



Bear Valley Communities, San Bernardino County

Community Profile

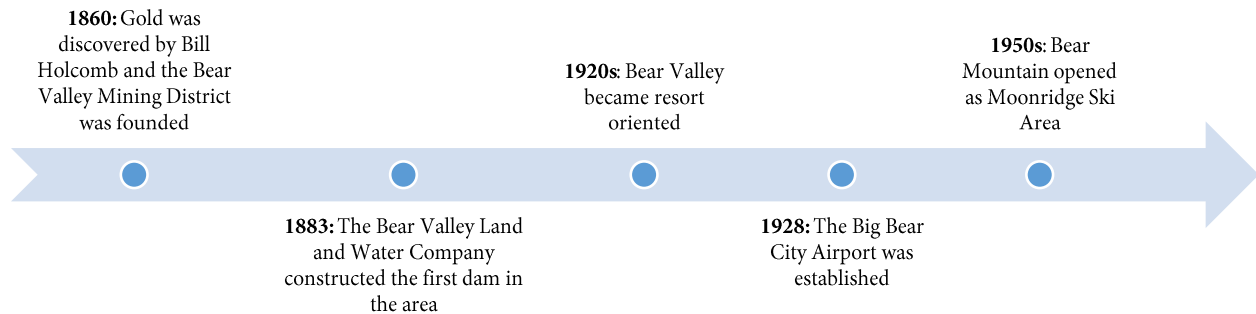
Purpose

The community profile is a summary of the social, cultural, economic, and historic dimensions of the Bear Valley Communities. It presents data collected through secondary sources to inform future actions. The profile, together with future studies and information gathered from residents, highlights essential facets and “tells the story” of the Bear Valley Communities of Baldwin Lake, Big Bear City, Erwin Lake, Fawnskin/North Shore, Lake Williams, Moonridge, and Sugarloaf.

The initial objective research prepared for the community profile was provided to participants as a handout at each community workshop to provide a basis for discussion during the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), values, and aspirations exercises. Workshop participants were asked to review the information and provide comments as a way to infuse local knowledge into the community plans process. Their feedback was used to finalize the community profile, which includes objective research and issue identification by community workshop participants.

The objective information, community stories, and public’s participation in the community profile, SWOT, values, and aspirations exercises were all used when developing the framework for the focus and action statements that make up the community plan.

History



The Serrano tribe originally settled Bear Valley. Bill Holcomb’s discovery of gold in 1860 spurred the first rush of settlers to the area, who quickly developed the small town. Over time, the primary industry in the area changed from mining and logging to livestock and cattle ranches. The construction of the first dam in the area in 1883 by the Bear Valley Land and Water Company created Big Bear Lake. This led to an inflow of recreational interest, and in the 1950s, Bear Mountain was opened as Moonridge Ski Area. From 1934-1937 the airport was used as a flight training facility by the Army Air Corps. Today, the airport is used for everything from emergency transport to valley hospitals and safety trainings to kids programs to weddings and events.

Source(s): bigbearlake.net, Wikipedia, bigbearhistory.org, 2007 Bear Valley Community Plan

Location & Geography

Bear Valley is a collection of mountain communities located in the southwestern portion of San Bernardino County approximately 100 miles northeast of Los Angeles and 40 miles northeast of the City of San Bernardino. The Bear Valley communities are located near Big Bear Lake, a 3,000-acre reservoir for irrigation downstream and recreational activities. Big Bear City (an unincorporated community, part of the Bear Valley communities plan area) is located adjacent to the City of Big Bear Lake (an incorporated City, not included in the Bear Valley communities plan area).

Source(s): Big Bear City General Plan, ESRI



Figure 1: Bear Valley Communities location.

