

Chapter Five

The Silverton/Mt. Angel Community Resource Unit

Section One: Baseline Social and Economic Information

A. Community Description

Geographic Features

The Silverton/Mt. Angel CRU on the north extends south of Molalla to north of Mt. Angel, west between Woodburn and Mt. Angel east of Howell Prairie and taking in the Pudding River, south of Silverton and including Silver Falls State Park, and east above the upper reaches of the Molalla River. Figure 13 shows the map of this area.

Settlement Patterns

Silverton began its white history in 1843 with pioneer settlement. Three years later, James Smith and John Barger built a sawmill on Silver Creek. Incorporated in 1885, Silverton had 900 inhabitants by 1894. By 1921, Silverton was exporting flour and timber to the region and abroad. Silver Falls Timber Company was once the largest sawmill of its kind in the world (Silverton, Visitor's Guide and Community Profile, 2001, Silverton Area Chamber of Commerce).

The population of Silverton was 5891 in 1990 and 7414 in 2000, an increase of over 21%. Mt. Angel had 2832 people in 1990 and 3121 in 2000, an increase of 9%. Scotts Mill had 280 people in 1990 and 312 in 2000, an increase of 10% (Census Data, Table Two).

Silverton has a distinct downtown that still has integrity to it. Although signs of decline and re-development were evident—boarded up businesses mixed with newer businesses. The town has newer style homes and apartment complexes. The neighborhoods appear well taken care of. The historic feel of the community is apparent because the condition of the

