

# Community Profile

## Sandpoint and Its History

Before Sandpoint officially became a village in 1901 and a city in 1907, it was part of the home of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians. Their ancestral lands extended across all of Priest and Pend Oreille Lakes, up the Pend Oreille River into Canada and as far east as Montana. Northwest Company fur trader David Thompson was one of the first settlers to establish a relationship with tribes including the Kalispel, and helped establish fur trading in the area in 1809.

Northern Pacific Railroad surveyors arrived in the area in 1880, attracting a few permanent settlers. That same year, Robert Weeks opened a general store in what was then called Pend Oreille, the little settlement that sprouted up on the east side of Sand Creek opposite the present Sandpoint City site. By 1882, Northern Pacific began building the stretch of railroad that ran between Montana and the tiny community of Pend Oreille. The settlement grew slowly over the next decade, during which time its name was changed to Sandpoint.



Figure 2.1 - Sandpoint's industrial history is giving way to new types of specialty and service businesses. This image, from a mural on the side of the Pend O'reille Brewing Company, shows wine makers transporting fresh grapes. (Image Studio Cascade, Inc.)

In 1892, Great Northern Railroad arrived in what is now Bonner County. Its first agents were L.D. Farmin and his wife Ella Mae. The Farmins bought rights to 160 acres along the west edge of Sand Creek, and after “proving up” on homestead property, platted the city of Sandpoint in 1898.

The forests and rich mineral deposits in the Pend Oreille region attracted settlers to small communities forming throughout the area. Timber became the main industry in Sandpoint and Kootenai and mills like the Humbird Lumber Company thrived in Sandpoint into the late 1920s.

Farming was also becoming a popular activity on the cleared forest land. Called “stump ranches,” these farms primarily

grew hay because the short growing season in Northern Idaho made it difficult to grow other crops. The hay was used to feed the horses lumber companies used to harvest and process the wood.

February 2, 1907, a portion of Kootenai County was incorporated to become present day Bonner County.

By mid 1908, work had begun on the bridge connecting Sandpoint and Sagle. It was completed in 1910, and was just under two miles in length. The bridge was replaced and dedicated in 1934, and replaced again in 1956. The first two versions of the span aligned with Sandpoint's First Avenue – unlike today's alignment with Superior Street. The Long Bridge Sandpoint residents and visitors use today was built in 1981.

The Panida Theater was built in 1927 to enhance entertainment options for area residents. The 1940s brought Farragut Naval Training Station to the area and about 300,000 new servicemen. In 1963, Schweitzer Basin ski area opened, which brought more people to the area for skiing. North Idaho's many unpopulated areas, and rich and diverse recreational opportunities began to attract many more to the region in the 1970s. A growing arts-oriented population helped form and support the Pend Oreille Arts Council (POAC) in 1978.

Between the 1980s and 2007, Sandpoint has transitioned from a resource-based economy to a more balanced diversified one with manufacturing and recreation amenities.

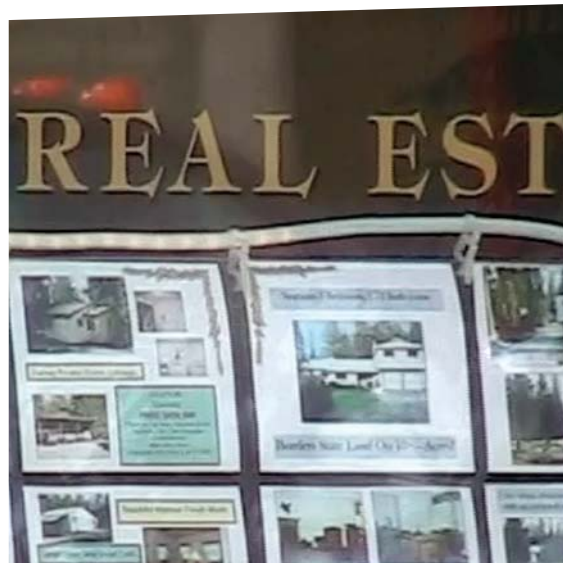


Figure 2.2 - Sandpoint's economic shift from resource industry to seasonal recreation is evident downtown, where real-estate business is increasingly predominant. (Image source: Dan McCann, "Caviar & Corndogs.")

## Environmental Characteristics

### Geological and Physical Setting

Sandpoint is located at the north end of Lake Pend Oreille in Bonner County, Idaho. Nearby communities include Dover to the southwest and Ponderay to the northeast. The City exists on relatively flat lands, though foothills to the north and west surround it.