Source(s): ESRI, San Bernardino County LUS

Key Census Data

Category	Bear Valley Communities		San Bernardino County		California		United States	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Population								
Total Population	14,113		2,078,586		38,066,920		314,107,084	
2020 Population Forecast	15,038 (+6.6%)		2,227,066 (+7.1%)		40,619,346 (+6.7%)		334,503,000 (+6.5%)	
Total Households	6,140		607,604		12,617,280		116,211,092	
Average Household Size	2.43		3.34		2.95		2.63	
Median Age	45.3		32.2		35.6		37.4	
Education								
High School Diploma	2,665	26.5%	330,613	26.3%	5,153,257	20.7%	58,440,600	27.95%
Education Past High School	3,629	36.1%	417,953	33.3%	7,400,714	29.8%	60,821,634	29.1%
Bachelor Degree or Higher	2,474	24.6%	336,315	26.8%	7,708,909	31.0%	61,206,147	29.3%
Housing								
Total Dwelling Units	14,402	n/a	703,737	n/a	13,781,929	n/a	132,741,033	n/a
Homeowner Occupied Units	3,783	26.3%	370,032	52.58%	6,908,925	50.1%	74,787,460	56.3%
Renter Occupied Units	2,003	13.9%	237,572	33.76%	5,708,355	41.4%	41,423,632	32.2%
Vacancy*	8,615	59.8%	96,133	13.7%	1,164,649	8.5%	16,529,941	12.5%
Median Year Structure Built	1976	n/a	1976	n/a	1974	n/a	1976	n/a
Income								
Median Household Income	\$49,420	n/a	\$54,100	n/a	\$61,489	n/a	\$53,482	n/a
Persons Below Poverty Level	1,804	18.0%	199,451	12.7%	3,354,518	11.2%	26,235,361	10.6%
Employed	5,171	83.1%	812,707	86.1%	16,890,442	89.0%	143,435,233	90.2%
Unemployed	1,050	16.9%	131,293	13.9%	2,084,564	12.3%	14,504,781	9.2%
Note: N/A indicates that the data is not available; n/a indicates that the category is not applicable								
*This figure may include seasonal households								

Table 1: Key Census Data

Source(s): 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and ESRI

Community Structure (Physical Characteristics)

The Bear Valley Communities consist predominantly of single-family residential uses, with lot sizes up to 40 acres, and smaller multifamily residential buildings. Commercial uses are limited and focused primarily along W. Big Bear Boulevard. Houses and shops in the communities are one to two stories with craftsman, bungalow, or log cabin style architectural elements.

The major roadways throughout the communities are State Route (SR) 18, SR 38, and Baldwin Lake Road. These are paved two-lane highways with few pedestrian facilities. The WalkScore.com rating for the communities range from 2 - 50 out of 100, suggesting the need for a car to complete most errands. Mountain Transit Bus Routes 1 and 1A serve the communities and provide connection from Big Bear City to Boulder Bay, Erwin Lake, Mountain Meadows, and Gold Mountain. A regional route is also available for off-mountain service.

Source(s): Google Earth, County of San Bernardino Zoning Map, Walkscore.com, Mountaintransit.org

Community Existing Land Use

The 88,294-acre Bear Valley communities contain a mix of agriculture and resource conservation; open space; institutional; floodways; rural, neighborhood, and general commercial; office, service, and highway commercial; industrial; and residential uses of various densities. Most of the land, (86% - 75,416 acres) is in agriculture and resource use. Residential uses account for 8,115 acres, with single-family residential accounting for 5%, rural residential accounting for 4%, and multiple family residential accounting for less than 1% of Bear Valley's total acreage. Remaining uses each account for less than 1% of total communities land area.

Land Use	Acreage	% of Total Area
Agriculture/Resource Conservation	75,416	86%
Community Industrial	25	<1
Floodway	3,900	4%
Institutional	349	<1
Multiple Residential	94	<1
Office, Service, and Highway Commercial	39	<1
Rural, Neighborhood, and General Commercial	158	<1
Rural Living	3,314	4%
Single Residential	4,709	5%
Special Development	289	<1
Bear Valley Total	88,294	

Table 2: Land Uses by Acreage

Source(s): County of San Bernardino Land Use Services

Quality of Life Concerns

The following list was compiled from observations and calls received by the San Bernardino County Sheriff and Code Enforcement officers. Common issues noted within the communities include:

- **Residential Issues:** junk and trash, excessive outside storage, inoperative vehicles, group homes, construction without permits
- **Commercial Issues:** excessive signs and banners, outside displays of products, original land use changing without approvals, land use and zoning
- **Business Concerns:** lack of public parking areas for visitors

Source(s): San Bernardino County Code Enforcement

Community Amenities

Approximately 85% of the land within the Bear Valley Communities Plan boundary is National Forest. The plan area also contains Bureau of Land Management- and State-owned lands. The Bear Valley Communities Plan area has many recreation-based community amenities, as shown on **Table 3: Recreational Areas**.

