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## CHAPTER 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

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Waterville's future will be shaped in part by regional, statewide, and national trends. An understanding of the growth and change occurring within the population is essential to developing a realistic direction for the future. [For instance, a community whose growth is fueled by the in-migration of retirees will face different issues and have different needs than a community with a large in-migration of young families with children.] This chapter provides a summary of the demographic forces at work in Waterville and the implications of those factors for the future of the City.

### Population Trends: 1890 to 2000

Just 120 years ago (1890), Waterville had a population of 7,107 people, or about 45% of the 2010 population (15,722). From 1890 to 1960, Waterville's population grew from 7,107 to 18,695 people, albeit at a smaller and smaller rate each decade. The City's growth during that period reflected the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas in much of the nation as family-farming declined.

From 1960 until 2000, the population of the City declined. That decline also reflected a national trend, a movement away from urban areas into the surrounding countryside. Increased migration from Waterville was due in part to ease of commuting and people's desire to be close to amenities such as lakes and open space, larger house lots, new schools, and lower property taxes. [Between 1990 and 2000, for example, Waterville lost 1,400 persons through net migration and only 168 through natural change or decline in birth rate.]

### Population: 2010

After fifty years of decline, the population of Waterville increased in 2010, albeit only by 117 persons. Waterville experienced a net in-migration of 428 persons and a net natural loss of 311 persons according to figures provided by KVCOG.

Table 1-1 illustrates the City's growth trends since 1890 and compares the City's population change to County and State growth.

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**TABLE 1-1: POPULATION CHANGE 1890-2010**

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|      | <b>Waterville</b> | <b>Kennebec County</b> | <b>State of Maine</b> |
|------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1890 | <b>7,107</b>      | 57,012                 | 661,087               |
| 1900 | <b>9,477</b>      | 59,117                 | 694,466               |
| 1910 | <b>11,458</b>     | 62,863                 | 742,371               |
| 1920 | <b>13,351</b>     | 63,944                 | 768,014               |
| 1930 | <b>15,454</b>     | 70,691                 | 797,423               |
| 1940 | <b>16,688</b>     | 77,231                 | 847,226               |
| 1950 | <b>18,287</b>     | 73,831                 | 914,950               |
| 1960 | <b>18,695</b>     | 89,150                 | 969,265               |
| 1970 | <b>18,192</b>     | 95,247                 | 993,722               |
| 1980 | <b>17,779</b>     | 109,889                | 1,125,043             |

|      |               |         |           |
|------|---------------|---------|-----------|
| 1990 | <b>17,173</b> | 115,904 | 1,227,928 |
| 2000 | <b>15,605</b> | 117,114 | 1,274,923 |
| 2010 | <b>15,722</b> | 122,191 | 1,328,361 |

Source: U.S. Census .

### Statewide Population Comparison

According to the 2010 Census, Waterville is the fifteenth largest community in the State. It is smaller in population than only Portland, Lewiston, Bangor, South Portland, Auburn, Biddeford, Sanford, Brunswick, Augusta, Scarborough, Saco, Westbrook, Windham, and Gorham. The last five cities were smaller than Waterville in 1990, when Waterville was the tenth largest city by population.

[Note that the largest cities in Maine in 2010 were Portland, 66,194; Lewiston, 36,592; Bangor, 33,039; South Portland, 25,002; and Auburn, 23,055.]

### Regional Population Comparison

Despite the City's population losses since 1960, it still is by far the largest community in the region and remains a service center for its region. It is worth noting, also, that although the population of Waterville has declined, the regional population has increased substantially over the past five decades. [See Table 1-2.]

**TABLE 1-2: WATERVILLE AREA POPULATION CHANGE: 1960 - 2010**

| Community           | 1960          | 1970          | 1980          | 1990          | 2000          | 2010          | % Change<br>1960-2010 |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Waterville</b>   | <b>18,695</b> | <b>18,192</b> | <b>17,779</b> | <b>17,173</b> | <b>15,605</b> | <b>15,722</b> | <b>-15.9%</b>         |
| Albion              | 974           | 1,056         | 1,551         | 1,736         | 1,946         | 2,041         |                       |
| Belgrade            | 1,102         | 1,302         | 2,043         | 2,375         | 2,978         | 3,189         |                       |
| Benton              | 1,521         | 1,729         | 2,188         | 2,312         | 2,557         | 2,732         |                       |
| China               | 1,961         | 1,850         | 2,918         | 3,713         | 4,106         | 4,328         |                       |
| Clinton             | 1,729         | 1,971         | 2,696         | 3,332         | 3,340         | 3,486         |                       |
| <b>Fairfield</b>    | 5,829         | 5,684         | 6,113         | 6,718         | 6,573         | 6,735         | +15%                  |
| <b>Oakland</b>      | 3,075         | 3,535         | 5,162         | 5,595         | 5,959         | 6,280         | +104%                 |
| Rome                | 367           | 362           | 627           | 758           | 980           | 1,010         |                       |
| <b>Sidney</b>       | 988           | 1,319         | 2,052         | 2,593         | 3,514         | 4,208         | +325%                 |
| Smithfield          | 382           | 527           | 748           | 865           | 930           | 1,033         |                       |
| Vassalboro          | 2,446         | 2,618         | 3,410         | 3,679         | 4,047         | 4,340         |                       |
| <b>Winslow</b>      | 5,891         | 7,299         | 8,057         | 7,997         | 7,743         | 7,794         | +32%                  |
| <b>Total Region</b> | 44,960        | 47,444        | 55,344        | 58,846        | 60,278        | 62,898        | <b>+39.9%</b>         |

