

**POPULATION & ECONOMY**

**WILLIAMSTON, N.C.**



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# INTRODUCTION



## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In planning for the physical and economic development of a town such as Williamston, the first logical step is the collection and analysis of pertinent background data. For Williamston, the data collection and analysis includes base mapping, a survey and analysis of existing land use, and a study of the population and economy of the town. These three basic elements are necessary for the formulation of the land development plan which will be published in the near future.

This report is a summary of the Population and Economy Study. It includes an analysis of age and sex composition, income, race, education, and other characteristics of the population. In addition, the population is projected into the future based on past trends and current conditions. Trends in employment, retail sales, agricultural production, and other economic activities are analyzed. Finally, the report includes recommendations designed to strengthen the economy.

Generally, the data used in this study includes data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the N.C. Employment Security Commission, in addition to information derived from personal interviews with local officials and business leaders.

In addition to its basic purpose of providing background information for the planning board, this report should prove to be of value to other local officials and citizens. It should be especially useful to people who are interested in the economic growth and development of Williamston and the surrounding area.

## REGIONAL ORIENTATION

The Town of Williamston is located in Martin County, North Carolina, and is separated from Bertie County by the Roanoke River. The town is situated in a major agricultural area and many local people still gain their income, either directly or indirectly, from agriculture. In addition to agriculture, forestry and fishing have played a major role in the development of the area. Recently, the area's economy has started to become more diversified and has been expanded to include an increasing number of manufacturing industries.

Perhaps the principal reason for Williamston's growth during the past few decades has been its location in relation to the transportation network of the region. The town is served by U.S. Highways 17, 64, and 13 and by North Carolina Highway 125. The significance of this highway system becomes more apparent when it is realized that the U.S. 17 and 13 bridge across the Roanoke River at Williamston is the only bridge across the river for many miles in either direction. The nearest crossing west of Williamston is on U.S. 258 which is approximately 35 miles away at its nearest point. The closest eastern crossing is on N.C. 32 across the Albemarle Sound approximately 40 miles east of Williamston. It is evident that many north-south travelers go through Williamston because of the bridge. Two new highway bridge projects spanning the Roanoke River are under construction; one connects Oak City in Martin County to Lewiston in Bertie County and the other connects Plymouth in Washington County to Shipyard Landing in Bertie County. However, these two bridges will serve primarily the local population and should have very



little, if any, impact on tourist travel through Williamston.

In addition to highways, the town is served by railroad and water transportation. An east-west line of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad serves the town and connects with a north-south line of the same railroad in the town of Parmele, 14 miles west of Williamston. With numerous trunk line interconnections, this line provides good rail facilities for Williamston.

Although regularly scheduled water transportation is not available to Williamston, the Roanoke River is navigable for boats with shallow draft. A channel depth of ten feet is maintained up to Williamston.<sup>1</sup> Once the river was a primary means of transportation. However, today very little cargo is transported by means of the river. Cargo that is transported includes pulpwood, chemicals, and oil.

The weak link in Williamston's transportation network is air transportation. The only commercial airport within 50 miles is at Rocky Mount, 48 miles from Williamston. The town has no municipal airport for local and business use. However, plans are underway for construction of a 3,600' X 75' paved, lighted runway to be located on a 78 acre tract west of town. Since many modern companies need a landing strip for business airplanes, this runway should increase the town's attractiveness to potential new firms.

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<sup>1</sup>Virginia Electric and Power Company, Martin County, North Carolina, An Economic Study, 1966.

# POPULATION



## INTRODUCTION

A town's most valuable resource is its people. The extent of a town's development depends largely upon such factors as the education, skills, and ambition of the local population. Therefore, anyone concerned with planning for the growth and development of a town should first gain an understanding of the structure of the local population. In order to efficiently provide such things as schools, police protection, and fire protection, the local government needs information concerning population increase, education, income, the distribution of the population by age and sex, and other pertinent factors. This section of the Population and Economy Study is designed to provide the Williamston Planning Board and, in turn, the local government with an analysis of the factors listed above.