Figure 13
Map of the Silverton/Mt. Angel Community Resource Unit

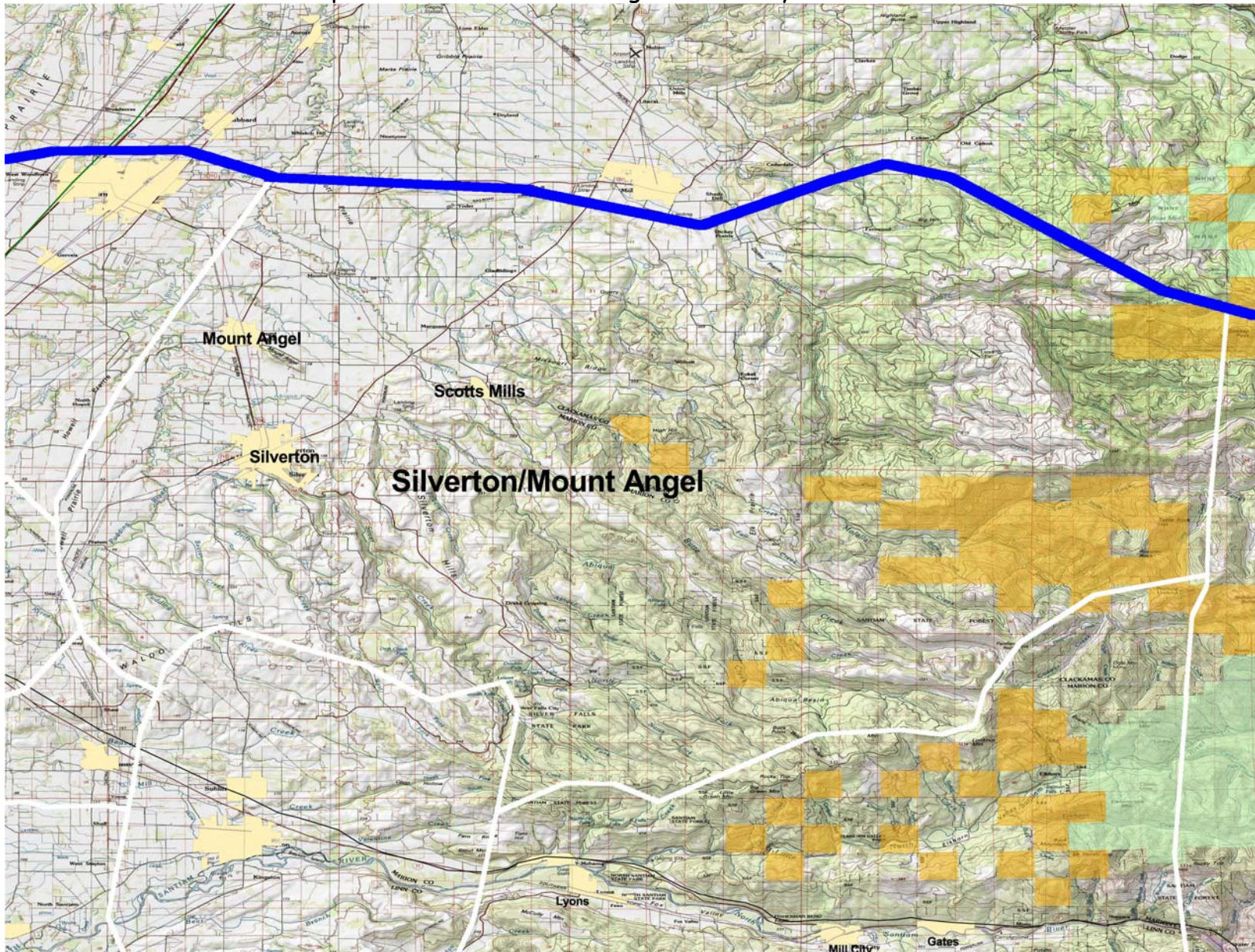


Figure 14
Downtown Silverton Next to Silver Creek



older buildings still showcase community life. There are several large, Victorian bed and breakfast establishments, but not many motels and hotels. There are many scattered murals around town, and an organized mural tour for visitors. The presence of a developed artist community is reflected in the many galleries downtown. In fact, the mayor recently began to organize the artists so that they would have a collective voice in the community.

Silverton used to be an agricultural community.

"It's hard to agriculture here today. You still see migrants during the 'seasons.' There is a migrant camp near us."

Residents stated that Silverton experienced a lot of development 5-10 years ago but it has slowed somewhat. Many in-migrants are Californians, some of whom reside on "Snob Hill." Despite the anti-California references in the area, local people say origin does not really matter. The absorption process for newcomers is working well, although the retirement sector is becoming

large enough that it is beginning to change the character of the community. Despite this change, no community issues related to retirement.

Mt. Angel is a small community known for its religious institutions, German influence, and its Oktoberfest celebration that has brought in many visitors since 1965. The grain elevator, Mt. Angel Abby, and the Benedictine Sisters Prior are well-known landmarks.

The Mt. Angel population is 3121. St. Mary's public school, associated with St. Mary's parish, is the largest in town. Mt. Angel was described as a "traditional" community with many long term families of German and Catholic descent.

"In Mt. Angel, you feel like you're in the '50s. There's no fast food restaurants."

Scotts Mill is a very small hamlet far from through roads whose isolation and rural character are intact. It has just a couple commercial establishments.

We were told that young people do not stay in these communities but leave for education and jobs.

"I'm going to nursing school in Portland. I come home the weekends to visit my parents."

A number of middle-aged adults revealed that they had followed a relative here.

"I moved here a few months ago from Idaho. My mother lives here. People have welcomed me with open arms."

"We moved here after we retired and visited my brother here."

Publics

Silverton has a large segment of retired people in the community who reside locally in the summer and who winter in warmer locales.

The Hispanic presence in this area is not new. However, this population is beginning to have an influence in its own right. The Catholic Churches and schools in Mt. Angel are bilingual, Mexican restaurants are springing up in the area, and other Hispanic businesses have begun, contributing to the re-development of downtown.

Youth seem better educated and more traveled than some of the other communities. A number of people talked about the importance to youth of a college education and the large percentage of graduates who go on to college. We also heard numerous references among young people to traveling abroad. Most students leave the community after school and a fair number return after a few years.

Silverton has a well-developed artists community. There are a number of antique stores, art galleries, and gift stores catering to high end visitors. One gallery featured mainly local artists of paintings, watercolors, photographs, greeting cards, jewelry, glass work, and pottery. The primary customer-base for the gallery is local. The opening of Oregon Gardens has brought them business each weekend. Artists have strong environmental values as expressed by their work and by their devotion to public art.

