

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SOUTHWEST HARBOR

CENSUS COMPARISONS – indications of change derived from the population counts in 1990 & 2000

- Population Totals - The town population increased from 1,952 by only 14 persons to 1,966 by the year 2000, a 0.7% increase over a 10 year period – Bar Harbor (BH) increased by 9% (377 persons), Mt Desert (MD) by 11% (210 persons), and Tremont (TRE) by 15% (205 persons).
- Migration - As an indication of growing stability in population, slightly more than 1200 persons (63% of the population) had been living in the same house in SWH for over 5 years – this compared with 58% in 1990. Amongst the 760 persons who moved into Southwest Harbor during this period, 400 moved from within the same County, 60 from within the rest of the State, and 300 from out of State. (Almost the same number of people left.)
- Households – HH size continued to decrease from 2.3 to 2.1 over this period, the lowest in the area. For comparison, Tremont and the County are 2.3 and the State is 2.4.
- Age Distribution – Showed a marked decrease in the under 5's and increase in the over 45's. Also, there was a disturbing decrease in the 18 – 44 age group (child producing age).
- Education – Population highly educated at each end of age scale, but 25 – 40 group showed a marked decrease in the proportion who had obtained a high school diploma.
- Income – SWH, BH, & MD have higher per capita and median family income than TRE (Tremont's distribution more closely resembles Hancock County and the State of Maine).
- Labor Force – There was a fall of 1% in the labor force in spite of the small increase in total population. The number of females increased by 40 whereas the number of males dropped by 50. Unemployment figures slightly increased during the 10 year period (both in totals as well as percentage of labor force); as a comparison, Hancock County unemployment figures increased in numbers but decreased as a percentage of the labor force. SWH maintained its high self-employment rate relative to the State, although it did decrease. Fewer were employed as fishermen, in manufacturing, in trade, and public administration; more were employed in construction, insurance and real estate, recreation and accommodation, and food service. This indicates the growing importance of tourism in this area.

1996 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROJECTIONS

Population

- The Plan projected that Southwest Harbor would have a range of population between 2,000 – 2,020 by 2005. The US Bureau of the Census estimated that there were 1,983 persons in Southwest Harbor in 2005, an increase of 17 since the 2000 Census count, but 17 – 37 persons less than was projected by the Plan.
- Family size has decreased more quickly than projected by the Plan (2.20 was estimated by 2005 and the census counted 2.1 in 2000).
- The State is projecting a decrease in the year-round population for the Town over the next 10 year period, 2005 – 2015. Hancock County Planning Office has estimated the population for SWH as 1,969 persons by 2015, a .7% decrease. TRE will show the fastest rate of growth, BH will add the most people to its total, and MD & SWH are projected to be in decline. (continued)

School Enrollment

- 1996 to 2006 saw a decrease in enrollment from 264 to 194 students, whereas the School District had projected 254 pupils by 2006 – we have therefore 60 fewer students than were projected. The School says this reflects departure of families due to high property taxes and lack of jobs as well as a loss of Coast Guard families.

Seasonal Population

- 1996 Plan estimated an increased number of summer dwellings; based on this it is now estimated that there is accommodation for 1100 persons.
- SWH/Tremont Chamber figures: approximately 1880 beds + 25% additional nonmembers + 75% occupancy suggests approximately 1700 persons.
- People who live on boats + “day-trippers” estimated at 300 persons
- Thus, the Town year-round population of 1966 is augmented during the two summer months by an additional 3,100 persons, for a total of 5,066 persons – 1 ½ times the number who live here. These numbers will have an increased impact upon the Town, as the services required to meet the needs of the summer population have to be provided by the residents.

Economic Forecast

- Based on a very small increase in population and number of families, the economy was expected to grow at a low level.
- In 2005, the unemployment rate continued to fluctuate monthly from 8.6% to 2.8%, compared with the State’s fairly constant rate of 4.8%. This is however much less fluctuation than in 1994 (20.5% to 1.8%), perhaps indicating a shift in the type of employment.
- The Plan projected that the growth sectors of the economy would be in services, retail and construction. This has been shown to be true in the above results of the 2000 census - marking the trend toward a tourism based economy.