Recreational Areas	District Parks
Big Bear Snow Play	Big Bear City Park
Centralized and dispersed campgrounds, organization camps and hiking trails	Erwin Lake Park
	Sugarloaf Park
	Grout Bay Park

Table 3: Recreational Areas

Recreational amenities draw in tourism and are important assets. The Bear Valley Communities Plan area contains many trails and dirt roads utilized as recreational facilities.

The Baldwin Lake Community Garden and the Big Bear Valley Community Gardens Project serve the community. Community gardening and community-supported agriculture are important to many local residents.

In terms of services, Bear Valley Community Hospital, the Big Bear Fire Department, and the Big Bear Police Station serve the plan area. All of the communities are located within at least a seven-minute response time of the nearest fire station, which include Big Bear Fire Department Stations 96, 282, 283, and 292.

Also located in the plan area are a number of elementary, middle, and high schools. They include:

- Big Bear Elementary School
- North Shore Elementary School
- Baldwin Lane Elementary School
- Big Bear Middle School
- Big Bear High School
- Chautauqua High School

Source(s): Zillow.com, Google Maps, California Department of Education, 2007 Bear Valley Community Area Plan, American Community Garden Association

Community Groups

Bear Valley is home to active residents and second homeowners who support hundreds of nonprofit organizations. They represent the following interest areas:

- Outdoor recreation activities and facilities
- Health, wellness, and education
- Service clubs
- History, arts, and culture

Big Bear City Community Services District http://www.bbcsd.org/
Big Bear Valley Historical Society http://bigbearhistory.org/
Big Bear Chamber of Commerce http://www.bigbearchamber.com/
Big Bear Lake Village http://www.bigbearlakevillage.com/
Big Bear Lake Rotary Club https://bigbearlakerotary.org/
Big Bear Airport Pilots Association https://www.bigbearcityairport.com/pilots-association/

Community Economics

A 2016 ESRI Community Analyst report showed that the Bear Valley communities have approximately 1,802 jobs and 478 businesses. The chart below shows the major business types.

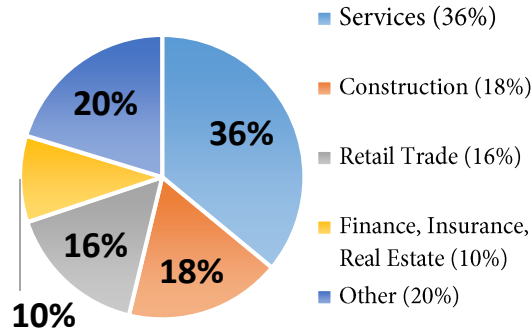


Figure 2: Major Business Industries

Source(s): 2016 ESRI Community Analyst

Community Events

Bear Valley hosts hundreds of events each year. Many of the events take place in the City of Big Bear Lake (not to be confused with Big Bear City), but they are organized, supported, and attended by residents from all over the valley. Events tend to fall into the following major categories:

- **Athletic:** running, bicycling, rowing, fishing, snowshoeing, skiing, and snowboarding
- **Cultural:** film festivals, concert series, theater performances, car shows, and Independence Day fireworks
- **Food & Spirits:** wine walks, beer festivals, cook-offs, Oktoberfest, and a weekly three-season farmers market
- **Big Bear Air Fair:** annual event
- **Young Eagles Program:** May through September on the second Saturday of each month
- **Youth Aviation Adventure Program:** single day event held at Big Bear Airport for kids age 11-17.

Source(s): BigBear.com

Public Health

Chronic Disease: Information for some of the Bear Valley Communities is not available. The predominant health concerns for the Bear Valley Communities include heart failure, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and asthma. The Bear Valley Communities experiences higher rates of emergency room visits for each of these chronic diseases in comparison to San Bernardino County.

