

## Valley Data Report 2005

August 10, 2005

### MRV 2005

The MRVPD has been collecting data on demographics, skier visits, employment, housing, and land use for almost ten years. The information has been used to create a snapshot of where the Valley is in 2005; and to identify the trends that have been shaping the Valley over the last decade.

### Population

The Valley towns experienced a substantial increase in population between 1990 and 2000. Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren saw increases of 35%, 17% and 43 % respectively. The number of people in the MRV grew from 3440 in 1990 to 4481 in 2000. Population growth has continued since 2000 adding 380 additional residents over the last five years; an 8% increase overall. The population of the three towns is estimated to be 4861 in 2005. Projections for 2020 indicate the Valley will experience a 32% increase in population between 2005 and 2020 and reach a total of 6437. Currently the MRV represents 8% of the total population of Washington County by 2020 it will be almost 10%.

	1980	2000	2020 (projected)	%change 1980- 2020
Fayston	657	1141	1766	168%
Waitsfield	1302	1659	2250	72%
Warren	953	1681	2421	154%
MRV	2912	4481	6437	121%

The age distribution in the MRV shows that the majority of the population is between 25 and 54 years of age. This group accounts for approximately 50% of all Valley residents. The median age in the Valley is 39.8 years, compared to 38.5 for Washington Co. and 37.7 for the State. On gender lines the population breaks down 50.4% male and 49.6 % female. The percentage of MRV residents between 5 and 24 accounts for less than 25% of the population, lower than the percentage for Washington County as a whole. The Valley is following a significant statewide trend; its population is aging. Vermont is also among the top ten states failing to retain its young, educated people. These trends have implications for communities and the State economy. In the 2001 Economic and Demographic Study of Irasville; Jeff Carr stated that encouraging young people to remain in the Valley should be a priority.

### Ski resorts, Income and Employment,

Sugarbush has recently embarked on a redevelopment program for Lincoln Peak. The \$70 million dollar project will provide a variety of amenities for visitors including: a new guest services center with improved facilities for children and beginners; residential units; restaurants and retail. The lack of an adequate bed base has created problems for the resort for a number of years. The redevelopment project will address the issue. Skier days have fallen from the average of 362,000 in the 1980's to an average of 332,000 for the last ten seasons. The historical average is 340,800. Vermont ski areas recorded a five percent increase in skier/rider visits over the 2003- 2004 season.

Sugarbush followed the upward trend with an increase of 12%. The CCC or comfortable carrying capacity is 7620 skiers on a given day. The highest recorded number for the 2004-2005 season was 6,994 on Saturday February 19<sup>th</sup> during President's weekend.

### Sugarbush

Season	Annual skier visits
1995-1996	373,312
1996-1997	362,552
1997-1998	387,973
1998-1999	350,726
1999-2000	344,111
2000-2001	357,529
2001-2002	305,081
2002-2003	296,933
2003-2004	264,852
2004-2005	295,969
Ten year average	333,903

Mad River Glen has experienced steady growth since becoming a cooperative ten years ago. For the past two season's skier visits have averaged 83,000 to 84,000. The CCC for the resort is between 1400 and 1500 per day. MRG has been reaching its CCC on a regular basis when good conditions prevail.

### Income and Employment

The median family income (1999) in the MRV is higher than the County and the State. The average Valley family income is \$57,670. This figure is 12% higher than Washington County and 18% higher than the State. The average annualized wage has increased steadily over the last decade. By 2002 the Valley average was \$21,800. In spite of a decade of gains the figure falls below the number for both Washington County at \$30,472 and Vermont at \$30,010.

Generally local employment is split approximately 65% non-tourist and 35% tourist related. January through March tourist related employment increases to 50%.

The highest wages in the Valley were paid by non-tourist industries; manufacturing and construction. The lowest wages were paid by the restaurant and accommodation sectors.

