyes-Ocampo household is a tradition—an opportunity for the family to get together and chat about what’s happening in their lives and their community. Reyes and Ocampo practically salivate as they list their favorite family dishes: Huevos con frijoles, carne asada, tacos de pastores, pozoles.

“Our parents taught us to appreciate having food every day,” Reyes said, “even if it’s something simple.”

A statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe, resting on a bed of white flowers, holds a place of honor in the living room. The family has always been devoted to its religion, attending Sunday mass since the oldest kids were small. But now, it’s hard for Reyes to go—he is constantly working at a local museum.

When his parents almost lost their home due to rising property taxes, Reyes left his computer science studies at University of Illinois Chicago to financially support them.

“It was really hard trying to study while thinking about what kind of debts my parents had,” he said. “Before, I used to see them stressed, unable to sleep ... But now I see them calmer, happier.”

Ocampo followed his example and started working for a local cultural organization this year.

“I wanted to help my parents; they’ve already done too much for me,” Ocampo said.

Most young adults living with parents contribute to the household financially, according to a [2024 Pew Research Center](#) report. Around two-thirds said they pay for groceries or utility bills, and 46% said they help with the rent or mortgage.

Others, like Jasmine Monarrez, 23, contribute in different ways, such as helping with cooking and cleaning around the house.

“I think most people, when they say contributing, I guess what they mean is money,” Monarrez said. “There is a huge stigma within being at home and not contributing.”

## Leaving Pilsen and losing connections

Monarrez spent her early years in Pilsen, holding her grandfather's hand as they walked down cozy residential streets.

They used to live together on 19th Street, along with her parents, grandparents and siblings. Monarrez lived in the middle home, while cousins lived in homes on either side, allowing her to visit extended family any time she wished.

"It was like a bunch of family around all the time," Monarrez said.



Jasmine Monarrez watches a childhood memory go by—a paletero—as she leans against her grandfather's home's fence, where she once lived. Rocky, her cousin's dog, barks at the sight of the stranger passing by, on Sunday, April 27, 2025. Credit: Alonso Vidal for City Bureau

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The Monarrez family eventually outgrew the space, and her mother lost her job as a teacher, prompting Monarrez, her parents and siblings to move to southwest suburban Burbank when she was 10. Her grandparents stayed put—they had lived their entire lives in the neighborhood.



The differences between Pilsen and Burbank were obvious right away, she said.

Monarrez remembers a Pilsen of neighbors—family and friends lived across the street, loved ones she now only sees during Fourth of July block parties. In Burbank, she shares quick greetings with her current neighbors, but it's not the same.

Monarrez attended a predominantly white high school. Although there was a Latino community, “you really had to dig deep to find those connections,” she said.

Monarrez goes back to Pilsen to visit her grandfather in the same house he has always lived in. As she walks down the familiar corridors, she doesn't see the street vendors and local businesses she remembers.

Monarrez's grandfather, a Mexican immigrant, speaks only Spanish, but leaving Pilsen meant Monarrez didn't learn the language.

“[It] kind of left me conflicted, because I can't really understand my grandpa as much as my older sisters can,” she said. “In a way, that tore me apart.”

After recently graduating from Columbia College, Monarrez lives with her parents and siblings at their Burbank home while she looks for a job.

“They always have supported me in everything that I've done,” she said. “It's like having a little village behind you.” Her time living with her extended family in Pilsen was brief, but “learning from them has probably been the greatest thing that I'm most thankful for.”

Monarrez wants to move back to Pilsen one day. But right now, she said, “it's just too expensive.”

## **‘She'll be here until she feels ready’**

Only a few hours pass before Luis Saucedo asks his wife, Claudia Saucedo: “Hasn't Bibiana texted you? What is she doing?”

Most days, Luis Saucedo shares the upper unit of their family's two-flat with his daughter. While Bibiana Saucedo focuses on her art, he works in a corner surrounded by plants she has methodically arranged.

The Saucedos used to rent one of the units and live in the other, as many [two-flat owners in Chicago](#)

**traditionally do** as an extra source of income. As Bibiana Saucedo's art career progressed, they stopped renting it so she could have a larger place to work.

Without that space, Bibiana Saucedo said it would be difficult for her to afford an art studio. She would have to share it with multiple artists for it to even be a possibility.

"She really loves murals and painting big," Luis Saucedo said smiling, ever the proud father. "I can't stop talking about her art to everyone."

Bibiana Saucedo is figuring out the next step in her career, and "it's nice to be able to do that while living at home with my parents and saving money," she said. At home, Bibiana always has someone to go to for advice, someone who listens to her, and someone to keep learning from, Luis Salcedo said.

Luis Saucedo had never thought of a home without his daughter, until he spoke to City Bureau in a recent interview.

"I would miss her. It would be boring [without her]. What I think I'd miss the most are the times she comes in and says, 'Look, I drew this today,' or 'I'm thinking of drawing this.' She's always asking us for our opinions," Luis Saucedo said.

There will come a time for Bibiana to live independently, her parents said.

"I want her to be happy, to be independent, to have children and raise them the way we raised her," Claudia Saucedo said.

But until then, "she'll be here until she feels ready," Luis Saucedo added. "Whatever she needs, as long as we can help her. She helps us, too, by being here."