Source: US Census.

### Population Projection

KVCOG projected that Waterville's population will decline to 14,500 by 2030.

## **Seasonal Population**

With 66 seasonal housing units (2010 Census), Waterville clearly does not have a large influx of summer residents in seasonal dwellings. The City does, however, host a significant number of college students each school year at Colby College and Thomas College. The 2010 Census lists 1,826 non-institutionalized persons in group quarters.

While neither Colby nor Thomas offer summer sessions, both offer special programs to visiting groups. Colby schedules over 50 summer programs, including refresher courses for doctors and athletic camps for children, and attracts approximately 7,000 persons to Waterville over the course of the summer. Thomas College offers Elder Hostel. At the same time, some Waterville residents move to houses on nearby lakes. Some rent their Waterville homes to persons attending Colby's special programs, while others leave their winter homes empty.

## **Household Change**

The 1970s saw a dramatic decrease in household size. In Waterville, the average household shrank from 3.15 persons in 1970 to 2.50 in 1980. That decrease was typical of national trends and was caused by a variety of factors including lower birth rates, increased longevity among the elderly, higher divorce rates, and more elderly and young people living independently in their own homes.

The trend of decreasing household size has continued, but at a slower rate. The 2010 Census indicated an average household size of 2.13 persons in Waterville. There were 2,481 single person households representing more than a third (38.9%) of Waterville's 6,370 households. Husbands and wives without their own children under age 18, accounted for 1,387 or 21.8% of households.

Only 1,577 households, about a quarter (24.8%) of Waterville's households, had children. Of those households with children, 565 were headed by single mothers and 181 were headed by single fathers. [For school enrollment projections, see Chapter 6: Public Facilities and Services.]

## **Impact of Household Change on Housing Demand**

Over the past fifty years, the decrease in household size has had a substantial impact on residential development in Maine communities, including Waterville. During the 1980s, for example, although the population of Waterville declined by 606 persons, the number of households increased by 382. Consequently, more dwelling units were needed to house fewer people.

Between 1990 and 2010, Waterville lost 8.4% of its population (1,451 persons). Over that same period of twenty years, Waterville lost only 213 households or 3.2% of its households. [There were 6,583 households in Waterville in 1990 compared with 6,370 households in 2010.]

## **Age Distribution**

As might be expected, and as shown on Table 1-3, in 2010 Waterville had a much higher percentage of college-aged adults (18-20) and a lower median age than both Kennebec County and the State. Those statistics reflect the presence of Colby College and Thomas College. Also in part because of 20-year-olds in the colleges, Table 1-4 shows that Waterville had a higher percentage of adults in the child-rearing age group (20-39) than the County or the State.

**TABLE 1-3**  
**COLLEGE AGE AND MEDIAN AGE**  
**WATERVILLE, KENNEBEC COUNTY, STATE**  
**2010**

|                    | 18-20<br>Years | Median<br>Age |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Waterville         | 1,593<br>10.1% | 36.8          |
| Kennebec<br>County | 4,927<br>4.0%  | 42.8          |
| State of<br>Maine  | 53,834<br>4.0% | 42.7          |

Source: U.S. Census 2010.

Table 1-4 shows, too, that the City also had a higher percentage of elderly (85 and older) than Kennebec County or the State. This is explained in part by the presence of numerous nursing homes and apartments, including apartments provided for the elderly by Waterville Housing Authority and the Catholic Church. The ease of access to shopping and medical services in this service center community also makes it an attractive location for the elderly.

The middle-age group (40-64), on the other hand, is a smaller percentage of the population in Waterville than it is in Kennebec County or the State. Given that the entire baby boom generation was included in the age 40-64 cohort in 2010 and that it covers a span of 24 years, it is surprising that that group is not larger in Waterville.