"Earth muffins" is a local term referring to environmentalists. Apparently, there is a well-developed group of these folks that engage in clean up activities, through the group SOLVE, and foster awareness of environmental issues.

Networks

See Section Two.

Work Routines

The City administration listed the following as the major employers of importance to Silverton residents, along with the number of employees:

Silverton School District, Education	425
Redman Industries, Manufactured homes	250

Mallorie's Dairy, Inc., Milk	70
Quest International, Vegetable Processing	30
Stockwell Manufacturing, Hardwood Products	30
Source: Community Profile, Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, 2002.	

The Silverton Chamber of Commerce pointed out that, in addition to the above list, the Silverton Hospital employs 405 and Brucepac has 140 workers.

Work routines in this area revolve around general contracting, trade jobs, commuting to Salem and a large visitor population. There is a large seasonal migrant labor force. High school kids often work in the canneries in Woodburn during the summer. Agriculture today is evident in the seed and Christmas tree operations of the nearby areas. A large number of nurseries can be observed.

The retail and commercial sectors are not thriving at present. The increase of commuting and the discretion to buy cheaper when away from home is perceived to have eroded the local economy. One person quoted a recent statement by a community leader:

"In the late 1980s, mom and pop stores were thriving. J.C. Penney's was the core of the downtown. The phone company had more than 100 workers. Now, ten years later, Penney's and most of the family-owned shops have shut down, and those 100 employees have evaporated into air."

Growth over the last few years, especially the increase of retirement, has spawned an active trades economy.

"People here do trade work, you know, shutters, gutters, dry wall, those kind of things. Some of this they do here, but they also drive to other areas."

"As a general contractor, I primarily serve the wealthy."

Construction is one of the better paid work activities in the community but new construction has reportedly slacked off.

"Some contractors are going belly-up. My business is steady because I'm established in the community."

Silverton supports a number of real estate offices in the more expensive office spaces downtown, reflecting the importance of in-migration to the housing market and in stimulating the local economy. An assisted living facility shows the recent influence of the retirement community.

"There isn't anything here to make a living. People are either retired or they commute to Portland or Salem."

"Locals choose to patronize stores in Salem instead of locally owned businesses. Downtown used to be a thriving shopping district before it committed suicide."

"Many of the family-owned businesses are gone. Penney's used to hire many people and now it's shut down."

A number of people still engage, or did engage in the past, in timber related businesses.

"In my logging years, I wouldn't cut everything. I was very careful not to cut down trees with birds. I was very conscious of the watershed boundary. I would get flack from other loggers, but I was proud that I didn't cut everything in sight. I haven't logged in 8 years; I went into general contracting."

Support Services

Some residents complained of a "good old boy" system operating in the community whereby the interests of the few dominate. The leadership is perceived to be oriented to wealthier migrants moving to the community, typically from California, and is reflected in the housing and business orientation of the community. The cost of this emphasis appears to be the loss of younger families and lower and moderate income families, which for

some observers, has resulted in the many "for rent" signs in downtown business stores. This lack of balance and diversity in the community is increasingly perceived as a detriment to the long-term health of Silverton.

Many kids leave high school early because the school setting does not work for them. They go on to Chemeketa Community College to finish high school.

The Community Outreach Clinic is one of the most modern free clinics in the region in terms of aesthetics and equipment. It is just under two years old and is primarily funded by the Silverton General Hospital as a means to serve the community's poor population. Professionals who donate their time staff the clinic. Both Spanish and English are commonly spoken.

The library had a major renovation and large addition in 1997. For a town of this size, the library is large and modern, with about 15 computers with high speed internet access. The large bulletin board serves a variety of formal and informal interests in the community.

In 1992, Silverton began an art mural project to attract visitors. Ten years later, there are nine wonderful murals throughout the town that have become an attraction in their own right. Fostered by the Silverton Mural Society, the murals depict American values, as well as local stories and landmarks.

