

1980

MAD RIVER VALLEY PERSPECTIVES

Humanist Coordinator: Nancy Price Graff

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Please contact the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (229-0389) or the Valley Study Office (496-4393) for meeting places and times.

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Mad River Valley Perspectives

Humanist Coordinator's Report

Humanist Coordinator: Nancy Price Graff

Mad River Valley Perspectives was a fourteen-part series of public forums designed to examine issues of growth and development in the towns of Warren, Waitsfield, and Fayston. It was one part of the much larger Mad River Valley Growth Impact Study undertaken by the Farmer's Home Administration and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. The forums were supported jointly by the Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, and were intended both to bring experts from various disciplines into the valley to provide some perspective on the complex issues being considered and to stimulate discussion among valley residents in the hope of soliciting local opinion on those issues. The design was to place issues such as population growth, increase in traffic, and changes in land use or municipal governments in a humanistic framework so that their effects on the total life and lifestyle of the valley could be gauged. The Planning Commission hoped through the forum discussions to learn the attitudes of valley residents toward these issues and to use this information as a planning guide.

The series was divided into three parts: the land, the economy, and the people, with the parts including five, three and six forums respectively. Approximately 800 people attended the fourteen forums, with the number of distinct participants slightly less than one-third that figure. The average attendance at a forum was sixty and interest in the series remained high to the end. For each forum, an effort was made to attract those in the valley with a special interest in or knowledge of the evening's topic and this effort met with reasonable success. At the forum on farming in the valley, for example, eleven farmers were represented; at the forum on the recreation industry, all three alpine ski areas were represented, as were sport stores, realtors and tourist services.

The five forums on the land and landscape examined, in order, America's cultural preferences for landscapes, the history of strip development, attitudes toward the land and the effect of those attitudes on land use, theories of land regulation and the history of social attitudes toward that regulation, and America's tendency to distort the reality of its landscape in favor of popular images. Scholars were drawn from Middlebury and Dartmouth Colleges, Vermont Law School, Charlotte and Montpelier, and represented the fields of geography, historic preservation, history, philosophy, environmental law, and art history.

The three forums designated for economic interest groups within the valley were directed toward small businessmen, people involved directly or indirectly with tourism and recreation, and farm families. The presentations involved scholars from Norwich University, the Upper Valley-Lake Sunapee Council of New Hampshire, and the University of Vermont. The forums examined the special character and needs of businessmen in tourist areas, the history of recreation in Vermont, the effect of tourism on the state and its communities, and the image and problems of the Yankee farmer.

The six forums in the "People" set ranged more widely than those in previous parts. The first was a Mock Town Meeting exercise designed to focus discussion on several issues of increasing importance within the valley. The final five forums examined, in order, the role of women in the work and future of the valley, the relation of place names to place-identity, the history in Vermont of intra-municipal and intermunicipal cooperation, the problems of housing in the valley and some possible solutions to those problems, and the various elements that comprise a good quality of life. Scholars were drawn from the University of Vermont, Johnson State College, Middlebury College, and Montpelier, and represented the fields of economics, women's studies, history, art history, geography, engineering, and political science.

The forums were structured to fit the dual purpose for which they were sponsored. Sessions began with presentations by the humanists or scholars that ranged from a half-hour to an hour in length. During this time, the evening's topic was introduced and particular aspects of it were examined. This was followed by a break in the program for refreshments, but this pause served a more important function of allowing the audience a moment to reflect on the presentation, and to consider its relation and relevance to the valley. After the break, the audience and scholars reassembled for an informal discussion moderated by the Perspectives coordinator. This was the opportunity for valley residents to address the scholars, which they did in proportion to his or her ability to respond to audience comments directly, but it was also the opportunity for discussion among the audience members. The programs ran approximately two and a half hours, from 7:30 to 10:00 p.m., and few people left before the programs concluded.

One event that differed in format was the scholars session, an addition to the series as originally designed, funded by a supplementary Humanities Council grant. Fifteen of the twenty participating Perspectives scholars attended the preliminary session in early January, which was also attended by members of the Planning Commission, the Director of the Mad River Valley Growth Impact Study, several valley residents, the valley representative to the Vermont House, and reporters to The Valley Reporter and The Burlington Free Press. The purpose of the session was to introduce participating scholars to each other, to explain the series and the study in greater detail, and to familiarize scholars with conditions in the Mad River Valley. It was an unqualified success and contributed immeasurably to the success of individual programs as well as to the success of the series as a whole.

"Success" in the major portion of this project has different definitions. As a planning exercise, the forums were most useful the more narrowly they focused on the valley's specific problems and situations. As a humanistic exercise, the forums were most exciting when they succeeded in placing these specific problems and situations in a larger context. For this reason, the

Planning Commission considers the land preservation, Mock Town Meeting, and housing forums to have been among the most useful, while the Humanities Council should regard the forums on attitudes toward the land and perceptions of the landscape as most successful.*

Attendance figures are equally ambiguous. Approximately 837 people attended the fourteen forums; however, the number of distinct participants was closer to 275. This represents about ten percent of the adult population of the three Mad River Valley towns. From a Humanities Council viewpoint, it should be rewarding to note that the attendance statistics indicate a large number of repeat participants. The Perspectives series did attract a loose group of devotees who were faithful and interested followers of the programs and active participants in the discussions. Unfortunately for the planners, however, the audiences were not truly representative of the valley population. Waitsfield was under-represented, for example, as were young, single or married people; service workers in the ski and tourist industries; and valley natives.

The most visible product of the Perspectives forums were written summaries of the discussions, copies of which were supplied to the Regional Planning Commission, to members of the Mad River Valley Growth Impact Study Steering Committee, the Planning Commissions of the three towns, and to the Joslin Public Library in Waitsfield.* These summaries do not attempt to incorporate the humanities presentations delivered before the discussions nor do they give a true indication of the influence of the humanities on the ensuing discussion. They are as straightforward as possible for planning convenience (and attempt to group opinions and ideas without imposing conformity on the ideas or insisting upon consensus among the participants). To the extent that particular valley issues and topics were discussed, the summaries deal as specifically as possible with those issues and topics.

The Perspectives series also had unanticipated results. Participants of the economic forums were impressed by their own gathering and discussion; they left the meetings pledging to meet with each other again for a lengthier discussion of their common concerns. Advocates at the early forums of either an informal or formal valley planning group were heeded; town planning commissions in the valley have begun working together and there is thought of continuing the Mad River Valley Growth Impact Study Steering Committee as a formal valley planning committee. Women at the women's forum were considering forming a valley business-women's group to promote the area and their businesses and to help each other solve business problems; several weeks after the forum, the Valley Business Women's Association held its first meeting. One other new valley organization grew out of the series. Although the series itself was designed to be impartial, it served as a meeting ground for valley residents and some of those have combined in a valley anti-development group whose object is to oppose the Sugarbush Valley development proposal.

Although the Perspectives series may have failed to achieve the level of specificity originally envisioned by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, it did produce information that planners should find useful. The summaries reveal few, if any, surprising attitudes toward the issues of growth

*Copies of several summaries are attached.

and development in the valley, but they reinforce the Planning Commission's instincts and ideas. The validity of the summaries, in turn, was confirmed by a valley-wide questionnaire survey conducted by the Commission in early March that brought a forty percent response.

The Mad River Valley Perspectives achieved a greater success in raising the level of awareness in the valley of how it came to face the particular pressures it faces and of what it may face in the future. In general, the participating scholars placed the issues in context, highlighted the gray areas in what are often considered black and white issues, and offered an outside perspective on the valley's situation. Valley residents on the whole responded well to the presentations, giving them thoughtful hearings and using the scholars' offerings to reach a better understanding of the issues they confront. The insight offered by the humanists, as well as the discussion comments, were disseminated to an even wider audience by regular and prominent press coverage.

