

POWNAL

**-Bennington County-
Vermont**

A Community Profile

**Prepared for the
Vermont Council on Rural Development
Community Visit
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**By
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A Note to the Reader

This profile is an exercise in secondary research, gathering together existing data and information from various sources. It is meant to facilitate further on-the-ground exploration into the particular community, which will likely result in much more detailed and actionable information than could ever be obtained from any text or website.

Just as a community never finishes adapting to and organizing its natural, political and social environments, an attempt to profile these dynamic processes must be considered a work in progress. Materials below are organized to reflect community characteristics and resources and draw heavily upon easily accessible information at the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) website. Please join us in this profiling effort by calling our attention to major omissions, inaccuracies and errors of fact.

Thank you,

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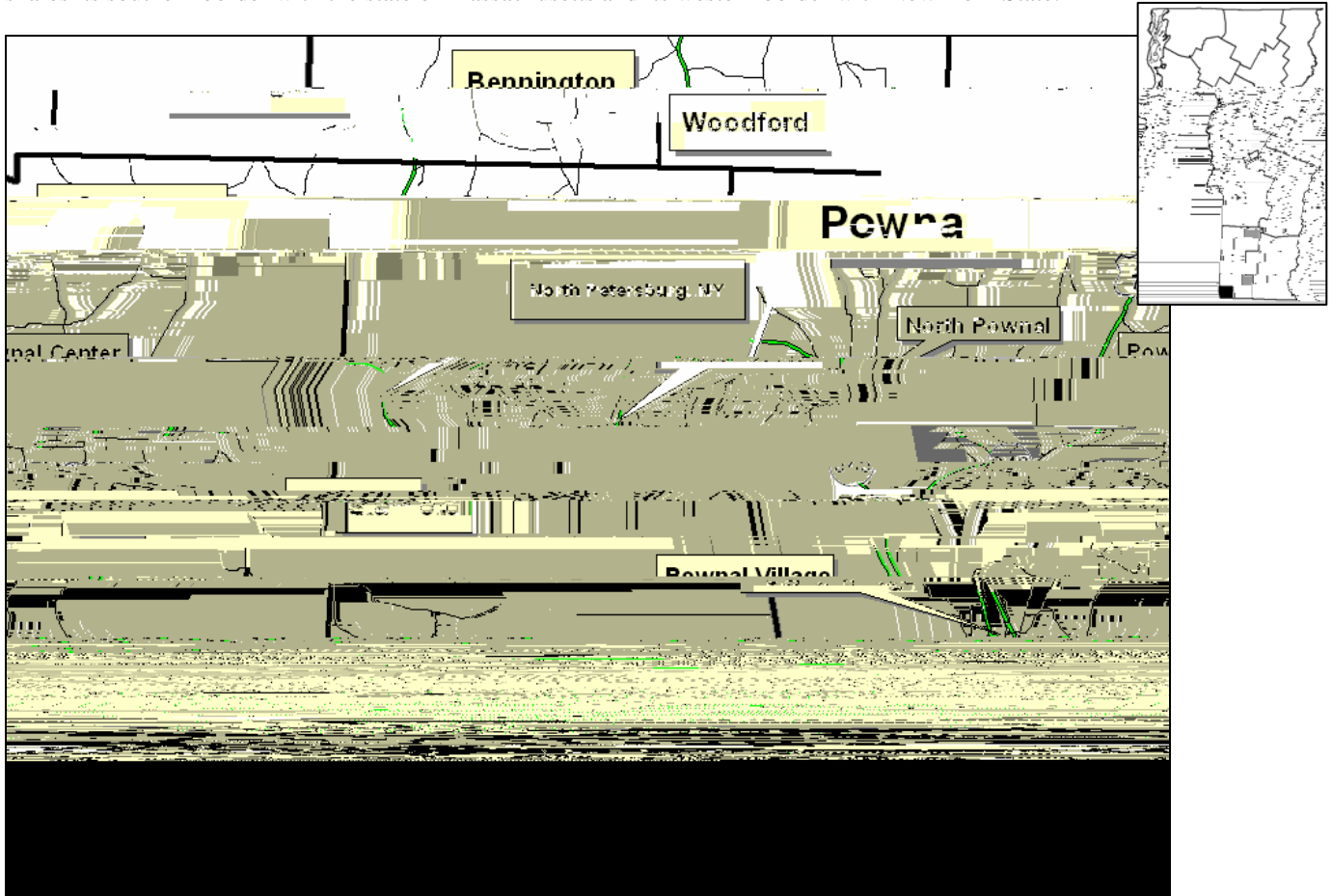
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Section 1.

