

# **Snowmass Village Seasonal Residents**

## **A Report to the Second Homeowners Advisory Board**

**Greer L. Fox**

This report was requested by the Snowmass Village Second Homeowners Advisory Board. The board members have not participated in the preparation of the report and are not responsible for any of the comments herein. This report is based entirely on the results of the Snowmass Village (CO) Community Survey conducted during Summer 2007 by RRC Associates of Boulder, CO. No one from RRC Associates was consulted in the preparation of this report. All of the comments about and interpretations of data are solely mine, and I take full responsibility for their accuracy in describing the seasonal residents in SMV represented in the survey. The report has seven sections, each one focusing on a different aspect of the Community Survey. Each section is summarized in a “bottom line.” At the end of the report I provide biographical information.

### **The Data and Some Suggestions and Caveats re Interpretation**

**The Data:** Two separate sets of data were provided by the TOSV staff to assist the Second Homeowners Advisory Board [SHAB] in learning more about their constituents: 1) a series of quantitative analyses of each of the questions in the survey showing responses for the seasonal residents separately from those of the town’s permanent residents. Thirty-nine pages of tabular results comprise this set of data. This data set will be referenced as the “quantitative data.” 2) A separate set of text tables listed all open-ended responses from seasonal residents. This 36-page data set will be referenced as the “qualitative data.” It is important that these two sets of data on the seasonal residents be available as you read this report. The qualitative commentary for seasonal residents only is currently available on the Second Homeowners page on the TOSV website, and the quantitative dataset for the seasonal residents only will be uploaded to the Second Homeowners page by town staff as soon as feasible. I have made the simplifying assumption that the seasonal residents are second-homeowners [SHO] and so I use these terms interchangeably.

**Suggestions:** In reading the quantitative tables, note the first three columns of data, labeled “overall,” “year-round resident,” and “seasonal resident,” respectively. These three columns of data provide an excellent comparative snapshot of the distributions of responses to each of the questions in the survey for three groups: the entire set of respondents to the survey, the full-time residents of SMV only, and the seasonal residents only. These columns should be consulted if one wants to know how full-timers differ from SHO on various points in the survey. The next three columns in each of the quantitative tables show a more finely grained distribution of responses for SHO only according to their tenure of ownership in SMV (< 5 years, 6-15 years, 15+ years). Moving on across the tables, the next three columns present responses of SHO according to age category (<45, 45-65, 65+). Finally, the neighborhood locations of SHO

are used to differentiate among responses. Caution should be used in viewing the age group and neighborhood location distributions because data are presented as percentages, but the total number of respondents in some of the categories is so small that percentage calculations are simply inappropriate and can be misleading. To be meaningful, percentages should be based upon at least 10 cases, and clearly some of the numbers in several subcategories falls below this minimum (eg, SHO aged <45; residents of Horse Ranch, Fox Run, Two Creeks, Divide).

In reading the qualitative tables, it is helpful to work alongside a copy of the survey itself so that the full context of the open-ended responses can be understood. Responses to each open-ended opportunity or question are organized alphabetically in these tables. In several instances, lengthier commentaries have been truncated to one line of text. RRC Associates has provided some categorization and interpretation of the qualitative responses from all survey respondents, and their report to TOSV should be consulted. Qualitative data lends itself to several different analytic approaches. In general, one asks for open-ended responses in a survey, not so much to find predominant patterns (quantitative results do a better job with this), but rather to find some explication of the meaning of quantitative results and to discover the range of opinions among respondents, that is, opinions that might not have been captured by the preset responses in the survey. In interpreting open-ended data, one often characterizes a set of responses in words not used by the respondents themselves in attempting to express a sense of the whole.

**Caveats:** A few caveats are needed. First, the SHO sampling frame may or may not be a good reflection of the SHO population. It simply is unclear how well the sampling frame used by RRC Associates matched the target population. Second, the response rate was 17% among SHO, reasonably healthy for a typical mail-out survey, but anemic when compared to the “gold standard” of at least an 80% response. Finally, missing data can be problematic for individual questions. Because respondents are free to answer some questions and ignore others, the “base N” – the number on which percentages or means are calculated – varies by question. Moreover, only a subset of SHO provided open-ended commentary, so the qualitative data are even more selective of those with strong opinions than are the quantitative data.