The greatest achievement, however, was the bridge built by the series between the humanities and public policy in the valley. Participating scholars were sensitive to the Humanities Council charge to use their disciplines to examine the value and cultural conflicts inherent in the growth decisions to be made in the valley and valley residents, in their turn, appreciated the freshness and value of the humanities approach. They were entertained while being guided to a greater understanding of their own and their neighbors' opinions. Although the influence of the discussions cannot be determined until new town plans are written for the valley communities, the impact of the series may have been summarized by a valley resident who described it as "a once in a lifetime opportunity for an area this size."

Mad River Valley Perspectives

date-place	title-subject	scholars	evaluator	#	audience
THE LAND January 17 Our Lady of the Snows Waitsfield	Look down the long valley and there stands a mountain: Images of Vermont	Stewart McHenry Geography Charlotte	Philip Elwert Assistant Director Vermont Historical Society Montpelier	+110	general
January 24 Waitsfield Elementary School	Keeping an eye on the yellow brick road: The function and future of Route 100	Chester Liebs Historic Preservation University of Vermont	Jules Rabin Anthropology Plainfield	+100	general farmers business people ski industry
January 30 Fayston Elementary School	Pastures of plenty and pas- tures for plenty: Attitudes toward the land	John McCardell History Middlebury College	William Curley III Philosophy Montpelier	+63	general farmers ski industry
February 7 Warren Elementary School	Dollars and Sense: Should we preserve open land?	Richard Brooks Jurisprudence Vermont Law School William Curley III Philosophy University of Vermont	Harold Meeks Geography University of Vermont	+80	general ski industry selectmen planning commissioners

Mad River Valley Perspectives

date-place	title-subject	scholars	evaluator		audience
February 13 Green Mountain Valley School	Vermont's Mountain Majesty: Perceptions of the landscape	Robert McGrath Art History Dartmouth College	Stewart McHenry Geography Charlotte	+60	general
THE ECONOMY February 4 Our Lady of the Snows Waitsfield	Minding your own business: Small business in the valley	Eber Spencer History Norwich University James Wechsler Upper Valley/Lake Sunapee Council Lebanon, N.H.	Jennie Stoler Economics University of Vermont	+55	business people ski industry Valley Area Assoc.
February 20 Sugarbush Inn Warren	Playing for keeps: The recreation industry in the valley	Malcolm Bevins Natural Resources University of Vermont James Overfield History University of Vermont	Frederick Schmidt Sociology University of Vermont	+66	general farmers ski industry sport stores business people
February 28 Waitsfield Federated Church	What now brown cow? The evolving Yankee farmer	Frederick Schmidt Sociology University of Vermont "Last Stand Farmer" (film)	Jan Lewandoski History, Political Science Johnson State College	+65	general farmers

Mad River Valley Perspectives

date-place	title-subject	scholars	evaluator	audience
THE PEOPLE March 25 Warren Town Hall	Mock Town Meeting	Frank Bryan Political Science University of Vermont	Charles Morrissey History Montpelier	+50 selectmen planning commissioners general
April 16 Waitsfield Federated Church	Remember the ladies: Women in the valley	Jennie Stoler Economics University of Vermont	Frank Bryan Political Science University of Vermont	17 women business people
April 24 Fayston Town Hall	What's in a name? Should the Mad River Valley consider changing its name	H. Gardiner Barnum Geography University of Vermont	Phillip Elwert Assistant Director Vermont Historical Society Montpelier	28 general ski industry
May 1 Oddfellows Hall Waitsfield	You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours: Is inter- municipal cooperation desirable or feasible	Charles Morrissey History Montpelier	Mary Gover History Montpelier	23 selectmen planning commissioners general

Mad River Valley Perspectives

date-place	title-subject	scholars	evaluator		audience
May 8 Sugarbush Inn Warren	A room of one's own: The housing situation in the valley	Glenn Andres Art History Middlebury College Richard Downer Civil Engineering University of Vermont	Betsy Bouton Historic Preservation Montpelier	+60	architects selectmen planning commissioners developers realtors general
June 5 Waitsfield Elementary	Vermont - a way of life: Finding and preserving a comfortable way of life	Jan Lewandoski History, Political Science Johnson State College Harold Meeks Geography University of Vermont Nancy Price Graff History Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Montpelier "A Question of Values" (film)	H. Gardiner Barnum Geography University of Vermont	+60	general
SCHOLARS' SESSION					
January 12 Fayston Town Hall	Orientation session		Jennifer Meub	25	humanists/scholars planning commissioners valley residents valley officials reporters

Look down the long valley and there stands a mountain: Images of Vermont
January 17, 1980

Among the 110 people who attended the first forum, "Images of Vermont," only three opinions seemed to be widely shared: that the Mad River Valley is an area of special beauty; that the Mad River Valley is under intense pressure; and that the people of the valley do not share the same ideas about how to control the impending growth to limit effects on the landscape and on the essentially rural way of life.

The presence of these shared opinions, however, did not necessarily reflect widespread agreement on means or ends in attempts to preserve the special qualities of the valley. Several people were not inclined to encourage or accept even modest growth; others were less adamantly opposed to growth, but were unsure of how much growth should or could be tolerated. Clifford Wallis and Bill Heinzerling, for example, believe that rigid zoning is necessary immediately to protect the valley from all further development. The opposite opinion was expressed by Lenny Julius, a relatively recent emigrant from New York City, who described the valley as "underdeveloped," but who, nevertheless, seemed to desire some constraints on further development.

Middle opinions were expressed by Arthur Williams of Fayston and Ron Court of Waitsfield, both of whom acknowledged the economic importance of the ski areas, the inevitability of at least some growth, the aesthetic values of the valley's landscape--both on life and on tourism in the valley, and the need to use education and some form of regulation to direct well-considered growth. These men believe the valley has not suffered too badly yet and is in a strong position to determine its future.

Four other people expressed opinions or ideas that also deserve note. Answering a challenge to name exactly what he wanted for the future of the valley, Russ Chalom listed protection of the mountains, energy self-sufficiency, the development of the valley's resources, a diversified economic base, strong planning commissions, and the preservation of Eurich pond. Later speakers challenged every item on the list to some degree. Lenny Julius asked the question, "Are we a rural area or a resort," and succeeding speakers concurred that this was an important dilemma to resolve. One of these went even further, however, and said that "mistrust" over goals and plans among neighbors, towns, and economic interest groups would hinder decision making. Finally, Mrs. Clifford Wallis expressed fear that if the valley's landscape and way of life deteriorate because of future growth, present inhabitants will desert the valley leaving behind failed businesses and empty houses.

"Keeping an eye on the yellow brick road: The function and future of Route 100"
Waitsfield Elementary School

Discussion at the second forum, "The function and future of Route 100" ranged over a variety of subjects and reflected an equal variety of perspectives, but one clear message emerged: people in the valley are concerned with preserving Route 100 in its present state. In the course of the discussion, different people described the road corridor as "picturesque," "scenic," and "rural," terms that could have different meanings, but which in this case, seem intended to describe the present condition of Route 100. This is significant because it suggests that people are not dissatisfied with current development along the road and that they feel the area is in a strong position to make decisions about the future of Route 100.

Two people were especially eloquent on this subject. Courtney Fisher referred to Rt. 100 as "the calling card" of the area and called for vigilance in regard to strip development to ensure that tourists would continue to visit the valley to enjoy its "pastoral landscape." In his opinion, present development is neither so distracting nor overwhelming that tourists cannot overlook it to the landscape beyond. Lenny Julius, later in the evening, described the Rt. 100 corridor as a "metaphor of the quality of the valley." He stressed its significance to the area as the tourist thoroughfare and called for it to remain free of "excessive or bad development."

Three people picked up on this idea and addressed themselves to specific assets of the road. Otis Wallis, who believes growth in the valley is inevitable, stressed the importance of clustering businesses in the village," (referring to Waitsfield), both to promote a village atmosphere and to save Route 100 from strip development along its length. In his opinion, this seems to be occurring at present, with the added benefit that older buildings in the village's center are being re-cycled and improved. Ken Quackenbush concurred that the "picturesqueness" of Waitsfield ought to be preserved. Towny Anderson, though he did not address the idea of clustering or town centers specifically, felt that farmland along Route 100 had to be preserved for the valley's own best interests and that strip development was a great threat to this preservation.

Three other speakers also shed light on the valley's attitude toward Route 100. Jack Tobin is one who feels that the valley is in a strong position to protect and preserve Route 100, and therefore the "lovely rural nature of the area," because the present ski development on the mountain "has not really changed the area." If the area continues to grow and develop, however, he feels that concentrated pockets

of development are imperative to save both the general character of the Mad River Valley and Route 100. Jim Hubbell, a later speaker, was less optimistic that the character of the area could be preserved if the ski areas expand. He argued that bigger ski areas mean more people and that growth on the mountain is bound to creep down to the valley and spread itself along Route 100, either in the form of new buildings or increased traffic. This thought was echoed by Hugh McIntyre, who said that people in the valley generally fear that "development anywhere will affect Route 100." Implied but not expressed was the fear that this development will be a negative influence on the area's character and quality of life.

A brief portion of the discussion was devoted to exploring how Route 100 can be preserved and Dennis Malloy from the state Scenery Preservation Board was available to answer questions about scenic road designation. Malloy's remarks and the general response, although this was not developed, suggested that the towns in the valley would be wisest to prepare local plans to preserve the road and this fits a pattern for local control that seems to be emerging.

"Pastures of plenty and pastures for plenty: Attitudes toward the land"

January 30, 1980

Discussion at the forum, "Pastures of plenty and pastures for plenty: Attitudes toward the land," tended to cluster around several themes: concerns of people in the valley; priorities to establish; and the extent to which valley residents have control over the area's destiny, as well as the type of control that would be best exercised.

Barry Simpson began the discussion of the valley's concerns by pointing out that the area suffers from increasing development without the concurrent diversity that usually follows. John McCardell picked up on this idea, likening the valley to mill-towns or Detroit, areas that were or are overly vulnerable to the dictates of a single industry and which have consequently suffered. This awareness was mentioned several times throughout the course of the discussion and suggests a desire to strive for greater economic diversity.

The most obvious economic antidote to the "mono-culture," as it was described by one spokesman, was felt to be farming. Often throughout the evening, the importance of saving farming in the valley was stressed, both for its aesthetic and economic benefits. However, speakers generally carried the idea further than they had in earlier forums. Dorothy Tod Cheney was the first to insist that farms be preserved in the valley, but she also maintained that the farms had to be preserved by their own economic viability and not through contrived measures. Both she and Mary Kerr developed that idea by referring to the "support system" that farming requires to be feasible. Elwin Neill, Jr., however, said that he felt farming in the valley was relatively secure for awhile--because of good land, profit making businesses, and strong family ties--but that even if the present support system crumbles, farmers in the valley would make an effort to continue.

In the course of the evening, a short list of priorities emerged for the future of the valley, but none was offered without conditions, even when these conditions seem irreconcilable with the priority. Of primary importance is preserving farms, with the unchallenged condition that the farms be economically capable of preserving themselves. Another priority is the preservation of open land, but again, according to several speakers (Cheney, Kerr), the land must be kept open through efforts such as grazing that do not require great expenditures of money, purchased energy, or human effort. Towny Anderson, while not discounting the importance of open land, pointed out that open land in the valley was not in great danger of going to seed currently because the high price for the land was an incentive to keep it that way. Finally, there was a brief discussion of the importance of having land available--in various lot sizes, most in the 5-50 acre size--to valley residents for purchase and development for personal use. The inconsistent qualification here, expressed by

Clifford Wallis and Elwin Neill, Jr. was that noone should have to look at this development. A sympathetic laugh from the audience suggests that this feeling is widely shared. Ken Quackenbush pushed the idea even further by arguing that this dispersed development was a greater threat to the valley than the ski areas.

Finally, several speakers took up the subject of how much control valley residents have over the future of the valley and four opinions were expressed. Bill Heinzerling and Clifford Wallis share the feeling that a "moratorium on development" or strict zoning are the only ways to preserve the valley. Both men feel relatively impotent before the ski industry in the valley. Henri deMarne, in responding to this, said that he saw no reason why the valley had to "leapfrog into development by thinking we must provide for everyone. Let the area reach its own level." He described a "natural balance" that could be achieved with moderate zoning that would limit how quickly the valley could grow by limiting the number of jobs the area could offer. John Connell, earlier in the evening, argued that planning for the area was not realistic if it was done solely within towns and not coordinated valley-wide. Lenny Julius was the last speaker to address this subject and he pointed out that the national economy and the energy crisis were going to be powerful factors in the future of the valley and that the area should be prepared to survive without the federal assistance that Vermont has enjoyed for many years.

Eighty people attended the fourth forum in "the land" series, "Should we preserve open land?" Approximately one-eighth of these were newcomers and approximately another eighth had attended only one previous session. At slightly more than one-third of the way through the entire "Perspectives" series, therefore, the five forums (this includes one economic forum) have attracted a total of 388 people, although the number of distinct participants has been half that figure.

The discussion for this particular forum focused on an unresearched land preservation plan for the Mad River Valley, a copy of which is attached. It was devised for the purposes of discussion to gauge people's attitudes toward land regulation in the valley; consequently the summary that follows reflects primarily remarks directed to this scheme. How far the remarks may be stretched to encompass all land preservation plans is open to question. Furthermore, the participants were divided into two discussion groups, so the summary is similarly divided.

Group I

There was widespread, perhaps unanimous, agreement that open land in the valley must be preserved; that it is a vitally important element in the life and aesthetics of the area. Moreover, people seemed to agree that open land, in this sense, has to include recreational areas that would benefit the entire valley; the greenbelt along Route 100; several large, key farms (which remained unnamed); and several key cleared, but not farmed, lands that also remained unnamed, but whose locations seemed to be known to most people in the group.

There was also widespread, perhaps unanimous, agreement in this group that local control is essential to the success of any land preservation plan. This concept of "local control" is a concern that has been expressed at several of the forums and one that has met with much enthusiasm from valley residents. Here, as in the other references, "local control" was interpreted in valley-wide, not town, terms.

Opinions began to splinter over the question of whether all valley residents should pay to preserve these open spaces in the valley's behalf. Bill Heinzerling said that valley residents must be willing to pay or the spaces will succumb to development pressures. Kit Hartshorn felt that valley residents should be willing to pay all owners of pivotal open land to ensure the continuation of that open space, regardless of the financial status of those owners, because the benefits would be shared by the entire valley. It was an opinion that seemed to invite disagreement but it was not pursued.

The only clearly expressed opposition to the purchase of conservation easements described in the plan came from a young farmer, Elwin Neill, Jr. It is farmland such as his, however, that is vital to the success of any preservation plan. Elwin argued that any such plan would lower his collateral at the bank; failed to take into account the realities of inflation, especially in real estate that rapidly increased in value annually; and could not accurately determine the effect that a large increase in development on the mountain would have on run-off onto his farmland, with the result that he stood to lose both his land's development and agricultural potential. He also expressed opposition

to the plan on a more emotional but not less significant level. He described his own feelings as a farmer toward his land and concluded that he would not be happy to lose any right to the land that he worked.

The only other speaker who seemed to question the plan wondered if further segregating valley residents into groups that were especially taxed and communally supported would, in the end, be in the valley's interests. Presumably he was referring to a community breach suggested often by many speakers at other forums, between part-time condominium "mountain people" and full-time valley residents. His concern, in that light, was that the special assessment district would encourage further alienation.

Vermont's Mountain Majesty: Perceptions of the landscape
February 13, 1980

Approximately sixty people attended the final forum in "The Land" series, "Vermont's mountain majesty: Perceptions of the landscape." Discussion tended to cluster around several themes: how the ski slopes are perceived in the valley as well as how these perceptions have evolved over the past twenty years; what role the mountains in the Mad River Valley play in defining the area; and difficulties in the development of the ski industry in the valley.

Ted Montgomery started off the discussion by referring to a speaker at a previous session and labelling the area's ski slopes "the calling card of the valley." He mentioned their "sign value" in attracting tourists and recreationists to the valley and said that their high visibility throughout the area was a "damn strong statement" of the Mad River Valley's economic focus. Mrs. Clifford Wallis argued that the "sign value" to which Montgomery referred was "a sign of commercialism," but Art Williams felt this was a relatively new attitude. Twenty-five years ago, he said, people wanted to build their houses on sites that overlooked the ski slopes. At that time, the ski trails represented recreational opportunities and prosperity that first attracted many people to the area. In Williams' opinion, however, that attitude has changed. "What was the best view and best site no longer is," he said, implying that the current idea of "best view and best site" is one that overlooks a rural landscape.

It seemed generally agreed, however, that despite the importance of farmland in the area, the mountain ranges give geographical and psychological definition to the valley. Mrs. Wallis talked about the growing opportunities in the valley—for shopping and cultural activities—and said that she enjoyed the increasing self-contained nature of the valley. Henri de-Marne carried the idea further and referred to a "conditioning in the valley to stay geographically defined within itself." The mountains, he felt, were natural and psychological borders that could not be broken down, such as by widening or paving feed routes into the area, without damaging the identity of the valley.

Barry Simpson pursued the idea of valley identity but preferred to look at it from the perspective of skiing. He pointed out that skiing was originally an eastern activity whose initiative has now "gone West." The modern image of the sport, he argued, is large scale, huge mountains, deep powder, and daily brilliant sunshine, an image that Vermont cannot naturally meet. In designing the "First western-style ski resort in the East," he said, the Sugarbush Corporation is trying to "emulate a western image." He concluded by saying that the area has its own opportunities and potential but "we've gone beyond the point of appreciating what's here."

Simpson's was an opinion that seemed to be sympathetically received and Fred Collins used the analysis to propose a solution to a concern that several valley residents have voiced: what will happen if the ski industry ever collapses or if development

perceptions of the landscape-2

projects fail? His suggestion was to import a "western solution" to deal with the problems of importing other "western images" by requiring developers to establish escrow accounts that would be used to reclaim land lost to bad developments or failed ventures.

In the end, Lenny Julius seemed to summarize the opinions that have been expressed at all five forums on the land and landscape. As in the other forums, it was an objective negatively rather than positively defined, but it is significant nonetheless. "I don't think we share a common vision of how things should be," he said, "but we do share a common vision of how things shouldn't be."

Minding your own business: Small business in the valley
February 4, 1980

The forum on small business in the valley was attended by approximately 55 people, three-quarters of whom were newcomers or relative newcomers to the Perspectives series. Participation in the discussion was high, reflecting a variety of opinions and introducing a number of issues.

Of greatest concern is the relative instability of small businesses in the valley; however, blame for the lack of stability was traced to several faults. Most people felt that small business instability was due to factors that were either beyond the valley's control or inherent in the tourist industry, such as seasonality, the national economy, weather, or energy uncertainty. Chuck Nichols, for example, feels that the energy crisis threatens the continued existence and prosperity of valley businesses because it is deterring tourists. A moment later, Barry Simpson, in describing the area's "fragile economic base," pointed out that the valley depends for its livelihood on other people's discretionary income and that people have increasingly less discretionary income. Everyone agreed that this year's poor snowfall has proven how dependent the area is on weather, an unknown and uncontrollable factor in the local economy. Finally, there was concern expressed by several people (ex. Laurie Bigger) that the area suffered from being too winter-oriented, an orientation that promoted difficult fluctuations for businessmen.

However, all these concerns were expressed with a regard for one other factor that also affected local businesses: the unpredictable future growth of the valley. There was a consensus that valley businesspeople are concerned with the quality of life in the valley and that crowding in the area, even if it means greater profits, would subtract from their enjoyment of the area. One speaker said that when the Mad River Valley looked like Killington, valley businessmen would simply move on; but Henry deMarne, the next speaker, argued that many people are committed to the valley and would prefer preserving the quality of their lives there to maximizing their profits. It was this latter view that seemed to be more widely shared, but there was a qualifier, best expressed by Chuck Nichols, who appeared to speak for many when he asked, "Can we survive (as businessmen) without growth?"

Two solutions were suggested to stabilize the valley economy. The one most often expressed was a desire for diversification with light, small industry. There was much interest expressed in this—mostly through questions addressed to Jim Wechsler—but there was also much uncertainty over how to attract it, what would be most suitable for the area, and what the consequences of it would be for the valley. Ann Heinzerling, alone, said that stronger, year-round small businesses would help stabilize the local economy, and there seemed to be some sympathy for this position, but it was not pursued.

Many people, however, anticipate problems if the valley grows. Most of the participants thought an increased valley population would make the area less rural and consequently, less attractive both to themselves and to tourists. Mary Kerr carried the idea further and spoke for several people when she complained that the valley lacked adequate middle- and low-income housing for present valley workers; increasing the job corps would simply increase the problems in the valley towns or, as Towny Anderson said, force workers to invade nearby towns like Duxbury. Jim Emminger picked up from Jim Wechsler that the growth of ski areas and condominiums in Warren and Fayston, and the corresponding increase in worker's and businessmen's residences, probably in Waitsfield, would create inequities in the town tax structures that could only be alleviated by a valley-wide tax agreement. Both Emminger and Judd Babcock were also concerned about the best way to attract the best industry to the valley, leaving the impression that they preferred a local recruiting body to a county or state organization, but that they currently lacked the local knowledge and finances to pursue that object. Finally, someone also said that if the size or number of valley businesses grows without a general rise in the prevailing valley pay rates, the valley would become dominated either by outsiders who have to be transported in daily to fill the local jobs, or by a poorly paid, substandardly-housed, and untrained population of service workers.

By the end of the evening, it was clear that the participants were confused and concerned about their futures. At heart, they want their businesses to grow, or at least stabilize, but they do not want their lifestyles to change. Mentioned during the course of the evening as local industries that provide solid, year-round employment of a stabilizing nature were condominiums, real estate, and construction, but it was acknowledged that these industries rely on continuing growth in the valley, growth that would bring in outsiders who would both increase valley business and threaten the essentially rural character of the valley. Additionally, newcomers could increase municipal expenses in disproportion to their tax contributions, requiring a widening of the tax base, possibly in the form of new, competing businesses. In effect, what was being described was a cycle, already underway and out of the hands of local businessmen, that currently is feeding on itself.

Two more concerns that deal with specific problems need to be mentioned. In answer to the question of whether present physical situations and advertising are adequate, Bob Schaeffer replied that most valley businesses do not rely on "happenstance tourists," but instead, count on drawing tourists to their businesses with outside advertising or reputation. For this reason, cluster business districts instead of strip development

along Route 100 and the access roads are satisfactory, with the added benefit that Route 100 is preserved and protected from unsightly development that might, in the end, hurt tourism. Finally, most businessmen agreed that the development of commercial space on the mountain would not persuade them to move their businesses from the valley up the hill because, in general, and especially for the 60+ craftspeople, overhead expenses on the mountain would be prohibitive.

Playing for keeps: The recreation industry in the valley
February 20, 1980

The forum "Playing for keeps: The recreation industry in the valley" was attended by sixty-six people, approximately one-tenth of whom were newcomers to the Perspectives series. Most newcomers were involved with recreation or tourism in the valley. Representatives of the recreation industry included the presidents of the Sugarbush Corporation and Mad River Glen. Representatives of the real-estate/development industry were also present, as were representatives of various smaller scale recreational businesses such as ski shops and ski touring establishments. In general, it was a restrained and low key session that only began to touch upon questions that concern the future of the recreational community in the Mad River Valley and the relationship between that community and other residents in the area.

Discussion for the evening focused on two themes: the future of skiing in the valley, including what changes may be anticipated or desirable; and problems with the current or future industry. In addition, two speakers made an effort to define the relationship between recreation and other elements of the valley community.

Ken Quackenbush led off a discussion of the future of skiing by saying that he expects the industry to get "hotter and brighter." In his opinion, skiing has grown tremendously in the past quarter century, nothing suggests that its appeal will diminish, and the implications of this for the valley are great. "We haven't begun to feel the impact of skiing," he said. Bob Schaefer concurred, saying that the commitment of money and energy that many families have made to skiing will ensure their continued participation. In response to Mary Kerr's concern that the high costs of the sport may discourage people from becoming involved in skiing or force others to quit, Mal Bevins stated that the costs were "in line with other recreational activities" and that cost will not be a significant factor in decisions whether to pursue the sport.

A change that was anticipated, however, was an increased preference for longer-term skiing visits to the valley. According to Bevins, the average tourist visit in Vermont is 2.7 days, but Jay Young of the Sugarbush Inn said that visits to his inn were generally longer than that and that the average renter of a condominium stayed longer still. Several speakers addressed themselves to the causes of this phenomenon, and the consensus was that the "destination resort" concept had created housing and expanded recreational opportunities that combined with rising transportation costs to encourage longer rather than more frequent tourist visits. There was no criticism of this trend and most people seemed interested in knowing ways to encourage the longer visits.

Critics of the recreation industry tended to cluster around several themes. Elwin Neill, Jr. said that his strongest opposition to the industry was its adverse effect on critical watershed areas in the valley, an effect that the Fletcher Joslins said they had also noticed. Neill complained of increased flooding in the valley's floodplain, which is the area's prime agricul-

tural land, and said that "it will probably drive farms out quicker than high prices." Katherine Hartshorn objected to piecemeal review of development projects on the mountain and made a plea for a comprehensive review of combined development plans. This is an idea that has been expressed at other forums as well.

Finally, Anna Whiteside and Roy Cohen agreed that development in the valley could go too far, thereby destroying the balance of pastoral landscape and recreational and business opportunities that lured many to the valley in the first place. Cohen referred to the unique character of the valley and expressed his pride in it. To him, Stowe and Killington are examples of poor recreation-tourist areas that the Mad River Valley should avoid emulating. Whiteside was less specific in describing what the valley should avoid, but she did say "there is a price that is too high."

In two digressions from these themes, other speakers tried to put skiing and recreation in relation to other elements in the community. Arthur Williams asked whether cultural activities were more or less important than recreational opportunities, both in drawing tourists to an area and in inviting participation by local residents. No one could answer his question, but it is not the first time cultural opportunities have been discussed in the forums. Jay Young later related farming in the valley to tourism when he said that farming and the pastoral valley landscape were "vital, vital assets" to his business as an inn-keeper. "Many tourists mention it right here," he said, and it is as essential as skiing in the winter in drawing tourists to the valley during the other three seasons.

What now brown cow:
February 28, 1980

Approximately 65 people attended the farmers forum, the last in the series aimed at economic interest groups within the valley. Two-thirds of this audience appeared to be repeaters. Since the forum was aimed at the farming community, we made our regular special effort to attract that group and we met with some success, attracting twelve of the eighteen farmers in the valley and several of their spouses. Only two of these farmers had attended previous Perspectives Forums.

Discussion for the evening was lively and broad-ranging. However, in retrospect, it clustered around several themes. Farmers dominated a discussion of what the farming community views as its greatest problems. Both farmers and non-farmers made an effort to relate farming to other aspects of the local community and its economy. Finally, a portion of the evening was devoted to exploring the options available to farmers in the Mad River Valley.

Farmers view Federal Regulation as one of their greatest problems. They blamed the regulation for requiring bulk tanks that went into effect several years ago for forcing the latest handful of farmers in the MRV out of business, and fear that an upcoming regulation requiring slurry tanks will force another round of retirements from farming, perhaps with the result of so decreasing the "critical mass" of farms and farm support systems in the valley as to force the remaining farmers to sell also.

Otis Wallis was similarly critical of inheritance taxes which, he said, currently made it very difficult to pass farms along to children. Without an inheritance tax that provides some incentive to will farms to children, he said, "a lot of these open lands are going to end up in bushes, then in trees".

Local Regulation also came under attack. In response to Bob Cook's question asking farmers how they feel about agricultural zoning, one farmer replied, "public reaction to zoning is all the same". This negative comment was followed by laughter that revealed the audience's general sympathy with the view. However, another farmer was more specific, "When restrictions become too complicated," he said, "you won't see farmers selling off twenty acres, you'll see them selling off the whole thing."

By far the greatest problem of farmers, however, is the uncertainty that surrounds so much of their business. That view was expressed by David DeFreest who argued that diversifying a farmer's products when one operation is already stable, was not a sound suggestion. Government subsidies, he felt, determine what is profitable but these are too uncertain on a year to year basis to encourage diversification. Ed Eurich said, "our greatest problems are our uncertainties," and went on to blame taxes, federal laws, and regulations as the greatest uncertainties in the farming business.

Early in the evening, both farmers and non-farmers began to try to place farming in some context within the community. David Sellers introduced the subject by stressing the importance of the farms to the area, both visually and economically, but he argued that the towns in the valley should not be responsible for sustaining the farms. "Farms must be viable", he said, echoing an opinion that has been expressed at earlier forums. The person who later tried to argue that local residents who purchased local produce and products can help keep the farms viable was contradicted by David DeFreest, who said that the dairying business, which accounts for most of the valley farming, was not organized to benefit easily from local support. The subject was concluded with the feeling that it would be difficult to encourage further integration of the large valley farms into the valley economy because their product is part of a state-wide, not regional, marketing and processing system.

There were suggestions, however, of how farms could be helped. Ed Eurich said the sale of developments rights on farms has not been effective to ~~date~~ in preserving agricultural land because states haven't been willing to pay owners a fair price for the rights or to appropriate funds to implement the policy on a reasonable scale. Nevertheless, he feels that the idea has merit and if properly implemented, could save farms in areas like the MRV that are under intense development pressures. Ann Heinzenling suggested that owners of open space or small farms in the valley could keep that land open if they were willing to run guest homes. People are willing to pay to be in a rural setting, she said, and these payments can subsidize keeping the land open for everyone's benefit. David Sellers encouraged the valley to take the advantage of the marketing and business experience that many relative newcomers to the valley possess, to think of ways to "coordinate recreation and open land farming in the valley". This is a rich local source of experience and creativity that is not being tapped, he feels. Ed Eurich's response to Seller's suggestion was less pessimistic than David DeFreest's had been to the earlier suggestion to find some way to integrate farming into the local economy. Eurich felt there were possibilities that valley farmers could pursue - berries, small-scale produce production, sheep - and that it was possible some of this local business expertise could benefit farmers in the valley. His only warning was that, in his experience, the success of such ventures depends on keeping the individual efforts on a small scale that can still ensure efficiency and quality, and on maintaining a local initiative.

Mad River Valley Perspectives

Warning for Mock Town Meeting

The legal voters of the town of Valleyville are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Warren Town Hall on Tuesday, the 25th of March, 1980, at 7:30 in the evening to transact the following business:

Art. 1: To witness a presentation by Frank Bryan of the University of Vermont's Center for Government Research.

Art. 2: Will the town support a Green Mountain Power proposal to erect wind turbines on Lincoln Mt. in Warren if current feasibility studies prove sufficient wind?

Art. 3: Will the town upgrade the Roxbury Road to support substantially increased traffic and request the State Agency of Transportation to ensure an adequate connection between that road and I-89?

Art. 4: Will the town institute a growth management policy to preserve agricultural land?

Dated: March 10, 1980

Nancy P. Graff, Coordinator MRV Perspectives
Town Manager, Valleyville

Mock Town Meeting
March 25, 1980

Approximately fifty people attended the Mock Town Meeting that opened the third and final series, "The People". This is the smallest audience to date. Nonetheless, about one-quarter of those in attendance were new-comers to the Perspectives Program. The audience was unusually homogenous: most were from the same town-Warren (site of the forum); most were employed outside the ski industry and its related activities (two farmers were present); and an unusually high proportion are practicing self-reliant or alternative lifestyles.

A copy of the warning for this Mock Town Meeting is attached. It describes the structure of the evening's program and outlines the subjects that were addressed. This tight format necessarily restricted discussion to the articles on the warning. Consequently, this summary will reflect that organization.

ARTICLE I:

Randy Taplin was the first person to ask who would receive the new power if a wind generating facility were built. He was concerned about the number of condominiums and second homes being built on the mountain that rely on electricity for heat, particularly during the week where many of them are empty. He felt that permanent residents and valley businesses had to be guaranteed access to energy in times of crisis, especially farms, which rely on electricity for milking. In Taplin's words "Green Mtn. Power has to decide who gets the first use of that power when we get the first crisis."

David Sellers, however, suggested that the decision not be left up to Green Mtn. Power. He proposed that a valley wind turbine (s) be owned and operated by a valley energy cooperative. "We could make an intelligent lasting decision," he said, "that would affect our destiny". He went on to say that wood was another renewable energy source that the valley could explore and that in either or both cases, the residents of the Mad River Valley could decide on the amount of energy available and the priorities of its distribution. When asked how the valley coop would distribute the power, he proposed purchasing the present valley power grid from Green Mtn. Power. (The strong appeal of this idea is reflected by examining the audience evaluations of the evening's program. Nearly half of the 21 returned said the idea of a valley energy coop was the most impressive thing they had heard at the session.)

Several people also took up the idea of energy in relation to the valley's image. At other forums it has been said that the ski trails are currently the symbol of the valley, giving residents and visitors alike an instant and lasting impression of the valley's focus. Barry Simpson picked up on this and argued that ski trails also convey an image of energy consumption, because of the known and sizable amounts of energy necessary to run skiing operations. According to him, a large wind turbine, or for that matter a conspicuous generating facility powered by wood or water, would "reverse the image (of the valley) from user to producer without extraordinary environmental impact". "We have discussed what symbols are available to us," he concluded "A better symbol is a wind generating facility."

After his discussion, there was little debate on the aesthetics of the turbine. A few people were obviously not pleased with the imposing appearance of the turbines but they were not opposed to the idea of the energy source. Mary Kerr seemed to speak for them when she said, "If we are serious about finding alternative energy, then we must accept the pluses with the negatives".

Vote: yes: 42 no: 6

Article II

David Sellers launched debate on the question of upgrading the Roxbury Gap Road by outlining the effects of ~~that~~ improvement on the town of Warren. He attributed the presentation of Warren's rural character to the RT 100 by-pass built several years ago, the effect of which was to make the town into a "dead end", thereby reducing significantly the amount of vehicular traffic ~~that~~ passes through its center. While questioning whether such an improvement would really save gas or time for skiers crossing from the interstate to the ski areas, he argued that the increased traffic through the town of Warren would "become a wall" against regular community travel and intercourse. Such a road, he said, would be "a tremendous inconvenience to the quality of life here".

Several other people objected to the project for other reasons. Justus Littel and Mary Kerr doubted that the route would prove practical for buses, considering the steepness of the road near the top of the Gap. Barry Simpson was more concerned about the auxiliary services that tourist routes require. He said that the valley towns are currently trying to focus commercial enterprises in Waitsfield, with secondary services in satellite neighborhoods, and implied that encouraging traffic to use the Roxbury Gap Road and cut through Warren would encourage the development of Warren as a commercial center. "It is prudent from a planning standpoint," he said, "to bring transient traffic through transient-oriented centers" and he went on record supporting the present transportation arteries within the valley, with Waterbury serving as a transportation hub.

Only one person spoke clearly in favor of the article. Lixi Fortna, selectman from Warren, said that paved roads are much easier and cheaper to maintain. David DeFreest, another Warren selectman, pointed out that the town's gravel supply is running out and that maintaining dirt roads will be an increasing hardship for them unless a new supply can be found.

Vote: yes: 5 no: 40

ARTICLE III

The unfortunate vagueness of the wording of this article precluded much significant discussion. Debate bogged down in questions concerning the definition of "agricultural land" and much that planners would find helpful to hear on this topic was left unsaid. Nevertheless, the debate and vote were not irrelevant.

There was obviously much sympathy for the ~~position~~ position of growth management and for the position of ~~preserving~~ preserving valley agricultural land. Mary Kerr said that valley towns already have some control. Anne Just opposed the restrictive form of the article's proposal and argued, instead, that reinforcement of growth management in the form of incentives (such as by purchase of development rights) was a more positive route to pursue. Someone else argued that there are many reasons to control growth "even if there were no agricultural land left", implying that people are looking too narrowly at the benefits their communities offer. Barry Simpson felt that any agricultural land policy in the valley was doomed to fail if its thrust was to preserve the aesthetics of farmland and not the function of farming. He concluded the discussion by saying that "we can't just legislate against-we have to provide something (an incentive to farm), and not just provide something for everyone to look at".

Vote: yes: 24 no: 9 no comment: 1

Remember the Ladies

April 16, 1980

Seventeen people, one-third of whom were men, attended the tenth forum in the Perspectives series, "Remember the Ladies." This was approximately one-third to one-fourth the average attendance at a forum and represented no new faces to the series. The drastic reduction in attendance may be traced to several reasons: a lack of interest in the subject or an unwillingness to discuss it; failure to see the topic's relevancy to the valley's development and growth issues; conflict with a valley-wide meeting on the Harwood Union budget; poor weather; and loss of momentum in the series due to forum spacing.

Nevertheless, there was interesting and significant discussion on the topic of "community." Everyone present was concerned over a diminishing spirit of community in the Mad River Valley, a feeling that Betty Joslin traced to the coming of Mad River Glen in 1947 and the valley's transition from an essentially rural area to a resort. Discussion on the subject was lively, but fault for the loss was generally blamed on:

1. A population of transients out of proportion to that in an average community.
2. The lack of physical town centers, with the exception of Warren.
3. A population of second-home owners out of proportion to that in an average community.
4. The presence of conspicuous social stratification (not as evident in other communities, even in the valley).
5. The diminishing role of churches in community life.
6. The transition from an agricultural community to a resort.
7. The unionization of schools.
8. The lack of family recreation centers.

At the close of the evening, Jennie Stoler, the speaker, raised two questions: How would everyone like to see the Mad River Valley improved? What can people contribute to these improvements? The responses are simply listed and show many common concerns.

Improvements:

1. Women should have stronger effect on school system and push for good education.
2. Job opportunities that encourage young people to stay.
3. A community recreational area.
4. People working together, especially women taking a more active role in the community.
5. No more expansion because it is destroying a sense of valley community.
6. More emphasis on the arts.
7. Greater acceptance of what the valley already has.
8. Greater sense of community.
9. Intermunicipal cooperation to promote tax sharing and a spirit of community.
10. Community strength to raise the quality of life above economic concern.
11. Greater housing and job opportunities to encourage children to stay in valley.

Remember the Ladies (cont.)

Valley Contributions:

1. Greater personal involvement in community efforts (5).
2. Better use of valley power base.
3. Greater personal caring for neighbors and the valley.
4. Greater use of valley elders.
5. Courage to take risks.
6. Lead busy productive lives.
7. Positive attitudes.
8. Respect for others.

What's in a name: Should the Mad River Valley consider changing its name?
April 24, 1980

Twenty-eight people attended the eleventh forum in the Perspectives series, "What's in a name?" For the second week in a row, attendance was down significantly from earlier forums, but the problem in this case was probably publicity. In early March the forum date was moved back one night from that listed on the Mad River Valley Perspectives brochure, and all press announcements carried a note to this effect. Nevertheless, the Times-Argus and the Valley Reporter carried announcements that listed the forum for two nights. Presumably, if this misunderstanding had not occurred, attendance at the forum would have been higher, since the topic has generated much debate in the valley. Despite the lower attendance, however, discussion was lively and seven people were new-comers to the series.

As a starting point it is important to note that, at this forum, there was no opposition to the local use of the "Mad River Valley" name. Everyone in the audience, including representatives of Sugarbush Valley and businesses that currently use the Sugarbush Valley tag in their advertising, expressed a desire to retain the Mad River Valley name for this geographical region within Vermont. Anne Heinzerling observed, however, that the Mad River Valley name has no official standing within the state. A member of the Vermont Board of Libraries, the Vermont agency in charge of place-names, said that this was probably correct, since amorphous areas such as valleys often lack official names, regardless of their well-recognized popular names. Without this official designation, she said, it would not be possible to officially change the name. (Nevertheless, petitions submitted from valley residents to the Library Board in support of the Mad River Valley name might effect an official name, in which case a petition to change the name would be eligible for consideration.)

Discussion of the significance of place-names immediately focused on the relationship between names and the areas they identify, a discussion that is closely related to other forum discussions on the image of the area. Many times at earlier forums the question has been asked, "Are we a rural community or a resort?" In this debate, place-names play a significant role. To everyone present, "Mad River Valley" conjured up pleasant images of a rural community and landscape; this traditional name, to most people, symbolized traditional Vermont ways of life. "Sugarbush Valley," in contrast, was an unpleasant image to most people. It represents a relatively new business in the valley, one that bears no relation to traditional work and communities. Certainly, the businesspeople at the forum whose success rides on the success of the valley as a ski resort, did not share the negative aspects of these connotations, but they did acknowledge that the two names represent very different and conflicting images. In addition, others acknowledged that their opposition to the name was more deeply-rooted than simple dislike of a new name replacing an old; to many present, a shift in names would signal to them and to everyone else that the area had resolved the image question by becoming exclusively a ski resort and abandoning other, more traditional and diverse forums of livelihood and community.

The causes for this dilemma in identification were recognized readily. "Mad River Valley" is a relatively local name; that is, those who are familiar with it, know that it defines an area that includes four towns, parts of several others, and three ski areas. Therefore, it is an acceptable and recognized name for a select, "internal" community that does not extend much farther than Vermont's borders. "Sugarbush Valley," however, defines the area as a large ski resort for an "external" community that comprises some of Vermont and all the rest of the country, and is used to promote the resort outside the valley. The two names, therefore, are aimed at different groups of people. Conflict arises when valley residents believe the "Sugarbush" name mistakenly leads people to suspect that it identifies more than a specific resort. Obviously, the greatest problem is for local businesses, which must gear their advertising to both types of community (in all four seasons), and which, therefore, are open to criticisms of image-making by local residents.

Several ideas were suggested for lessening the friction this situation has caused. One person proposed that Sugarbush Valley drop "valley" from its name, thus putting an end to the implication that the name defines a specific geographic location rather than a business. Someone else suggested that Sugarbush Valley acquire its own post-office (Mad River Glen once had its own post-office) and make it clear in its advertising that the name defines a ski resort, not a broad area or true valley. Still another person suggested that large signs be erected at all entrances to the valley announcing "Mad River Valley: Home of Sugarbush Valley and Mad River Glen" (or vice versa), thus explaining the relationship to all new-comers.

The discussion ended without an expression of preference for any particular suggestion or combination of suggestions to lessen the friction. However, the issue and sources of conflict seem clearer. Sensitivity to local residents' allegiance to the traditional name and its image was exchanged for an appreciation of the economic investments and needs of businesses.

You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours: Is intermunicipal cooperation desirable or feasible?
May 1, 1980

Twenty-three people attended the twelfth forum in the Perspectives series, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." Approximately one-fifth of this audience were new-comers to the series, the rest were largely valley residents who had attended the sessions regularly. As has been true in previous forums, Fayston was best represented and Waitsfield was under-represented in terms of valley population distribution.

Discussion focused quickly on the idea of "community" in the valley, but it defined community in several ways. There was general agreement that the Mad River Valley itself defines a geographical community and throws the four valley towns into a relationship that areas without such geographical definition lack. This is an opinion that has been expressed at previous forums, especially the February 13 session on landscape perceptions and the April 24 session on place-names. Several long-time residents recounted a history of informal intermunicipal cooperation that derived from this close proximity and feelings of sharing this particular area.

There was a strong feeling, however, that the towns of Warren, Waitsfield, and Fayston do have distinct community characteristics and town personalities. Although the participants did not clearly outline these different personalities, they traced the differences, in part, to physical and population characteristics. The clearest message, expressed almost unanimously, was that there is value in these distinctions and that they should be preserved.

Once these points were made, discussion shifted to evaluating the benefits and problems of intermunicipal cooperation. There was an apparently unanimous feeling that the valley towns should continue to cooperate as they have in the past and expand this cooperation to ensure smooth valley relations and the realization of shared goals. This was not felt to be particularly difficult since everyone acknowledged that social associations in the valley already transcend town borders and many goals are already shared by a large proportion of the valley population. One participant, Fletcher Joslin of Waitsfield, went further and proposed an official assimilation of at least two valley towns into one municipality, possibly to include Warren, as well, if the plan were feasible. James Hubbell of Moretown, while not openly supporting that proposal, did suggest that one valley manager with some authority in all four towns could best integrate the activities, obligations, and budgets of the area. In both cases, the proposals stemmed from the viewpoint that small municipalities are not economical and that merger on this high level would result in the most productive use of local funds.