Residents from Silverton began Silverton Together in 1993 to focus on youth and family activities. Drawing on parents, social service agencies, and grant funding, the group offers parenting and other classes, recreation opportunities, and cultural events

Mount Angel Abbey was begun in 1882 and is part of the Benedictine monastic tradition. Its members carry out ministries related to pastoral service education, retreats, and a natural history museum. Queen of the Angels Monastery, founded in the same years, serves as the historic house for the Benedictine Sisters.

The Oregon Garden, a few miles south of Silverton, has become an important visitor facility in the area. Silverton and Oregon Gardens have an agreement

whereby the City's wastewater is transported to the wetlands at the Oregon Gardens, solving mutual problems.

Silverton Country Museum features artifacts and historical exhibits from early settlement days.

Silverton City Park is a small, but well-kept park, conducive to family picnics and large gatherings. It has a nice playground for kids and a large covered picnic area with tables and BBQs. Two bridges, one covered, connects the park with downtown.

Among the many festivals in this area are:

- Christmas in Silverton;
- Homer Davenport Days, a weekend of arts, crafts, food booths, and parade, commemorating the celebrated cartoonist;
- Iris Jubilee, a variety of weekend events, including runs and a senior Olympics;
- Strawberry Festival;
- Mt. Angel's Oktoberfest, a well-known celebration of German heritage.

Recreational Activities

See Section Three.

B. Citizen Issues Related to Community

Housing

"Strict building laws keep many houses from going up. As a result, property values of homes have skyrocketed."

"Once I decided to stop commuting here to my job, it took me four years to find a place to live. Selling my five bedroom house in Salem was still not enough to cover a two bedroom cottage in Silverton."

"There are no city fields or basketball courts for kids to play on. Kids have to join organized sports that the YMCA offers."

"Kids are bored. There is not much for them besides the bowling alley and one movie theatre."

"Kids go to the park and smoke dope and do crystal. The park is vandalized regularly. I don't know why police can't do a better job of patrolling since their station is only a block away."

"The city doesn't want to spend on affordable housing."

Growth and Governance

"The City is not preparing for growth, even though their own projections show that housing could increase by 4000 units in 10 years. They don't want to spend any money to accommodate growth."

"City planners don't seem to stay long."

"Last summer, a 200 year old tree was cut down to make room for the High School soccer field. The project was supposed to be considered by city council, but for some reason it was pushed through quickly. They had police on site because they were worried about protesters but it didn't happen."

Youth

"There are more kids doing crack than when I was a kid." [24 year old returnee]

Residents were aware that their local economy is vulnerable and even in decline because of recent economic changes. Some citizens have begun a campaign to foster local spending and a commitment to local business.

"Downtown used to be a thriving shopping district before it committed suicide."

Section Two: Communication Strategies

A. Informal Networks and Communication

Both formal and informal groups in the community use the bulletin board at the library to communicate.

Mac's Place is a gathering spot downtown that attracts regulars and visitors alike. From poker in the backroom to retired folks having a beer out front, to live music, it is a place at which people trade stories and information. The weekdays are mostly local users, while the weekend brings in visitors from Stayton, Salem and other locations.

Silver Creek Coffee House sports several piles of flyers and a rack of brochures about the town, upcoming events, and regional entertainment guide. People know each other's names, people talk across tables, and local business is conducted there. Its bulletin board announces art and music events.

The City Park is an active gathering spot in good weather.

"Earth muffins," the local environmental network, depends on word-of-mouth communication. They stay informal and are not involved in more formal environmental stewardship activities.

B. Formal Groups and Communication

Figure 15
Organizations With Interest in Public Lands in Silverton/Mt. Angel

Organization	Contact Information	Mission
The Oregon Gardens	Ben Gentile [95] P.O. Box 155 Silverton, OR 97381-0155 (503) 874-8200 miles@oregongarden.org	Display botanical diversity through a variety of gardens; attract visitors.
SOLV	Silver Creek Coffee House	Clean up rivers and streams

