

## What a Difference A Decade Makes

Roughly once a decade the MRV does a version of a community assessment, think of it as a health examination for the place where you live. This October a community vision-to-action forum will provide an opportunity for citizens to engage in an event that will both celebrate and evaluate life in the Mad River Valley. A few of the topics to be addressed are: community leadership, growth and development, environmental quality, and the stability of the local economy.

It's been over 10 years since the Valley Forum series was held and during the last decade things have changed in the world and in the Valley. For many the early 90's doesn't seem that long ago, yet think how much has changed. Ten years ago we were halfway through Bill Clinton's first term; and Mandela was President of South Africa. Nationally the median house price was \$109,000 compared with \$183,000 today.

Closer to home things were different too. In the Mad River Valley the percentage of households with income above \$75,000 increased from 7% in 1990 to 23% in 2000. Population growth in the 45-64 category was at twice the rate for the rest of Vermont, and for the over 65 group the rate of growth was three times faster than the state average. The Valley continues to be an attractive place for people seeking an active retirement.

Other indicators that help to create a snapshot of the Valley in the early 90's include:

- Skier days at Sugarbush, averaged around 300,000 for the first two seasons of the 90's with numbers very similar for the 2001 and 2002 seasons. Both sets of numbers are down considerably from 400,000 skier days in the 83-84 season.
- School enrollment (K-6) is down slightly from a three town total of 457 in 1994 to a projected 418 for 2004. The Warren school has seen the greatest decline in numbers. The trend may indicate that the Valley will need fewer schools in the future.
- Cost per pupil for the MRV towns was \$5450 in 90/91 and \$8211 in 00/01.
- Eighty five new construction permits were issued for Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren in 1990 compared with 156 in 2000.
- Fifty-six lots were created through the subdivision process in 1990 and 58 in 2000, 42 of them in Warren.
- Property tax rates which are a constant source of discussion in Vermont have changed.

	1991	2001
Fayston	4.82	2.05
Waitsfield	1.64	2.31
Warren	1.04	2.07

In 2020, a short sixteen years away, the Valley is expected to have a population of 6500. The current trends indicate that the local population is older than the county average and the percentage of people with incomes above \$75,000 is steadily increasing. The cost of land housing continues to increase and taxes are an issue. School enrollments have fallen slightly and with an aging population it's likely that there will be fewer children in the Valley.