Lake Pend Oreille is approximately 40 miles in length and reaches depths of 1,200 feet. Formed by glacial activity, the lake is fed by the Clark Fork River and drained by the Pend Oreille River. A smaller tributary, Sand Creek, flows into Lake Pend Oreille immediately east of downtown Sandpoint.

## Climate

Sandpoint enjoys a temperate climate with average high temperatures reaching into the 80s during the summer, and below the freezing mark during the majority of days of the winter. The annual average precipitation in Sandpoint is about 34 inches. The wettest months of the year are November and December, when Sandpoint receives an average of 4.75 inches of precipitation.

## Community Characteristics and Population

Sandpoint's population has increased dramatically over the last 30 years, although not at the rates of Bonner County as a whole. The 2005 U.S. Census indicates Sandpoint is populated by 8,105 persons, approximately 19.8 percent of Bonner County's population (40,908 persons).

While Sandpoint has grown, it has not changed much in terms of race, income, employment or household composition. The City's largest population segment is persons between 35 and 54 years of age. About 15 percent of Sandpoint residents are over the age 65, and more than 96 percent identify themselves as white.

Census data indicate 1,643 residents are three years of age or older and are enrolled in school. Of this population, 8.9 percent are in college, with 24.2 percent enrolled in high school. About 86 percent of the general populace of Sandpoint graduated from high school, and 23.4 percent hold a bachelor's degree or greater.

## Household

Populations in both Bonner County and Sandpoint increased only slightly faster than

Table 2.1 – Percent Population Change

| 1970-1980     |           | 1980-1990     |           | 1990-2000     |           |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| Bonner County | Sandpoint | Bonner County | Sandpoint | Bonner County | Sandpoint |
| 55.3%         | 7.6%*     | 10.2%         | 16.7%     | 38.4%         | 31.4%     |

Source: Census Data, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 \* Same due to annexation

Table 2.2 – 1990-2000 Housing Comparison

| Total Housing Units |               |           |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------|
|                     | Bonner County | Sandpoint |
| 1990                | 15,152        | 2,452     |
| 2000                | 19,646        | 3,168     |
| % Increase          | 29.7%         | 29.2%     |

| Median Value Owner Occupied HU |               |           |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
|                                | Bonner County | Sandpoint |
| 1990                           | \$60,500      | \$57,000  |
| 2000                           | \$124,500     | \$111,100 |
| % Increase                     | 105.8%        | 94.9%     |

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census SF3; 1990 Census H023B

the increase in housing units between 1990 and 2000. In 2000, the median value for housing units was \$111,100 in Sandpoint, compared to \$124,500 across the remainder of Bonner County; these prices were 94.9 percent higher than 1990 figures for Sandpoint, and 105.8 percent higher than 1990 figures for Bonner County. During that same decade, the total number of housing units increased by 29.7 percent for Sandpoint and 29.2 percent for Bonner County.

As of 2000, the community had 3,168 households with an average household size of 2.29 persons per dwelling. The vacancy rate for Sandpoint during this period was about 10 percent, compared to Bonner County's 25 percent. This may indicate a larger demand for housing in Sandpoint compared to Bonner County, but the county's larger number of seasonal units (19.2

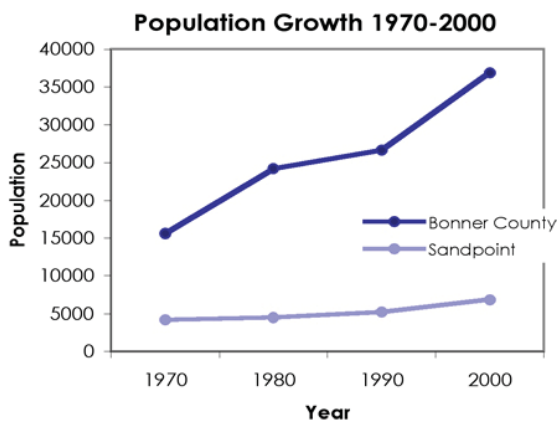


Figure 2.3 - Relative growth rates, Bonner County versus Sandpoint between 1970 and 2000. (Image source: ECONorthwest, Inc.)

percent) versus Sandpoint’s (4 percent) may also account for the higher vacancy rates.

The Housing chapter of this plan provides housing information beyond the scope of this summary.

## Employment and Income

Manufacturing businesses and government employers were responsible for nearly 50 percent of Sandpoint’s employment in 2007, according to the Idaho Department of Labor. Accommodations and food services provided 11 percent of jobs. Bonner County’s per capita personal income in 2005 was \$24,844 and the average wage per job in 2006 was \$29,743.\* U.S. Department of Commerce

One prime component of Sandpoint’s economy is tourism. Each year, visitors travel to Sandpoint to shop, ski at the Schweitzer Mountain Resort, or take part in a variety of other activities including concerts at the popular Festival at Sandpoint. Many events and activities in Sandpoint are designed to attract visitors who enjoy music, art and gourmet food.

In addition to the tourist and recreation economy, Sandpoint is home to Coldwater Creek - a large, national clothing retailer employing approximately 600 persons locally, making it, according to the Idaho Department of Labor, Bonner County’s largest private employer.

The unemployment rate in Sandpoint was 4.9 percent in 2005 - slightly lower than Bonner County’s 5.2 percent rate. According to the 2000 Census, the majority of the community’s workforce used automobiles – either alone or in a carpool – as their primary means of commuting (83.0 percent), with 8.3 percent walking and about 5 percent working at home. Rates of resident commutes by car are only slightly lower than those of Bonner County (87.6 percent). However, 48 percent of Sandpoint workers have a commute to work of 10 minutes or less. Just 20 percent of Bonner County workers have similarly short commutes.

## Population Forecast

Population forecasting is an essential part of the comprehensive planning process as it provides a basis for estimating land needed for housing, employment, and other uses. Forecasts also help predict the amount of infrastructure the City will need to provide, ensuring that the City has sufficient capacity to accommodate projected growth while ensuring provision of services are commensurate with growth.

A number of sources helped produce population projections for this plan, including historical data from the U.S. Census for 1980, 1990, and 2000, data from the Idaho Department of Labor, and review of population forecasts from the City of Sandpoint Wastewater Facility Plan and the City of Sandpoint Water Facility Plan.

Sandpoint’s population grew more quickly between 1990 and 2000 than did the rest of Idaho. During that timeframe, the statewide population rose by approximately 28.5 percent compared to Sandpoint’s 31.4 percent. Between 1970 and 2000, the City’s population grew by about 65 percent. This plan’s base population – 8,206 – is from the Idaho Department of Labor’s estimate of population in Sandpoint in 2006.

Three population forecasts – producing “Low”, “Medium” and “High” projections – were prepared for Sandpoint’s 20-year plan horizon. Each projection was based on differing assumptions, as listed below:

- *High: This forecast assumes the City will grow at the rate forecast in the Water Facilities Plan for the 2005-2025 period, about 3.5 percent annually. At this pace, the City’s population will reach 16,900 residents by 2027.*
- *Medium: This forecast assumes the City will continue to grow at the same pace as that experienced from 2000 to 2006, or about 3.0 percent annually.\*according to city building permit data. This scenario projects the City’s population to be 15,266 residents by 2027.*
- **Low: This forecast assumes the City will grow at a rate similar to long-term City growth rates experienced between 1980 and 2006, or about 2.5 percent annual growth. By 2027, the City’s population would include 13,738 residents under this scenario.**

Additional projections were produced for Sandpoint’s Area of City Impact (ACI), which currently has an estimated population of 1,399 residents. The land use scenarios presented in

this comprehensive plan emphasize compact urban centers and generally discourage urban levels of growth outside of the city limits. The ACI forecast also presumes that people will be more attracted to the urban environment within the city limits.

Total and interval forecast figures for the Sandpoint ACI are provided in Table 2.4.

**The 2008 City Council Members feel that a 2.5% growth rate is most likely over the period of this plan.**

Table 2.3 – Sandpoint Population Forecasts

|      | Low    | Medium | High   |
|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2006 | 8,206  | 8,206  | 8,206  |
| 2007 | 8,441  | 8,452  | 8,493  |
| 2017 | 10,767 | 11,359 | 11,981 |
| 2027 | 13,783 | 15,266 | 16,900 |

Table 2.4 – Sandpoint ACI Population Forecasts

|      | High  | Medium | Low   |
|------|-------|--------|-------|
| 2005 | 1,399 | 1,399  | 1,399 |
| 2007 | 1,448 | 1,441  | 1,434 |
| 2017 | 1,723 | 1,673  | 1,624 |
| 2027 | 2,049 | 1,941  | 1,839 |

Source: ECONorthwest Population Projection