Town Organization

Where is Pownal?

The town of Pownal is located in Bennington County, in the very southwest corner of Vermont. The Vermont towns of Bennington and Woodford lie to the north and northeast, respectively, while the town of Stamford lies directly east. Pownal shares its southern border with the state of Massachusetts and its western border with New York State.



What's in a Name?

New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth chartered Pownal, Vermont in 1760. The name of the town comes from Thomas and John Pownall, brothers who are listed in the charter. In the document, Governor Wentworth left off the final 'l' from their names, and did likewise with the town's name.

Thomas Pownall, the younger of the two, usually went by the name Governor Pownall, because he had spent time as the lieutenant governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and governor of South Carolina. An accomplished author, Thomas Pownall spent much of his time devising plans and leading expeditions to drive the French out of North America. The elder Pownall, John, served as undersecretary of state for the American colonies, where he helped to form policies for the colonies. Both brothers ended up supporting Lord North's ministry in 1775, which was greatly involved with hastening the American Revolution.

Source: Swift, 1977:94

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Brief Chronology

On January 8, 1760 New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth charters the Town.

1813 – First post office opens in the village of Pownal.

1850's – U.S. Presidents, Chester A. Arthur and James A. Garfield taught at Oak Grove Seminary in Pownal.

1963 – Green Mountain Race Track opens.

1977 – Greyhound racing replaces horse racing at the Green Mountain Race Track.

1991 – Green Mountain Race Track closes for good.

2004 – Progress Partners buys the track, now called “Green Mountain Park.”

2005 – Planning begins on an effort to redevelop Green Mountain Park into a mix-use village setting.

Government and Civic Structure

As Pownal grew, a number of small population clusters emerged. Three areas in particular remain as distinct neighborhoods within the Town. These include: Pownal Village, North Pownal, and Pownal Center.

Section 2. Human Capital

Pownal’s growth rate in the last decade— around 2.2% -- is well below the state average. With a Census 2000 total of 3,560 inhabitants, it is in the top quintile of Vermont’s communities. Table 2.1 below shows that Pownal’s population density only grew slightly between 1990 and 2000. Conversely the Census Bureau’s 2004 updated population estimate for Pownal shows the population dropping by 15 residents since 2000. About 37% of the town’s population may be considered “age dependent” (under age 18 and over age 65) in 2000. Among those of European ancestry, Irish and French Canadian descendants form distinctive groups.

Table 2.1 – Pownal Population Characteristics

Population Estimate, 2004	3,545
Total Population, 2000	3,560
Total Population, 1990	3,485
Absolute Population Change, 1990 – 2000	75 inhabitants
Percent Population Change, 1990 – 2000	2.2%
Percent Age Dependent, 2000 (Under 18 and over 65)	36.5%
Percent of 2000 Population in the North Adams, MA Urban Cluster	14.0%
Percent Rural, 2000	86.0%
Percent Rural Farm, 2000	0.9% (from 0.7% in 1990)
Percent Native Born (United States), 2000	95.5% (from 96.5% in 1990)
Percent Reporting Irish Ancestry, 2000	11.4% (from 9.8% in 1990)
Percent Reporting French Canadian Ancestry, 2000	9.8% (from 6.4% in 1990)
Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. <i>Vermont Indicators Online</i> . retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators . <i>American FactFinder</i> . retrieved 2006. http://factfinder.census.gov .	

Age and Gender of Pownal’s Residents

Table 2.2 below shows that Pownal reflects state and national trends toward a graying of the population. The effect of the “baby boomer” age cohort is shown in the decrease in the percentages of younger and middle-aged populations and corresponding increases in the



Section 3. Income and Employment

Income Measurements and Issues

Table 3.1 below compares income and poverty data for Pownal, Bennington County, and the state. Pownal lags behind the county and state in annual average wage, per capita income, and median family income. The median household income for Pownal is also below county and state levels. Pownal’s poverty indicators are fairly consistent with county and state levels; however, the town does have a higher child poverty rate than Bennington County and Vermont.