	PO Box 1235 Hillsboro, OR 97123 (503) 844-9571 info@solv.org	and highway corridors
Molalla River Watch, Inc.	Kay Patterson P.O. Box 867 Molalla, OR 97038 (503) 824-2195 www.molallariverwatch.org	River clean up activities, trail maintenance
Cascade Pacific Council Boy Scouts	13462 Butte Creek Rd. NE Scotts Mills, OR (503) 873-1411	
Silverton Together	421 S. Water Silverton, OR 97381 (503) 873-0405	Youth and family support, activities, recreation, and events
Pudding River Watershed Council	Scott Eden P.O. Box 398 Scotts Mills, OR 97375 (503) 6873-6475 scott-eden@or.nacdnet.org	Watershed restoration
Merry Cranksters Mountain Bike Club	(503) 829-6743 btaylor@molalla.net	

Section Three: The Public Lands Perspective

A. Uses of and Orientation to Public Lands

People in this area take great pride in their rivers and creeks, as far as keeping them clean and preserving their beauty. Silverton is very aesthetically focused—that is, they make special efforts to improve and maintain the appearance of their town. The mural tour, presence of galleries and arts everywhere, the immaculate appearance of large, Victorian homes converted into bed and breakfasts, and just the quaintness of the town professes beauty, cleanliness, money and stability.

One of the favorite places for Silverton residents is Silver Falls State Park. This area has been highly valued for years. The town of Silver Falls City was located near the area of South Falls from the 1880s until the 1930s. While today it does not have the intimacy for Oregonians as in years past because of the number of visitors, the park is still used frequently for family outings, social events, and for showing out-of-town visitors. It also has a conference center that is used by groups around the region. At 8700 acres, Silver Falls is the largest Oregon State Park.

In addition, the Oregon Garden has opened its doors and has begun to attract local and regional visitors. Designed by the Oregon Association of Nurserymen through a non-profit organization, it is intended to highlight the industry and the botanical diversity of Oregon.

Retired people take many trips throughout the year, with trips to the coast being popular in summer. Many of the seed and tree farmers are well off and prefer to take long trips rather than go to local destinations. For camping, people go “up the canyon” in the summer, by which locals meant Detroit Lake. People said a favorite spot to visit was “Crooked Finger” near Scotts Mills, where a park and waterfall are used by families and high schoolers. Apparently, there are a fair number of bow hunters in the Silverton area.

“We’d go to Crooked Finger to play in the snow and party. We considered this place the forest.”

"Nobody here likes Detroit Lake. There's nothing to do unless you have a boat. We only went there for group events."

"You go to Silver Falls for scenery, Detroit Lake for boating."

"In season, Detroit Lake is not very accessible. You have to make reservations far in advance and it's very crowded."

B. Themes and Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

Themes

"I think about 35% of loggers are environmentalists. They aren't slaughtering the forest. They work hard to keep their impact low. Now logging is all political. The hippies get in the way." [98]

Citizen Issues Related to Natural Resource Management

"We need more interpretive signs around the area and the park, educating visitors of the plant life and local history."

"Trails are being abused—littering, four-wheeling. People who are not forest savvy."

"The Forest Service should do a better job with timber cutting around ornamental and rare plants. This one area housed small dogwood plants, like 8-10 inches tall. This plant is quite rare."

"The big problem in the forest now is the abuse of the trails. People bring their bikes into areas where machine bikes are prohibited and where hunters are present. I almost shot a guy who came around the bend on a motorcycle. They say they don't know they're riding on trails that are off limits, but I think they know."

"People litter a lot. I carry trash bags with me all the time and bring back bags of trash when I go hunting."

"We're always picking up trash out at Silver Ridge Road and Finley."

C. Management Opportunities

It is likely that the Forest Service does not need to play an active part in the Silverton/Mt. Angel community. Their location may preclude direct connection with the Willamette or Siuslaw National Forests, generally speaking. However, this population is one that is environmentally aware, has a residual timber culture still in place, and has avid interest in its own local natural environment. Hence, in terms of education, interpretive signage, regional partnerships and other types of connections, this area could be rich. There are several community events yearly that are well attended that would allow the Forest Service to gain exposure into local networks as well as with tourists. Silverton represents a strong possible bridge between urban and rural interests that could contribute to a broader constituency for the agency.

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