This relatively small cohort may suggest that the trend of population movement from the City to surrounding rural communities has continued among persons in the 40-64 age group. Those persons moving out may be motivated in part by the limited supply of newer homes for sale at the higher end of the housing market in Waterville. Many of them presumably are commuting back into Waterville to work.

**TABLE 1-4**  
**AGE DISTRIBUTION COMPARISONS**  
**POPULATION AND PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BY AGE GROUP**  
**WATERVILLE, KENNEBEC COUNTY, AND STATE**  
**2010**

|                    | Under<br>Age 5 | 5-19<br>Years    | 20-39<br>Years   | 40-64<br>Years   | 65-84<br>Years   | 85+<br>Years   |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Waterville         | 855<br>5.4%    | 2,932<br>18.6%   | 4,592<br>29.2%   | 4,720<br>30.0%   | 2,034<br>12.9%   | 589<br>3.7%    |
| Kennebec<br>County | 6,334<br>5.2%  | 22,248<br>18.2%  | 27,832<br>22.8%  | 46,777<br>38.3%  | 16,293<br>13.3%  | 2,667<br>2.2%  |
| State of<br>Maine  | 69,520<br>5.2% | 241,439<br>18.1% | 304,175<br>22.9% | 502,147<br>37.8% | 181,944<br>13.7% | 29,136<br>2.2% |

Source: U.S. Census 2010. (Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.)

**Population Projection to 2020 by Age Group**

The State has no population projection by age group for the year 2020 for Waterville. However, we can expect to see a slight increase in the number of persons ages 18 to 21, because of a planned increase in enrollment at Thomas College. We also will see an increase in the 65-84 age group, as the older half of the baby boom will have moved into that bracket by 2020.

**Educational Attainment**

In 2009 Waterville had a smaller percentage of people age 25 and older with at least a high school diploma (86.8%) than the State (89.4%). In addition, Waterville had a smaller percentage of people age 25 and older with at least a bachelor's degree or higher (24.1%) than the State (26.1%). One might expect a higher percentage of persons with advanced degrees given the presence of Colby College and Thomas College and the City's hospitals. Furthermore, Waterville is a service center community where professional services such as legal, accounting, engineering, medical, and dental services are available. This lower than expected percentage of persons with advanced

degrees may be indicative of the number of middle income persons who have moved out to the outlying towns and who commute back to Waterville for work. The lower percentage of people age 25 and older with at least a high school diploma reflects the poverty rate in Waterville.

**Income Characteristics**

Table 1-5 shows that Waterville's 2009 median family income (\$39,928) was substantially lower than that of Kennebec County (\$57,410) and the State (\$57,257). In addition, the percentage of families below federal poverty level in Waterville (18.4%) was more than twice as high as both Kennebec County (8.4%) and the State (8.6%).

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**TABLE 1-5**  
**INCOME CHARACTERISTICS**  
**WATERVILLE, KENNEBEC COUNTY, STATE**  
**2009**

|                        | <b>Median Family Income</b> | <b>% of Families Below Federal Poverty Level</b> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Waterville</b>      | <b>\$39,928</b>             | <b>18.4%</b>                                     |
| <b>Kennebec County</b> | <b>\$57,410</b>             | <b>8.4%</b>                                      |
| <b>State of Maine</b>  | <b>\$57,257</b>             | <b>8.6%</b>                                      |

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Source: US Census, 2009.

Poverty is very apparent in the elementary schools. The Waterville School Department reported that 67% of children in kindergarten in the 2007-2008 school year were from low income families and 48% "scored below the norms that lead to successful transition into public school" when screened prior to entering kindergarten. Among all kindergarten through third grade students in the Waterville public schools in 2010, 64% received free or reduced-price lunches. This percentage is considerably higher than the 34% of children in all grades in Maine and 36% in Kennebec County who qualify for free or reduced-priced meals. (Sources: Educare Central Maine application July 2008 and August 2011 Promise Neighborhoods Grant Application.)

In 2009, Waterville conducted an income survey which determined that 56% of Waterville's population is low- or moderate-income (LMI), well above the 2000 Census figure of 49.8% LMI. The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) has accepted the

results of the survey, making Waterville income-eligible to apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for public facilities. [LMI means an income at or below 80% of the county median, adjusted for family size.]

An additional indicator of poverty in Waterville is the City's community evaluation factor calculated by DECD in 2008. The score is composed of 4 factors: substandard housing (housing built before 1939), housing affordability index, tax burden, and low income population (less than 50% of area median income). Waterville and Mars Hill both scored 18 out of a possible 20 points, earning the highest distress scores in the State.

### **Issues and Needs**

1. Waterville needs to attract young people to the *region* in order to fill projected job openings (nurses, for example). Expanding the workforce, in turn, will attract new businesses to bolster the economy.
2. Waterville needs to plan for those in poverty and residents 65 and older.