This viewpoint was not widely shared, however. In arguing that larger sizes do not necessarily produce efficiency and economy, most of the audience supported maintaining town autonomy in the valley. Most people acknowledged that the town lines are relatively arbitrary, but they repeatedly mentioned their own allegiance, first to their specific towns and secondly to the valley, and defended this allegiance by citing the different town personalities and an evident local chauvinism. It was mentioned that the federal government is chipping away at municipal autonomy in small and large ways (by combining post offices for example), and that residents should strive to preserve these

increasingly fragile local affiliations and ties. One person mentioned that communities are more vital when there is strong local support; that people seem more willing to become involved when government is small; and that small towns encourage more people to participate. These comments were referred to several times over the course of the evening and seemed to be sympathetically received. (Note: One-third of the audience holds an office in one of the valley towns.) Before the session concluded, it was obvious that these participants were willing to fund certain inefficiencies in their local government for the sake of preserving municipal autonomy.

Below is a list of forms of intermunicipal cooperation that were discussed and the audience's general response. (* indicates small disagreement)

<u>form</u>	<u>acceptable</u>	<u>benefits</u>	<u>problems</u>
fire/police/ ambulance	yes	coordination economy	distance
MRV Planning Commission	yes	coordination	
MRV manager	no*	coordination economy technical expertise	threatens town autonomy
MRV planner/ consultant	yes	coordination economy technical expertise	
schools	yes & no	economy	detrimental to sense of community
valley selectmen	no*	coordination	threatens town autonomy

A Room of One's Own: The Housing Situation in the Valley
May 8, 1980

Approximately fifty people attended the thirteenth Perspectives forum, "a room of one's own." One fourth to one fifth of these were new comers; the remainder were largely "regulars." It was not a good representation of the Valley population: an unusually high percentage were 35 years old or older, and most were homeowners. Few of the younger or low-to middle-income people in the Valley who have had trouble finding affordable housing to rent or buy were there to explain the troubles they have encountered. As a consequence of this audience bias, the discussion focused not on the problems facing home seekers, but on the attitudes of the "landed" and "housed" toward the housing situation in the Valley.

From the start of the discussion it was obvious that this audience did not perceive a shortage of low-to middle-income housing in the Valley as the problem, or possibly even as a problem. The problem in their eyes was that too many people want to live in the Valley. This feeling was best summarized by Hugh McIntyre, who said, "It's not houses but people that create the problem."

Richard Downer, a civil engineer from the University of Vermont, and one of the two speakers for the forum, provoked much of the discussion by arguing that controlled growth pattern planning, zoning, and re-zoning were the means whereby towns can most easily and readily control their environments, futures, and rates of growth. He was a strong proponent of clustering development to save municipal funds by focusing services, and maintained that this clustering enhanced feelings of community.

Much interest was expressed in controlled growth pattern planning, but this is misleading. In fact, the concern was not in directing Valley growth but in curtailing it altogether. Evidence of this is reflected in the number of questions addressed to Downer concerning the constitutionally and legality of such planning, its effectiveness in restricting growth, and the means of effecting such a plan. Moreover, when the subject of clustering and small-lot zoning were pursued, strong negative feelings were expressed. Several relative newcomers to the Valley said they had come to the area specifically to avoid planned neighborhoods and the general preference was for a continuation of policies that enabled most (or all) people to hold a modest to large amount of land relatively removed from other residences.

These isolationist feelings were especially strong when the issue of ski area development was discussed. Not a single person in the room protested when someone suggested that all development related to the ski areas be segregated on the mountain. It seemed to be strongly and unanimously felt that this segregation of tourists' and residents' homes and services was the best way to minimize the impact of recreation-oriented development on the rest of the Valley community.

Much concern was expressed for the tax load new housing would necessitate. Clifford Wallis, in particular, argued that a substantial number of new low-to middle-income houses built to house present or future service workers (probably of the ski areas) and their families would significantly increase demands on local schools, creating new tax demands on the entire community. While it was conceded that schooling must be provided for all children, it was also felt that by discouraging such new housing, these new taxes could be avoided or minimized.

This particular discussion exemplified a feeling that was not expressed openly but seemed to be widely shared by this audience: that a covert means of controlling the growth of the ski industry and its related development is to discourage housing for workers necessary to service that development. Without adequate housing, it is unlikely the necessary workers could be attracted to the area and without the work force, it would be unrealistic for the ski areas to consider expansion. This effort to discourage housing developments on small lots that low to middle-income working families could afford seemed to be perceived as one means, already effective, of controlling the Valley's total future growth.

Mad River Valley Perspectives - Evaluation

Please check the Perspectives forums that you attended.

Images of Vermont (Our Lady of the Snows)
Function and future of Rt. 100 (Waitsfield Elem. School)
Attitudes toward the land (Fayston Elem. School)
Should we preserve open land (Warren Elem. School)
Perceptions of the landscape (Green Mt. Valley School)

Small business (Our Lady of the Snows)
Recreation industry (Sugarbush Inn)
Yankee farmers (Waitsfield Federated Church)

Mock Town Meeting (Warren Town Hall)
Women in the Valley (Waitsfield Federated Church).
What's in a name? (Fayston Town Hall)
Intermunicipal cooperation (Oddfellows Hall)
Housing in the Valley (Sugarbush Inn)
Quality of Life (Waitsfield Elem. School)

Which 1 or 2 presentations did you find most stimulating?

Why?

Which 1 or 2 presentations did you find least stimulating?

Why?

Which 1 or 2 discussions did you find most stimulating?

Why?

Which 1 or 2 discussions did you find least stimulating?

Why?

In cases where you missed forums, was it due to (check as many as relevant).
weather (1) location (1) series too long forgot (4) illness (1)
not interested in topic other commitments (12)

How did you usually receive notice of the forums?
Perspectives brochure (11) radio announcement (1)
postcard (4) newspaper announcement (8)

In general, were the scholars aware of the Valley's concerns?

YES
(10)

NO

SOMETIMES
(2)

The Humanities Council insists upon objectivity in its programs. Did you detect a bias in the series? If so, what was it?

YES

NO
(8)

If a single idea introduced at one of the forums has left a lasting impression on you, what was it?

MAD RIVER VALLEY PERSPECTIVES - AUDIENCE EVALUATION SUMMARY

Number of Respondents: 13

<u>Presentation</u>		<u>Program</u>	<u>Discussion</u>	
<u>Best</u>	<u>Worst</u>		<u>Best</u>	<u>Worst</u>
1	2	Images of Vermont	2	
3	2	Function and Future of Route 100	2	
2		Attitudes Toward the Land	1	
1	1	Should We Preserve Open Land?	1	
3		Perceptions of the Landscape	1	
	2	Small Business	1	2
		Recreation Industry		1
	4	Yankee Farmers	2	3
2	2	Mock Town Meeting	2	3
	1	Women in the Valley		1
1	2	What's In a Name?	1	1
2	1	Intermunicipal Cooperation	2	1
2		Housing in the Valley	2	
2		Quality of Life	1	1

Average Number of Forums Attended: 8

Do you think accurate summaries of these discussions will be useful planning tools in the Valley?

YES
(6)

NO

Do you think the audience was representative of the Valley population?
If not, who was underrepresented?

YES
(6)

NO

(4) Natives or long-term residents
ski industry

How would you rate the overall quality of the Perspectives forums?

Excellent
(1)

Good
(5)

Fair
(1)

Poor

Did Not Answer
(5)