	Diabetes Hosp./E.R.	COPD Hosp./E.R.	Asthma Hosp./E.R.	Heart Failure Hosp./E.R.	Hypertension Hosp./E.R.
Big Bear City, Baldwin Lake, Erwin Lake, Sugarloaf	* /148.0	* /29.8	* /46.2	* / *	* /30.3
Moonridge	* / *	* /27.9	* /53.4	* /29.2	* /44.7
San Bernardino County	23.3/42.4	16.0/19.9	9.6/52.6	32.3/10.6	5.6/46.9

Table 4: Rate of Hospitalization/Emergency Room Visits per 10,000 People

Source(s): Healthy San Bernardino

* Indicates insufficient data

Air Quality: Table 5 below shows the air quality near the Bear Valley Communities, measured at the Crestline monitoring site, in terms of the number of days that area exceeded the federal standards for pollutants (exceedance days). The table shows that the monitoring site near the Crest Forest Communities had fewer exceedance days for each pollutant than that of the overall South Coast and Mojave Air Basins, in which the Bear Valley Communities are located.

Air pollution is one of the contributing factors linked to the development of chronic diseases such as stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and respiratory diseases. By reducing levels of ambient pollution (outdoor air pollution), communities can lessen the impact that it has on resident’s health.

	Crestline Monitoring Site			South Coast Air Basin			Mojave Air Basin		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
Ozone Federal 8-hour standard	54	36	51	111	88	92	81	66	86
Course Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀) Federal 24-hour standard	0	1.0	1.0	0	2	1	1	1	1
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5}) Federal 24-hour standard	0	3.3	*	17	13	15	2	6	2

Table 5: Air Quality Exceedance Days
Source: California Air Resources Board
* Indicates insufficient data

Modified Food Index: The Modified Food Index maps the availability of healthy food in a census tract. The lower the score, the less available healthy options are in the area.

The entire community area of Mentone ranks within the two lowest categories for food access, meaning that there are access to 15 or less healthy food outlets within that area. Lower scores indicate that these areas contain many convenience stores and fast food restaurants compared to the number of healthy food markets.

Source(s): Modified Retail Food Environment Index Score Map

Public/Active Transportation: Transit service for the Bear Valley Communities is provided by Mountain Transit, which serves the mountain region with connections to San Bernardino. One route serving the Bear Valley region provides a connection to San Bernardino. There are no dedicated bike lanes, bike trails, or identified bike-friendly roads.

Community Initiatives: A 2015 First 5 San Bernardino report entitled “Assessing the Needs and Assets of San Bernardino County Families: Big Bear” identified some potential issues. These included a lack of indoor wintertime activities, challenges accessing resources such as public transportation, walkable routes, and affordability in childcare and other services, and a lack of prenatal and pediatric services.

Source(s): First 5 San Bernardino County, 2015



Community Engagement Summary

As a part of the Community Plans Continuum process, community members from the Bear Valley Communities were invited to participate in three community workshops. The first workshop, titled “What We Value”, took place on March 3rd, 2016 from 6:30 – 8:30pm at the Big Bear Regional Wastewater Agency. This workshop was attended by 30 community members. Workshop participants performed a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the community. Following that exercise, participants used that information to share what they valued about the community (Values) and what they want to see the community become in the future (Aspirations).

The second workshop, titled “Our Roadmap”, took place on March 31st, 2016 from 6:30 – 8:30pm at the Big Bear Regional Wastewater Agency. This workshop was attended by 34 community members. The purpose of this workshop was to develop preliminary focus and action statements. The project team provided word for word summaries of the SWOT and Values and Aspirations exercises to use during the goal setting process. Additionally, an existing land use map was provided for each of the Detailed Plan Communities for participants to comment on and recommend changes. Participants made comments on where they would and would not like to see certain uses in the future, as well as what they saw as the true boundary of their community.

The third workshop, titled “Making it Happen”, took place on July 21st, 2016 from 6:30 – 8:30pm at the Big Bear Regional Wastewater Agency. This workshop was attended by 18 community members. The workshop was used to help prioritize the focus statements developed in the previous workshop while also identifying possible champions for each effort.

Information was also made available on project websites made specifically for each community. This information included:

- Background materials on the project
- Materials developed for each workshop
- Summaries of the information collected from past workshops
- Surveys developed to follow the process of each meeting and allow for further input

Community Identified Issues

SWOT Analysis

This section contains the results of the SWOT analysis conducted during the first workshop. A SWOT exercise stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and is used to help gain insight into the community through local knowledge. In the first part, participants identify their communities’ biggest strengths, such as community assets like a library or community center, along with their biggest weaknesses, which could be a lack of open space or high rates of internal crime. Next, workshop participants looked at opportunities that the community could take advantage of as part of the community plans process. This builds off of what was identified in the strengths and weaknesses portion. Lastly, participants identify external threats to the community. These are generally concerns that are outside of the control of community members, such as natural disasters or changes in economic conditions. This information was then compiled and used throughout the rest of the community plans process to inform the values and aspirations exercises conducted at workshop #1, as well as the focus and actions statements.

Strengths

- Fair level of services
- Great restaurants for a small community
- Clean air
- Natural environment (beauty, animal habitats)
- Outdoor activities and recreation
- Darkness and quiet/privacy
- Small town atmosphere (Monday through Thursday)
- Arts and culture
- Giving community
- Great environment to raise children
- Safe community for families
- Weather (four seasons)
- Community involvement during emergencies
- National Forest
- Strong senior support
- Strong everyday civic groups
- Community relationships, strong supportive bonds
- North Shore Improvement Association (NSIA)
- Property owners group
- No better place to live May to December
- Simple mountain communities
- Sugarloaf - No businesses (quiet, no sirens, no traffic lights, few street lights)
- Free time because everyone is unemployed due to business-killing government regulations
- Less business-killing regulations than the City of Big Bear Lake
- Tourism draw from the Snow Summit and Bear Mountain Resort areas
- A large amount of community recreational space (five community parks)
- Big Bear Lake, Baldwin Lake, Erwin Lake, and Lake Williams

- Big Bear Discovery Center, Big Bear Solar Observatory, Moonridge Zoo
- A number of campgrounds, organization camps and hiking trails
- A large number of Community Development Organizations
- Transportation routes throughout the region including Rim of the World Highway (SR-18) and SR-38

Weaknesses

- Lack of job opportunities (16% unemployment)
- Not enough high paying jobs (poor job mix)
- Shrinking school system (lower population and homeschool/charter school)
- Lack of higher education opportunities
- Poor building conditions (dilapidated structures)
- Lack of communication with government (does not listen or respond to citizens)
- Tourist disrespect (leaving trash, trespassing, loud parties)
- Drug use
- Limited number of activities and services for families of small children
- Hostile environment for businesses
- Does not encourage new business (over regulation and lack of understanding)
- Lack of behavioral health services
- Lack of doctors/medical services
- Car dependent community
- Lack of transportation and mobility with sidewalks, etc.
- Traffic congestion (weekends, tourism, events)
- Narrow roads with way too much weekend traffic
- Limited water
- Lack of reliable utilities
- Weak snow plowing from road department
- Lack of return on taxes

Weaknesses (continued)

- Infrastructure deficits (roads as opposed to State Highways)
- Distance to bigger venues, events, hospitals
- Overdevelopment – lack of integration with the forest
- Zoning to support needed infrastructure
- Little community involvement in crime prevention
- Weak County involvement in clean-up of commercial property
- Natural disasters (fire danger/drought)
- Missing Trader Joe’s
- Lack of programs (outreach education)
- Fawnskin road closures during events
- A degree of apathy in residents (feeling they are being taken advantage of by Big Bear Lake)
- Lack of police enforcement
- Fawnskin Fire Department consists of two people (more staffing needed)
- Too many people crowding Big Bear City gas stations and post office
- Need better bus/transit stops
- Lack of careers
- Large low-income population with underpaying or no jobs
- Lack of resources for teens
- Lack of competitive education (no adult education)
- No recycling/salvage/resale facilities at County dump like Shasta County
- Cool Cabin Rentals
- Major facelift needed in downtown district of Fawnskin
- Walkscore.com ratings between 2 and 50, indicating the need for a car to perform most daily activities
- Few pedestrian facilities (sidewalks, signalized crosswalks) in some of the more remote areas

- Rates for diabetes, respiratory disease, and heart disease are all above the California state median for emergency room rates