**Bottom line:** These data are the first and best data available on SMV SHO. They provide an excellent starting point for developing a profile of SHO and are worthy of SHAB and TOSV attention.

### **Who Are the Seasonal Residents? A Look at Age, Tenure, and Lifestyle**

**Age:** Age data are of interest primarily because so much of life is developmentally organized, and age is a reasonable indicator of life stage. However, one’s age is a sensitive topic to many people, and SHO are no exception. Age data are missing for approximately 7% of SHO. A good picture of SHO age distribution is found on p. 37 of the quantitative report. There we can see that the SHO are most likely to be in their 60s or older. Only 5% (8 respondents) are <45 years old – too few to say much

about intelligibly – and only 13% (20 respondents) are between 45-54. Compared to SHO, the full-time residents are much more evenly distributed across age groups, with fully 1 in 3 (33%) younger than 45. Moreover, the median ages between the two groups are separated by almost a decade, such that the median age of full-time residents is 52.5 years and that of the SHO is 62 years.

**Tenure:** Information on length of residency or property ownership is available in at least three places in the quantitative report, with slightly differing numbers in each place. As can be seen in the table below, which shows the results I found for tenure, although the total N varies from 151 to 162, the distribution of SHO across varying lengths of tenure does not differ substantially from one source of information to another. The data indicate that more than half of the SHO respondents have been in SMV for more than 15 years. A comparatively small number has owned property here for less than five years.

|       |   | <b>SHO Length of Residence in SMV</b> |  |               |  |              |        |
|-------|---|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|--|--------------|--------|
|       |   | < 5<br>Years                          |  | 6-15<br>Years |  | 15+<br>Years | N      |
| p. 1  | N | 16                                    |  | 59            |  | 82           | 157    |
|       | % | 10.2%                                 |  | 37.6%         |  | 52.2%        | 100.0% |
| p. 36 | N | 16                                    |  | 62            |  | 84           | 162    |
|       | % | 9.9%                                  |  | 38.3%         |  | 51.9%        | 100.0% |
| p. 37 | N | 15                                    |  | 57            |  | 79           | 151    |
|       | % | 9.9%                                  |  | 37.7%         |  | 52.3%        | 99.9%  |

**Age and Tenure:** A better profile of SHO is gained by considering age and tenure simultaneously. To do this, I recalculated data from p. 37 to obtain a cross-tabulation of the age and tenure data. These data are shown in the table below:

|                      |   | <b>SHO Length of Residence in SMV</b> |   |               |   |              |           |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|---------------|---|--------------|-----------|
| <b>SHO Age Group</b> |   | < 5<br>Years                          |   | 6-15<br>Years |   | 15+<br>Years | N         |
| <35                  | N | 2                                     |   | 1             |   | 0            | 3*        |
|                      |   |                                       |   |               |   |              |           |
| 35-44                | N | 0                                     |   | 5             |   | 0            | 5*        |
|                      |   |                                       |   |               |   |              |           |
| 45-54                | N | 5                                     |   | 7             |   | 7            | 19        |
|                      | % | 26.3%                                 | + | 36.8%         | + | 36.8%        | => 99.9%  |
| 55-61                | N | 6                                     |   | 21            |   | 16           | 43        |
|                      | % | 14.0%                                 | + | 48.8%         | + | 37.2%        | => 100.0% |
| 62+                  | N | 2                                     |   | 23            |   | 56           | 81        |
|                      | % | 2.4%                                  | + | 28.4%         | + | 69.1%        | => 99.9%  |
| Total                | N | 15                                    |   | 57            |   | 79           | 151       |
|                      | % | 9.9%                                  | + | 37.7%         | + | 52.3%        | => 99.9%  |

\* = N too small for calculation of percentages.