	Median Family Income 1989	Median Family Income 1999	Percent Change	Median Household Income 1989	Median Household Income 1999	Percent Change
Fayston	\$34,712	\$60,938	75%	\$31,200	\$53,472	71%
Waitsfield	37,361	54,868	47%	32,917	45,577	38%
Warren	36,950	57,206	55%	31,307	47,374	51%
Wash. Co	35,960	51,075	42%	29,623	40,972	38%
Vermont	34,780	48,625	40%	29,792	40,856	37%

**Annualized Average Wage-** (represents the amount a worker would earn working full time year round in a specific industry in a given town)

	1992	2002	Percent change
Fayston	\$18,986	\$20,719	9%
Waitsfield	\$17,983	\$27,097	50%
Warren	\$15,382	\$17,565	14%
Wash Co	\$21,813	\$30,472	40%
Vermont	\$22,364	\$31,010	38%

### Land and Housing

A major trend in land use over the last decade has been residential development. Three hundred and fifty-three lots were created through the sub division process between 1991 and 2000. In addition a total of 496 permits for construction of single family homes were issued by the three towns. Projections indicate that an additional 900 single family homes will be constructed in the Valley between 2002 and 2020.

### Average Single Family Housing Costs

	1995	2004	Percent increase
Fayston	\$133,000	\$265,000	99%
Waitsfield	\$142,000	\$273,000	92%
Warren	\$118,000	\$405,000*	243%
Washington County	\$107,000	\$176,000	64%
Vermont	\$120,000	\$198,000	65%

\*the high figure for Warren in 2004 is likely due to the sale of several properties above 1 million dollars

The median and household incomes in the Valley allow for the purchase of homes in the range of \$175,000-\$200,000. Currently properties under \$300,000 are scarce. The "affordability gap" describes the ratio between the maximum housing purchase price or rent affordable to a household earning the median income, and the median home cost or rent in that town. The Valley falls short of being affordable; meaning the average house in any of the three towns is not affordable to the average household.

### Conservation

The Mad River Watershed has a total of 92,000 acres. Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren comprise 65,948 acres or 71% of land within the watershed. As of 2005 there are approximately 4,000 acres of land under conservation easements in the Valley. An additional 9,426 acres are protected as part of State and National Forests. Phenn Basin, Warren Falls, and Blueberry Lake, were conserved and then transferred to public entities.

### Conserved Land *CHSF/Camels Hump State Forest GMNF/Green Mt. National Forest*

	Total acres	public /fed or state protected	privately conserved	Total acres conserved	% of land conserved
Fayston	23,360	2,998- CHSF	1229	4,227	18
Waitsfield	17,220		1768	1,768	10
Warren	25,368	6,428-GMNF	973	7,401	29
Valley total	65,948	9,426	3,970	13,396	20
Watershed	92,000				

Several mechanisms have been employed by local towns to restrict development of sensitive/scenic areas of the Valley. Waitsfield created a Forest Reserve District to protect significant forest resources and water supply watersheds at higher elevations. Building is restricted above 1,700'. Warren created a Meadowland Overlay District to protect farmland, prime agricultural soils, the working landscape and the rural character of the town.

Agriculture remains an important part of the Valley's economy, landscape and heritage. There are 14 working farms in the three towns comprising approximately 2,900 acres. Over 65% of the 2,900 acres is held by three owners: DeFreest, Neill and Richards. An additional 1,300 is being leased for agricultural purposes. The Valley has 4,200 total acres in agriculture or 6% of land in the three towns. Below is a list of working farms in the Valley that have permanently conserved some or all of their land.

	Owner	Acreage conserved
Waitsfield	Bis-May Farm	22.4
Warren	Burling	91.6
Warren	DeFreest	297
Waitsfield	Joslyn Farm	40
Fayston	Knoll Farm	142
Waitsfield	Neill	45
Waitsfield	Mt. Valley/Geiger	35
Waitsfield	Rose	45
Waitsfield	Simplicity/Turner	122
Total		840 acres/ 28% of working farmland

There is concern that the agricultural land within the Rural Historic District in Waitsfield and Moretown is vulnerable to development. This is a significant area with a number of working farms, prime agricultural soils and a substantial collection of historic homes and barns. The scenic quality of the landscape is remarkable.

A recent trend in the MRV is the increase in the number of horse farms over the last 5-10 years, there is little precise data available at this time on the exact number of farms or the acres in use for this purpose. The MRWCP Conservation Opportunities document indicates that there are currently between ten and twelve horse farms evenly split between Warren and Waitsfield.

The major trend in land use is low density residential development, and projections strongly suggest that this will continue. This type of dispersed development will not protect the views, landscape and rural character people claim to value. Valley residents have demonstrated strong support for land conservation through town surveys and public meetings over the last decade. Conservation efforts should be focused to protect the most important resources and scenic landscapes.

### **Town Finances and Schools**

Rising taxes are a concern for all Valley residents. The decade between 1995 and 2005 indicates a general upward trend with a few fluctuations. The tax rates for the three towns have increased by the following percentages; Fayston 15%; Waitsfield 18% and Warren 80%.

The figures for 1990 show that historically there was a much greater range of tax rates in the Mad River Valley when the rate in Fayston was \$4.44; Waitsfield \$1.61, and Warren \$1.00.

#### Residential Tax Rates- 95-05

	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	% inc
Fayston	1.38	1.38	1.49	1.74	1.55	1.77	2.05	2.37	2.40	1.61	1.58	15
Waitsfield	2.19	1.60	1.76	1.90	1.98	2.34	2.31	2.53	2.80	2.49	2.59	18
Warren	1.35	1.42	1.09	1.48	1.44	1.48	2.07	2.30	1.70	2.26	2.45	80
AVG	1.64	1.47	1.45	1.71	1.66	1.86	2.14	2.40	2.30	2.12	2.21	34

School enrollment in the three towns increased on average by 11% between 1994 and 2004. Looking at the last 15 years the numbers more accurately reflect the increase in population. Between 1990 and 2004 the increases in enrollment for K-12 are as follows: Fayston + 45%; Waitsfield + 21% and Warren + 31%. Per pupil spending increased by 33% between 1994 and 2002.

	Enrollment 1994	Cost/pupil	Enrollment 2002	Cost/pupil	Enrollment 2004	Cost/pupil
Fayston	171	\$7600	197	\$9200	207	\$9476
Waitsfield	249	\$6800	260	\$9200	280	\$9689
Warren	276	\$6200	313	\$9000	289	\$9658
Total	696		770		776	
%Increase			+11%	+33%	+ .007%	+5%

In spite of changes to Act 60 there has been little relief on property tax. Enrollment has slowed in the last few years however the Valley has yet to experience the downward trend that has been predicted for the region. The increase in cost per pupil reflects increases in health insurance and special education costs. (Special education = 25-30% of total PK-12 expenditures for Valley schools according to VT Dept of Ed)

#### Quick Facts: (\* indicates three town averages)

Population	4861 in <b>2005</b>	6437 by <b>2020</b>	32% increase
Sugarbush- skier days	373,300 in <b>95-96</b>	295,900 in <b>04-05</b>	25% decrease
*MRV Median Family Income	\$36,000 in <b>1989</b>	\$57,600 in <b>1999</b>	60% increase
*MRV Avg. SF housing cost	\$131,000 in <b>1995</b>	\$314,000 in <b>2004</b>	140% increase
Area of MR watershed 92,000 acres	Area of 3 towns 65,948 acres	Total acres in Ag 4,200	Total acres protected- 13,396
Acres privately conserved	657 acres in <b>1990</b>	3,970 in <b>2005</b>	504% increase
Farmland	Acres in working farms- 2,900	Acres leased for agriculture 1,300	Acres of farmland conserved 840
School enrollment	696 in <b>1994</b>	776 in <b>2004</b>	11% increase
*Cost/pupil	\$6,860 in <b>1994</b>	\$9,600 in <b>2004</b>	41% increase
*Tax Rates	\$ 1.64 in <b>1995</b>	\$2.21 in <b>2005</b>	37% increase

## Sources

Sugarbush Resort/ MOU Data

[www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org)

Vermont Land trust

Vermont Indicators On-line/ Community Profiles

Vermont Dept of Employment and Training

Department of Agriculture

MRWCP *Conservation Opportunities*

Washington West Supervisory Union

Town Plans: Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren

VT Ski Area Association