Opportunities

- Understand the costs/benefits of tourist activities – true or perceived
- Externalities – how to educate and manage
- More tourism geared around natural surroundings
- Education about natural surroundings and potential impact
- Define snow play areas/other signage
- More green energy (solar, etc.)
- Sustainable design and building (less energy, more solar, less bldg. material waste, more recycling)
- Energy savings opportunities
- Ski resort developments for jobs
- Opportunities for younger physicians to establish new practices
- Enhance transportation (trams, buses, shuttles, gondola, bike lanes, pedestrian trails)
- Create more walkability
- Expansion of trail system outside of forest system
- Increase in educational opportunities for adults
- Activities for younger/school aged children
- Attract more young families to the area
- Building renovation/repair services (replacing redevelopment funds)
- Aspirations for disadvantaged persons
- Jobs and families (school enrollment)
- Vast economic revival
- Independence
- Create special districts in Whispering Forest to bury power lines
- Home self-construction
- Rail system tie into Vegas speed rail – Antelope Valley

Opportunities (continued)

- Add a stop light (18th and Stanford cutoff)
- Keep clean air
- Not over grown/developed and polluted
- Eco-tourism
- Environmental education center
- Open space enhancement
- San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust
- Recreation (fishing, boating, hiking)
- Fawnskin traffic flow redirected (Big Bear Mt. in N. Shore)
- Eyesore of large construction site in N. Shore
- Improve conditions of Fawnskin buildings with outside investment
- Fawnskin downtown area needs big improvement
- More classes at Senior Center
- Permanent Community College
- Help for education from the County
- Welfare offices can be returned to help clients get off of welfare
- County Court and office in Big Bear
- Post offices added to Ewin Lake and Baldwin Lake would relieve congestion in Big Bear City
- A thrift store at the County landfill would increase our recycling ability and reduce landfill requirements
- A Chamber of Commerce at our airport would create an enterprise zone for Big Bear City
- Local government should allow business owners to operate freely
- Fawnskin has limited opportunities for employment – recreation employment opportunities
- Access to Lake from South shore
- No expansion outside current commercial zones
- Stronger secondhand smoking laws

- Increased revenue capture of tourist activities as Winter sports gain popularity and the southern California population grows.
- Take advantage of major access routes (SR – 18 and SR – 38)

Threats

- More help on County funding to improve educational opportunities for community
- Not enough education about unique environment to preserve plant and animals
- Poor escape routes during natural disasters (fire, earthquake)
- County allowing new construction below code
- Sustainable development regulations
- Constitutional rights eroded away
- Job killing business regulations from the County
- The Rotary Club runs Big Bear
- Trash in forest (sled, dirty diapers)
- Low lakes levels (lowers tourism)
- Drug use by locals and visitors – need far more enforcement of drug laws
- Underutilization of forestry logging to thin forest and reduce fire hazards
- Critical shortage of industrial/commercial/enterprise land use zones
- Speed limits not enforced
- Traffic congestion
- Opportunities limited by lack of resources and blight in “downtown” (virtually no employment opportunities)
- Buildings in poor conditions
- Day-trippers causing dangerous traffic conditions in N. Shore
- Commercial truck traffic encouraged to use Fawnskin as the truck route into the valley
- More tourists threaten our environment and peace

Threats (continued)

- Agenda 21
- Restrictions on number of solar and electric services
- Skyrocketing utility bills
- Box store and changes severely impact small businesses
- Aging facilities (school, hospitals, etc.)
- Unsustainable development
- Abuse or destruction of the natural surroundings
- Tourists ignore laws and are not really policed
- Lack of unified community support for good projects and needed improvements
- High drug use and low law enforcement
- Easy access to drugs
- Career welfare, drugs, crime lead to unsafe community
- Threats for young families – lack of jobs and opportunities to keep them
- Lack of decent affordable housing for young, growing families and young professionals
- Lack of funding for school programs outside of normal classes
- Government impediment to action
- Losing dark nights because of too much night lighting
- Medical emergencies
- Infrastructure limits like substandard roads and water shortage
- Shrinking National Forest budget (lack of forest management)
- Fresh water consumption
- Inconsistent snowfall year to year could negatively impact the tourism industry in the area