

### III. POPULATION, HOUSING, AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

#### 3.1 Population

After decades of decline, Sandgate's population began to increase in the 1960s. The town's population grew very rapidly in the 1970s, and continued to grow, although at a more moderate pace, during the 1980s and 1990s (Table 3.1). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 353 year-round residents in Sandgate, and the population is expected to continue to increase over the next several years. The rate of population growth in Sandgate, consistently higher than the regional growth rate over the past 30 years, is projected to continue to grow at a fairly constant rate for the next several years.

Table 3.1

Population Growth - Sandgate, Vermont

<u>Year</u>	<u>Sandgate</u>	<u>Population % Change</u>	<u>Bennington Region</u>	<u>% Change</u>
1960	93	---	23,987	---
1970	127	36.6	28,279	17.9
1980	234	84.3	33,308	17.8
1990	278	18.8	34,516	3.6
2000	353	27.0	35,387	2.5

SOURCE: U.S. Census

The median age of Sandgate residents increased from 40.8 years to 46.1 years between 1990 and 2000. A profile of the town's population age structure reveals a relatively high proportion of people in older age categories when compared to Bennington County or Vermont as a whole (Table 3.2). This data suggests that Sandgate is home to a relatively large number of senior citizens and retirees, and fewer young families with children than an "average" town in the county or state.

Table 3.2

Population Age Characteristics  
Percent of Population in Age Class

	<u>0-17</u>	<u>18-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>	<u>65+</u>	<u>Median Age</u>
Sandgate	21.5	26.9	34.3	17.3	46.1
Bennington County	23.7	34.0	25.7	16.7	40.3
Vermont	24.2	38.3	24.8	12.7	37.7

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. Census

Many of Sandgate's residents have moved into the town from outside of Vermont. Much of the town's population growth in recent years has been due to this pattern of migration into the community.

### 3.2 Housing

As would be expected from the town's population growth over the past 30 years, Sandgate has seen a significant increase in the number of housing units during this same time. There are now 149 occupied year-round housing units in the town, an increase of 35 since 1990 (Table 3.3). Of particular interest is the fact that there is a large number of seasonal and recreational housing units in Sandgate. There appears to have been some conversion of seasonal dwellings to year-round housing units over the past decade. Clearly then, planning in Sandgate must give due consideration to both year-round and seasonal residential development.

<u>Year</u>	Occupied Year-Round <u>Housing Units</u>	Seasonal/ Recreational <u>Housing Units</u>	<u>Vacant Units</u>	Total <u>Housing Units</u>
1980	102	119	20	241
1990	114	128	20	262
2000	149	112	7	268

SOURCE: U.S. Census

Several other interesting facts about housing in Sandgate can be discerned from recent U.S. Census data. Of the 268 total housing units in town, nearly all are single-family dwellings or camps, and only 32 units are renter-occupied. Housing costs are relatively low in Sandgate. The median value of owner-occupied single-family in Sandgate in 2000 was \$89,700. At the same time, the county median home value was \$115,700, close to the state median value of \$111,500. The median monthly mortgage payment in Sandgate (\$933) is also lower than the county median (\$1,022). On the other hand, median monthly rental payments in Sandgate have increased in recent years to \$617, about \$80 more than the county-wide median. As a percentage of household income, housing costs in Sandgate are relatively high, with 20 percent of owners and 50 percent of renters paying at least 35% of their income toward housing costs.

It is likely that several new homes will be built in Sandgate over the next decade. If the population continues to grow at a consistent rate, up to 80 new residents will live in town. At the current average of 2.49 residents per year-round occupied unit, 32 new houses would be needed to accommodate this level of population growth. There is an adequate amount of land zoned for residential use that is physically capable of sustaining this level of growth over the next several years.

### 3.3 Economic Characteristics

Economic activities in Sandgate are quite limited due to the town's small size and remote location. The town's extensive forests sustain ongoing logging activities. Other than logging and a small amount of farming, however, the only economic enterprises in

Sandgate are several home occupations, an inn, and a garage. Most Sandgate residents who are in the labor force commute to work in another town.

The town's total work force (2000 Census data) consists of 192 persons. The unemployment rate in 2000 was 4.7%, only slightly higher than the county or state rates. Of the 178 adults who are employed 172 reported that they commute to work. The average commute time is approximately 30 minutes, reflecting, no doubt, the average commute times to the regional economic centers in Manchester and Bennington.

Data on the occupations of Sandgate residents reveals that a significant majority work in management, professional, sales, and other office occupations (Table 3.4). Service businesses, manufacturing, and retail trade are the leading employees by industrial classification.

The median income of a Sandgate household (\$41,250) is just slightly higher than the county and statewide medians (2000 Census data). The town's per capita income (\$22,096) also is higher than the county or statewide figures.

All of these economic and demographic statistics suggest that Sandgate is and will remain a very rural community with only limited economic activity within its borders. The town should support those industries that are most appropriate in this setting: principally forestry, agriculture, and home occupations. Improvements and technical advances in telecommunications can also be beneficial to Sandgate residents by enabling them to work out of their homes while exchanging information with offices or business clients in distant locations. Because many residents work in other towns in the area, local officials should also remain aware of important regional economic development issues.

Table 3.4

Occupation and Industry of Employed Residents of Sandgate, VT.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>
Management, professional, and related occupations	68
Service occupations	22
Sales and office occupations	43
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	8
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	15
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	27

  

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	14
Construction	10
Manufacturing	32
Wholesale trade	-
Retail trade	23
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	-
Information	6
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	8
Professional, scientific, management, administrative services	14
Educational, health, and social services	43
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	8
Other services	6
Public administration	19

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. Census