Immediately apparent is the strong correlation or link between age and tenure: older age and lengthier tenure are related. Almost 70 percent of the SHO 62 years old and over have owned property in SMV for more than 15 years. Further, among all SHO, 37% (56 of 151) are 62+ and have lived in SMV for 15+ years, and almost half (16+56/151 or 48%) are at least 55 years old and have lived in SMV for 15+ years..

Is there any evidence of retirees buying into SMV in large numbers? Not in this survey. A look at the first column of data in the table above shows that among the 15 SHO respondents who have owned property here for five years or less, only 2% are of retirement age. 14% of middle-aged SHO (the baby-boom ages of 55-61 years) are recent buyers and 26% of SHO in early middle age (45-54 years) are recent buyers. This underlines again the link between age and tenure; short tenure in SMV is associated with people of younger ages.

**Lifestyle:** A question in the survey asked respondents to describe themselves as one of the following: empty nester, couple with children, couple without children, or single without children. A look at the distribution of responses on p. 37 shows that second-homeowners are preponderantly found among traditional family lifestyle categories. Fully 86% of SHO have children in their households now OR have had children present at some point. This suggests that family-oriented activities and activities for children of all ages will be of importance to SHO either now or in the future. Indeed, more than twice as many SHO as full-time residents indicated that grandchildren visit with them in SMV (56% vs 21%).

**Bottom line:** Clearly, the voices of SHO in this survey are mature voices with a lengthy history in Snowmass Village.

### **Seasonal Resident Views re the Second Homeowners Advisory Board**

SHO reactions to the SHAB may be found on pp. 3 and 6 of the quantitative report and primarily on p. 10 of the qualitative report. Note that on p. 6, the number of respondents to the question about satisfaction with the SHAB falls off rather sharply; only 61 of the 162 SHO respondents (38%) actually answered this question. Satisfaction with the SHAB is lukewarm, with an average rating of 3.0 among the 61 respondents. The open-ended commentary fleshes out the quantitative data. Evident here is general support for the idea of a SHAB, but there is also frustration with the Board's lack of visibility and relative powerlessness as the representative voice of the SHO to the TOSV Town Council. The comments also suggest the need for improved means of communicating information to and hearing from SHO constituents. Reinforcing this notion are the awareness (of the SHAB) data on p. 3 of the quantitative report. It is of concern, even if understandable, that fewer than half (45%) of the relatively new homeowners are aware of the existence of the SHAB, but it is also of concern that 1/3 of the SHO with 6-15 years tenure and 1/4 of the SHO with more than 15 years tenure in the village are unaware of the SHAB. In considering possible avenues of contact with SHO, note should be made of the data on p. 26 about the ways respondents access information

about TOSV government happenings. It would appear that most SHO rely upon the Snowmass Sun; a quarter (25%) rely upon the TOSV website, a figure that does not vary substantially by tenure in the village.

**Bottom line:** There is interest in and support for the SHAB among SHO, but more effective ways of eliciting participation from SHO need to be tried.

### **Seasonal Resident Attitudes about the Community**

The qualitative report used in conjunction with the quantitative data on SHO gives much rich information on SHO attitudes about community issues and the tenor of community relationships. Questions throughout the survey elicited an outpouring of commentary from SHO. Among the serious issues SHO feel face SMV were the amount, scope, and continuation of construction over the foreseeable future. Many comments spoke to the need for forceful management of the construction process by the TOSV. Overdevelopment, residential density, and traffic congestion – all accompaniments of the plans to expand significantly the size of the population in the village – surfaced as concerns. Base Village and the dominance of Related WestPac in village growth, development, and political process were frequently singled out as matters of concern, particularly in light of what some saw as timidity and diffidence among the Town Council in recent years. Fears that SMV was being lost in the process of saving it were not uncommon, and indeed not a few questioned whether the ultimate beneficiaries of the current and planned development were in fact a small cadre of developers and realtors rather than the community at large. Others were just as convinced that the current developments would be a boon to the village, if only the Town Council would facilitate the process more effectively. Some voiced a desire for retaining the small-town atmosphere of SMV, its family-friendliness and affordability, and avoiding elements that smacked of Vail, glitz, and a European style uber-sophistication out of keeping with SMV history and character. There were calls for inclusivity, for opportunities for the coming together of locals and SHO along with visitors. Employee housing was often mentioned in open-ended comments, not only as a necessity but also as very desirable in order to sustain the sense of SMV as an integrated community. A sense of SMV as a community is important to SHO, and many voiced a desire to be a welcomed part of the community. Frustration and anger were voiced at the sense that SHO are the targets of often-hostile reactions from locals at worst and at being ignored within the political arena at best. Many found the continuing divisiveness and rancor within the community upsetting and wished for a greater degree of civility and comity in public life in the village.