	Pownal	Bennington County	Vermont
Annual Average Wage, 2004 ²	\$27,552	\$30,174	\$33,276
Per Capita Income, 1999	\$17,669	\$21,193	\$20,625
Median Family Income, 1999	\$41,006	\$46,565	\$48,625
Median Household Income, 1999	\$39,149	\$39,926	\$40,856
Poverty Rate, 1999	9.6%	10.0%	9.4%
Child Poverty Rate (persons under 18 years), 1999	4.2%	3.5%	2.8%
Elderly Poverty Rate (persons 65 years or over), 1999	0.2%	1.2%	1.1%
Percentage of Households with Public Assistance Income, 1999	4.3%	4.9%	4.8%

Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing.
Vermont Indicators Online. retrieved 2006. <http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators>.

Table 3.2 below takes a different look at participation of local school children in food assistance programs. For the 2004-2005 school year, the percentage of children at Pownal Elementary who are enrolled in the State’s food stamp program is higher than the Vermont state proportion for all school children, K-12. However it is lower than Mount Anthony school, which is located in Bennington and serves children from surrounding towns.

The situation is bleaker in terms of participation in the free and reduced lunch program, in which Pownal has a higher proportion across the table. In fact the table shows a majority of Pownal elementary students enrolled.

	Pownal Elementary (K-6)	Mt. Anthony Mid. School (7-8)	Mt. Anthony High School (9-12)	Vermont Total (K-12)

Employment and Unemployment

Table 3.3 – Pownal Employment Characteristics

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Table 3.4 – Pownal In-Town Job Opportunities, 2004

Total Jobs in Town ³	223
Wholesale/Retail Trade and Transportation	29.1%
Local School(s)	18.8%
Construction	12.6%
Manufacturing	9.9%
Professional Services	6.7%
Source: VT Dept. of Labor. <i>Covered Employment & Wages (QCEW)</i> . retrieved 2006. http://www.vtlmi.info/indtownnaics.cfm .	

Job opportunities are few and far between in Pownal, as illustrated by table 3.4 above, which is further broken out by the top five industries. Table 3.5 below shows that, consequently, nearly the majority of working Pownal residents commute to Bennington.

Table 3.5 – Top Five Places of Work, 2000

Total Working Pownal Residents, 16+	1,828
Working in... Bennington	46.6%
Pownal	12.1%
Williamstown, MA	11.9%

Section 4. Housing Demand and Affordability

Table 4.1 depicts housing and family characteristics in Pownal. Although the numbers of families and households are increasing slowly, the relative size of families is decreasing and the relative size of households is remaining steady, mirroring national trends. Home values and rents are increasing.

	1990	2000
Number of Households	1,281	1,373
...Number of Families	941	1,010
Average Household Size	2.59	2.59
Average Family Size	3.03	2.95

	Pownal	Bennington County	Vermont
Median Price of Primary Homes Sold in 2004	\$132,450	\$150,000	\$160,000
...Single Family Homes	\$140,000	\$156,000	\$171,000
Median Monthly Ownership Costs (with mortgage), 2000	\$882	\$1,022	\$1,021
...as Percentage of Household Income, 1999	22.4	22.9	24.1
Median Gross Rent, 2000 ⁴	\$534	\$538	\$553
...as Percentage of Household Income, 1999	27.9	27.3	26.2
Percentage of households with ownership costs at or above 30% of household income, 1999	22.2	24.8	23.2
Percentage of households with rental costs at or above 30% of household income, 1999	44.3	43.5	40.3

Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. *Vermont Housing Data*. retrieved 2006. <http://www.housingdata.org>.

⁴ Includes contract rent plus utilities.

Section 5. Infrastructure and Its Use

Transportation

Pownal contains the intersection of routes 7 and 346. The town is approximately 35 miles northeast of Albany, New York, the major transportation center for this region. Interstates 87 and 90 intersect in Albany, and the Albany International Airport serves as a major transportation hub. Pownal’s proximity to these major transportation corridors and the business base of the greater Albany region has undoubtedly affected economic growth and development.

Table 5.1 below elaborates on road mileage by type in Pownal.

