

Introduction



INTRODUCTION

- Social determinants of health: factors which impact an individual's health outcomes.
 - Examples include socioeconomic status, safety, education, food security, and infrastructure.
- Williamston, North Carolina is a town located about 30 miles northeast of Greenville, North Carolina. With a population of 5,248, it is the seat of Martin County.
- This project explored the social determinants of health of Williamston, North Carolina, to gauge the health of the town's residents

METHODS

- Preliminary research regarding the population of the town
- Self guided walking tour of Williamston
- Interviews with residents
 - Coffee Shop Owner
 - Firefighters
 - Pharmacist
- Additional research, primarily comparing Williamston to the rest of the state

RESULTS

Healthcare Access

- Martin General Hospital, Williamston's only hospital, closed on August 3, 2024
 - Since it's closure, all primary care offices in town have closed but one
 - The only remaining office, Access Medicine, is a concierge medical office
- Many patients utilize urgent care for the primary care service
 - "If it weren't for the urgent care, many of our residents would not be able to get refills on basic medications, like their blood pressure meds" - Pharmacist
- EMS must bring patients to Greenville, Bertie county, or Washington
 - Adds a minimum of 30 minutes to the transport time, and typically over 90 minutes to total call time

Safety

- Positives:
 - Speed Bumps
 - Crosswalks
 - Sidewalks around downtown
 - "I'd consider the crime to be medium to high, but it's mostly drug related. We don't have much violent crime" - Williamston Firefighter
 - "I chose to move here last year because I felt I was safer here than in Greenville" - Owner, B-mocha Coffee
 - Transaction Zone, used as a designated meeting place for transactions such as Facebook marketplace exchanges
- Negatives:
 - Crime rate of 57 per 1000 residents
 - Over double the NC average of roughly 25 per 1000 people
 - Several abandoned or condemned buildings
 - Lack of sidewalks outside of downtown
 - "We do have a large drug problem here in Williamston" - Firefighter

Food

- Several grocery stores
 - Primarily in the southern and central parts of town
- High prevalence of fast food
- Outdoor vending machines

Economy

- Since the hospital closed, all its workers now commute to other towns for work
 - "This causes a negative economic impact on our town, because these workers then get off work and shop and spend their money in these other towns, instead of here in our town where they used to shop" - Firefighter
 - A lot of the pharmacy's customers utilize payment assistance programs to afford their medication
 - "My business is doing great! My morning rush is always busy and we are even looking to expand" - Owner, B-mocha Coffee Shop



- Above: Access Medicine, Williamston's sole remaining primary care office
- Top Right: sign for the town's Transaction Zone, to provide a safe meeting point
- Bottom Right: Downtown Williamston



DISCUSSION

- The hospital closure became a prominent topic in nearly all of our research and interviews, as its impacts have been felt in many aspects of the town's social determinants of health.
- Although the focus of this study was only on this one town, many of these issues are generalizable across the region of eastern North Carolina. These problems need to be directly addressed at both a local and state level, in order to improve the health and well being of Williamston, as well as similar eastern North Carolina towns.

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