**Bottom line:** The SHO do not speak in one voice; there is the similar mix of attitudes about the direction and implications of current development for the community as is found among the full-time residents. However, the degree of SHO affection for, interest in, and commitment to the village in its past and future is quite evident.

### **Seasonal Resident Preferences for Community Amenities**

A number of questions throughout the survey queried respondents about different kinds of town-provided amenities and services. Results were discussed thoroughly in the RRC Associates report to the TOSV (pp. 24-26) and need not be repeated here. Results pertaining specifically to SHO are in tables on pages 22-24 of the SHO quantitative report; page 28 provides data on rodeo preferences of seasonal residents. There are relatively few differences between SHO and full-time residents evident in these tables. When SHO ratings of different amenities are considered, SHO give slightly more support to a performing arts center than to a new conference center. A new movie theatre receives the highest level of support among SHO, with support strongest among SHO with the most recent tenure in SMV (80% of SHO with <5 years tenure rate a movie theatre 4-5 in importance compared to about 60% of SHO with lengthier tenure who rate it so highly). Parking and access to facilities received only moderate satisfaction ratings from SHO (pp. 18-19 of the SHO quantitative report), and the open-ended commentary throughout the survey suggest that access is an issue for many, with specific comments directed to the need for parking at more trailheads, better access to skiing, and more parking near stores in the Center and the mall. Accessibility was also interpreted by some as “affordability,” and there is evidence in the open-ended commentary of a desire for more affordable golf, tennis, and recreation center fees for SHO. Finally, despite the thrust of the survey questions which encouraged responses couched in terms of what “more” was wanted, there were a few voices who said in essence: “Whoa. We don’t need to develop everything. We don’t need to be Disneyworld.”

The SHO commentary on their preferences for the mall suggested there was no desire to replicate Aspen but many want more “life” on the mall, with a variety of restaurants and stores that appeal to a wide price range from up-scale to modest, with pleasant “people-watching” and people-gathering areas, places to sit to be part of a scene, to soak up the ambience, and to do so without the constant pressure of harried staff trying to turn over the crowd to make another dollar. The mall should be a place to linger, to sit, to enjoy the human and architectural scenery and landscaping, rather than simply a place to eat, shop, and leave. There is much support for resort-enhancing businesses, such as restaurants and retail stores, but also considerable support for community-sustaining businesses, such as groceries, convenience, and hardware stores. The development on the mall only of high-end, upscale, private-club-type facilities that are costly and exclusionary will turn off many in this audience of SHO.

**Bottom line:** The SHO provide a wealth of suggestions about enhancing the bounty of community amenities and activities in SMV. At the same time, there is a constant thread of inclusivity in their commentary, such that the activities and amenities should be designed for the entire community, for people of varying ages and incomes, and for residents, second-homeowners, and visitors alike.

### **Seasonal Resident Attitudes about the Future of Snowmass**

Respondents were asked how excited they were about the improvements taking place in SMV, and these data are shown on p. 32 of the quantitative report. Evident is a good deal

of excitement among SHO. When the “don’t knows” are removed from the calculations, 40 of the remaining 144 SHO, or 28 %, are “not at all excited”; 61 of 144, or 42%, are “somewhat excited”; and 43 of 144, or 30% are “very excited.” The degree of excitement dissipates somewhat with tenure, with those of longer residency in SMV showing less enthusiasm than the more recent SHO. It is important to look at the open-ended commentary that accompanies these ratings when trying to understand what they mean. These data are included on p. 31 of the qualitative report. Helpfully, the commentary has been organized by the degree of “excitement” assessed in the original survey question. The comments of those who are not at all excited suggests the degree of disagreement, almost bordering on despair for some, with the direction of the “new” SMV. But, even more notable is the hesitancy expressed by those who are “somewhat excited.” Many of these comments suggest residents are withholding final judgment until the results are more evident. Finally, even among those most excited there are expressions of concern and apprehension. The “support” for the new direction is tenuous at best, judging from these data.

An alternative view of the future can be gleaned from the open-ended commentary in response to the question that asked “If you could keep one thing the same in Snowmass Village in perpetuity, what would it be?” In essence, this is a “values” question and can yield insight into those often-elusive elements that are of most importance to SHO about the nature of the village. This question elicited an outpouring of commentary, which is found on pp. 26-28 of the qualitative report. The predominant messages here are two-fold: Keep the small scale, accessibility, low-key, friendly nature of the village. And equally important: Remember to preserve the beauty and peace of the mountain, the natural surroundings, the open space, the native environment and wildlife. Don’t sacrifice the natural surroundings in the attempt to salvage the village, because that will presage the demise of both.

**Bottom line:** Most SHO are optimistic about the future of SMV but want to proceed with caution and awareness of the full range of costs, both human and environmental, of continued development, and some SHO do not feel the gain is worth the toll.

### **Future Surveys of Seasonal Residents**

Sprinkled throughout the open-ended commentary from SHO was support for the current survey effort and encouragement to continue with an annual survey. Whether done in conjunction with the TOSV as a whole or as a separate effort of the SHAB, attempts to reach out to constituents to elicit their opinions and engage them in the work of the SHAB through additional survey efforts would seem a good idea. In the future, the SHAB might want to ask questions more particularly addressed to SHO issues, such as amount of time in residence in a typical year, SHO desire for participation in the life of the village, and their views of the mission and effectiveness of the SHAB.

There were some omissions in the current survey that future surveys could address. For example, no questions were asked about the fire department or medical services/emergency care services. No questions were asked about the protection of

wildlife and the environment. Nowhere were respondents asked to indicate that they had a voice in local governance, or wanted such a voice, or felt adequately represented, or felt there was someone to contact if they had an issue or problem. Although many questions were asked about respondents' preferences for additional recreational services and recreational spaces, there was no opportunity for respondents to indicate a desire for community participation, volunteer opportunities, or community service. Many local governments, in assessing citizen attitudes, are interested in collective efficacy, that is, whether citizens feel they have a commitment to the community, live among like-minded others who share similar values, and can solve community problems effectively. Because Snowmass Village has embarked upon a developmental pathway that portends a shift to a more affluent resident, visitor, and second-homeowner base, it would seem important to ask how respondents feel about economic and social diversity in the town, and how that impinges upon their view of the quality of *their* lives here. And no questions were asked about the respondents' timelines – how long do respondents anticipate living, or working, or renting, or owning property in Snowmass Village.

Finally, a good community survey must have the support of the citizenry through their engagement and participation as respondents. It is imperative that survey content reflect a full range of issues confronting a citizenry and that, over time, citizens see that their responses are read by, listened to, and incorporated into consideration of issues that come before their civic leaders and town staff.

**Bottom line:** Citizen surveys serve many useful purposes. Although expensive, they can be a valuable source of citizen input to community leadership.

**About the Author:** Greer L. Fox is Distinguished Professor of Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN. A sociologist, she teaches graduate courses in research methods and has served as principal investigator on federally-funded research projects that rely upon survey methods as well as upon qualitative approaches. She and her husband Bruce, a native Coloradan with four generations of ties to Leadville, Denver, Boulder, and the Western Slope, have been second-homeowners in Snowmass Village for the past 24 years. Professor Fox may be contacted at [glfox@utk.edu](mailto:glfox@utk.edu) or at 970-923-4427.