Class 1 Highway	0.0
Class 2 Highway	11.85
Class 3 Highway	50.41
Class 4 Highway	9.08
State Highway	12.68
Lane Highway	0.0
Sources: Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). 2004. <i>Vermont Indicators Online</i> . retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators .	

Table 5.2 depicts several personal use of transportation infrastructure in Pownal. Residents rely primarily on their autos to drive to work (typically alone).

Total Number of Workers 16 Years of Age and Older, 2000	1,828
...who Drove to Work Alone	1,499
...who Carpooled to Work	222
...who Walked to Work	38
...who Commuted via Public Transportation	7
...who Worked at Home	55
Total Number of Accidents, 2001	17
Number of Accidents Involving Fatalities, 2001	2
Sources: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing. Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). 2001. <i>Vermont Indicators Online</i> . retrieved 2006. http://crs.uvm.edu/indicators .	

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Section 6. Social Capital

Schools

A school is not just an educational resource, but serves also as a networking hub for the community. Pownal’s school system includes Pownal Elementary, which is located in Pownal, and Mt. Anthony Union Middle School and High School (USHD #14), which are both located in Bennington and serve the towns of Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, Woodford, and any other sending towns. School indicators and comparisons to other Vermont schools can be found in the *Vermont School Report* at <http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt>. Fluctuations in school enrollments challenge many community school boards in Vermont and the leaders of Pownal and Bennington County struggle with these changes as well.

Pownal Elementary School’s total school enrollment is 279, having fluctuated from a peak of 308 in the 2001-2002 school year to its current low (see Table 6.1.). The student/teacher ratio in 2004-2005 shows that Pownal Elementary has smaller classes by about 1 child when compared to the 2000-2001 data, an important asset to the students and staff at Pownal Elementary.

Mt. Anthony Union Middle School’s total school enrollment has decreased in recent years. In 2004-2005, Mt. Anthony Union Middle School saw its lowest enrollment of the past four years (568 students). During the same period, the Student/Teacher ratio has seen an increase and is well above the state level. However, it is good to note that the attendance rate has risen in recent years.

Mt. Anthony High School UHSD #14’s enrollment has remained fairly steady during the past four years. However, a large decrease in has occurred in the past year and Mt. Anthony High School is now seeing its lowest enrollment level. In 2004-2005, the total enrollment was 1,193, almost 50 students less than in 2003-2004. Like the Middle School, the Student/Teacher ratio is considerably higher than the state average. However, the graduation rate has risen in recent years.

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	State 2004-05*
Total School Enrollment	308	290	286	279	98,361
Attendance Rate	94.6%	93.2%	94.3%	N/A	N/A
Retention Rate	0.0%	0.4%	7.8%	N/A	N/A
Student/Teacher Ratio	15.4	14.8	15.4	14.2	11.6
Eligible Special Education	16.6%	17.6%	20.6%	N/A	N/A

*All Vermont students K-12.
Source: VT Dept. of Education. *Vermont School Report*. retrieved 2006. <http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt>.

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Table 6.2 – Mt. Anthony Union Middle School (7-8)

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	State 2004-05*
Total School Enrollment	631	604	579	568	98,361
Attendance Rate	92.8%	93.0%	93.6%	N/A	N/A
Retention Rate	1.3%	1.0%	0.5%	N/A	N/A
Student/Teacher Ratio	14.3	13.5	13.3	14	11.6
Eligible Special Education	18.4%	19.0%	20%	N/A	N/A

*All Vermont students K-12.

Source: VT Dept. of Education. *Vermont School Report*. retrieved 2006. <http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt>.

Table 6.3 – Mt. Anthony High School (UHSD #14) (9-12)

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	State 2004-05*
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Section 7. Natural Resources

Lakes and Rivers

The most significant river running through Pownal is the Hoosic River. The two bodies of water in town are known as Barber Pond and Thompson Pond

Mountains and Hills

The most well known mountain in Pownal is the Dome, the first significant peak of the Green Mountains, which rises 2, 748 feet high and is located in the southeastern part of town.

Table 7.1 presents some natural resource information for Pownal.

Land Area (acres)	29,856
Water Area (acres)	51.2

Section 8.

Profile Information Sources

This Community Profile is an attempt to bring together information from many different sources.

The Internet resources used include:

For data: