

## Valley Data Report 2007

April 2008

### Mad River Valley - 2007

The Mad River Valley Planning District (MRVPD) has been collecting data on demographics, skier visits, employment, housing, and land use for more than ten years. The information has been used to create a snapshot of where the Valley is in 2007; 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 207 additional residents over the last five years; a 5% increase overall. The population of the three towns is estimated to be 4688 in 2005. Projections for 2020 indicate the Valley will experience a 37% increase in population between 2005 and 2020 and reach a total of 6437. Currently the MRV represents 7.2% of the total population of Washington County by 2020 it will be almost 10%.

	1980	2000	2005	2020 (projected)	%change 1980- 2020
Fayston	657	1141	1235	1766	168%
Waitsfield	1302	1659	1719	2250	72%
Warren	953	1681	1734	2421	154%
MRV	2912	4481	4688	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.

### Ski resorts, Income and Employment,

Sugarbush has completed the first phase of a redevelopment program for Lincoln Peak, with the opening of the luxury slope-side residences at Clay Brook, a new Base Lodge and year round restaurant -The Timbers. 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 322,775 for the last ten seasons, or 284,973 for the last five years. 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. The top day for 2005-06 was January 28 with 6,896. Saturday, February 17, 2007 hosted 7,905 skiers.

### Sugarbush

Season	Annual skier visits	
1997-1998	387,973	
1998-1999	350,726	
1999-2000	344,111	
2000-2001	357,529	good conditions
2001-2002	305,081	poor conditions
2002-2003	296,933	very cold
2003-2004	264,852	no snow Nov/Dec
2004-2005	295,969	good spring conditions
2005-2006	262,032	good start/rainy holidays
2006-2007	270,261	slow start/good finish
Ten year average	322,775	
Five year average	284,973	

Mad River Glen became a cooperative ten years ago. 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. Skier visit numbers : 2001-2002 – 85,023; 2002-2003 – 85,964; 2003-2004 – 84,091; 2004-2005 – 75,212; 2005-2006 – 69,000. The five year average is 79,853. Vermont wide – the 2005-06 season was down 6% from the previous year, while the Northeast was down 9%.

### 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 2005 the Valley average was \$25,151. In spite of a decade of gains the figure falls below the number for both Washington County at \$34,520 and Vermont at \$34,199.

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	2005	% change 02-05
Fayston	\$18,986	\$20,719	\$24,464	18%
Waitsfield	\$17,983	\$27,097	\$30,816	14%
Warren	\$15,382	\$17,565	\$20,174	15%
Wash Co	\$21,813	\$30,472	\$34,530	13%
Vermont	\$22,364	\$31,010	\$34,199	10%

### 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. 2001-2002 saw 45 new home permits in Fayston, 27 in Waitsfield and 48 in Warren. New lots for 2001-2002 were 19 in Waitsfield, 14 in Warren, Fayston had 9 in 2002. Figures for 2003-2007 are shown below.

2001-2007 Permits/lots	2003 SFP	2004 SFP	2005 SFP	2006 SFP	2007 SFP	2003 Lots	2004 Lots	2005 Lots	2006 Lots	2007 Lots
Fayston	20	18	17	13	10	8	15	20	13	18
Waitsfield	15	8	6	21	11	16	Not avail	9	not avail	19
Warren	33	27	18	16	16	18	30	30	18	9

### Average Single Family Housing Costs

	1995	2005	#sales	Percent increase
Fayston	\$133,000	\$262,895	16	98%
Waitsfield	\$142,000	\$270,826	24	91%
Warren	\$118,000	\$275,554	36	134%
Washington County	\$107,000	\$184,244	778	72%
Vermont	\$120,000	\$220,671	9135	84%

### MLS Statistics

	2006		2007	
	#sales	median \$	#sales	median \$
Fayston	19	\$315,000	16	\$343,000
Waitsfield	17	\$280,000	12	\$272,000
Warren	27	\$320,000	32	\$315,000

The first chart above is from State Data and uses Average House Sale Price. The data from the MLS for the two most recent years used median sale price for greater reliability. As an example – in 2006 the average house sale price in Fayston was \$444,718, due to 4 sales of \$748,000 and over, thus skewing the data higher.

The median and household incomes in the Valley allow for the purchase of homes in the range of \$175,000-\$200,000. 28% of our current homeowners have incomes below 80% of the County median income. Properties for sale under \$300,000 are scarce, and most of those that are available need updating and energy efficiency upgrades. 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. Our 2006 Housing Study indicates a current unmet need of 54 rental units and 38 units of elderly housing, a need that will escalate over the coming years. . By 2020, it is estimated that the Valley will need 150 new homes affordable to people earning up to 120% of median, including at least 100 affordable to folks earning less than 100% of median.

**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 2007 there are approximately 3,650 acres of land under conservation easements in the Valley. An additional 9,531 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	3,103- CHSF	1081	4,185	18%
Waitsfield	17,220		1613	1,613	11%
Warren	25,368	6,428-GMNF	956	7,384	29%
Valley total	65,948	9,531	3650	13,181	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, and the working landscape.

Agriculture remains an important part of the Valley’s economy, landscape and heritage. In 2005, this report indicated the Valley had about 4,200 total acres in agriculture or 6% of land in the three towns. Trying to quantify and update those numbers is difficult. The current USDA information indicates 9000 acres in farming, however, that includes land

owned by the farm that is also forested. The 2002 USDA Census of Agriculture is done by zip code, which corrupts the information for Fayston. That shows the following --

Town/zip code	# farms	1 to 49 acres	50 to 999 acres	Over 1000 acres
Warren 05674	30	17	12	1
Waitsfield 05673	35	16	19	0
Moretown 05660	18	5	13	0

Value of livestock, poultry and products sold (2002) shows the following information --

Town/zip code	# farms	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000-\$250,000	\$250,000 +
Warren 05674	9	8	0	1
Waitsfield 05673	12	6	6	0
Moretown 05660	10	6	4	0

Below is a list of 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

The Mad River Localvore Project has done a farm survey of the Valley and has reported over 25 farms that provide products ranging from beef to cheese to chickens and turkeys to vegetables and fruits and berries. There is no available total of the acreages involved. The 2002 National Agricultural Census reported 83 farms in the Valley, with only 44 of those containing more than 50 acres, with the majority of those making less than \$50,000 a year in sales of products.

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. The MRWCP Conservation Opportunities document indicates that there are currently between ten and twelve horse farms. 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**

	1994		2002		2004		2005		2006	
	Enrlm	\$/pupil	Enrlm	\$/pupil	Enrlm	\$/pupil	Enrlm	\$/pupil	Enrlm	\$/pupil
Fayston	171	\$7600	197	\$9200	207	\$9476	213	\$10943	198	\$11586
Waitsfield	249	\$6800	260	\$9200	280	\$9689	295	\$ 9293	275	\$10662
Warren	276	\$6200	313	\$9000	289	\$9658	267	\$10911	264	\$10763
Total	696		770		776		775		737	
% increase			+11%	+33%	+1%	+5%		+7%	-5%	

School enrollment in the three towns increased on average by 11% between 1994 and 2004, decreasing by 5% since then. Per pupil spending between 2002 and 2006 increased by 22% in Fayston, 16% in Waitsfield and 19% in Warren.

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 Waitsfield went down significantly in 2006 due to a Town-wide reassessment.

**Residential Tax Rates 1997-2007**

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Fayston	1.49	1.74	1.55	1.77	2.05	2.37	2.40	1.61	1.58	1.73	1.78
Waitsfield	1.76	1.90	1.98	2.34	2.31	2.53	2.80	2.49	2.59	1.41	1.38
Warren	1.09	1.48	1.44	1.48	2.07	2.30	1.70	2.26	2.45	2.67	2.74

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	4688 in <b>2005</b>	6437 by <b>2020</b>	37% increase
Sugarbush- skier days	362,552 in <b>96-97</b>	270,261 in <b>06-07</b>	26% decrease
*MRV Median Family Income	\$36,000 in <b>1989</b>	\$57,600 in <b>1999</b>	60% increase
Area of MR watershed 92,000 acres	Area of 3 towns 65,948 acres	Total acres in Ag 4,200	Total acres protected- 12,978
Acres privately conserved	657 acres in <b>1990</b>	3650 in <b>2007</b>	555% increase
School enrollment	770 in <b>2002</b>	737 in <b>2007</b>	5% decrease
*Cost/pupil	\$9133 in <b>2002</b>	\$11,003 in <b>2007</b>	20.4% increase

**Sources**

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

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

US Department of Agriculture

MRWCP *Conservation Opportunities*

Washington West Supervisory Union

Town Plans and Town Reports: Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren

VT Ski Area Association

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