This section of the study is in three parts. First, past population trends are analyzed to determine how the population has changed numerically over the years. Second, the characteristics of the current population are analyzed. This part includes information concerning the age, sex, and racial distribution of the population as well as social characteristics such as education and personal income. Finally, the population is projected into the future so that the Planning Board may plan for physical development in relation to anticipated growth.

## PAST TRENDS

There are essentially three ways by which a town can gain population. These are in-migration, natural increase, and annexation.<sup>1</sup> A town may lose population through natural decrease or out-migration. Migration, natural change, and annexation have all influenced Williamston's population growth during past decades.

Population change for Martin County, Williamston Township, and Williamston is shown in Chart 1. Although Martin County has lost population since 1950, Williams- ton and Williamston Township have gained population. As is shown later in the text, this is a reflection of migration patterns within the county.

### MIGRATION

In recent years, the prevailing trend of population movement throughout this country has been the migration of people from rural to urban areas. This trend developed as a result of technological change and innovation, particularly in agriculture. For example, in 1940, one farm worker could supply approximately 10 people with agricultural products, whereas, one farm worker can now supply nearly 35 people.

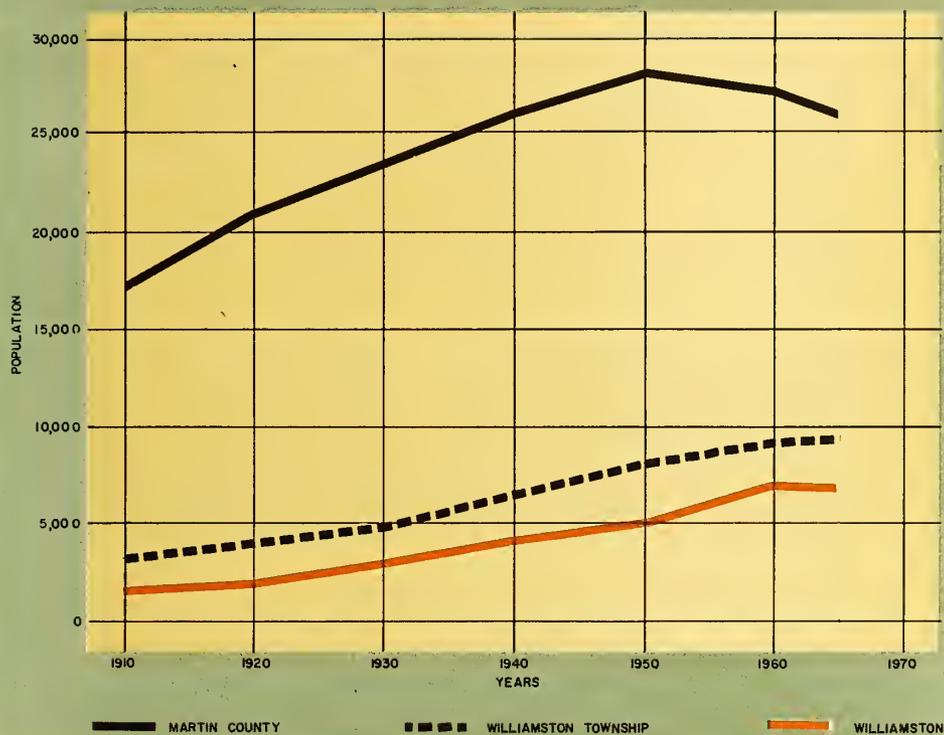
The decline in agricultural employment has been responsible for a large part of the out-migration from

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<sup>1</sup>In-migration is the movement of people into an area to live, and out-migration is the movement of people from an area to other areas.

Natural increase is an excess of births over deaths, and natural decrease is an excess of deaths over births.

Chart 1. Population Growth For Martin County, Williamston Township,  
And Williamston, 1910 - 1965.



SOURCE: U. S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Martin County. Because of decreasing agricultural employment opportunities, displaced agricultural workers and young people attaining working age compete for the limited number of nonagricultural jobs available. As a result, many of these people are forced to leave the county in search of employment.

In Chart 2, the net change in population for Martin County and Williamston from 1950 to 1960 is shown. Although the data includes deaths, except for the age zero and the ages above 50 the death rate is so low that including the number of deaths does not

**Chart 2. Net Change In Population, By Age Groups 1950 - 1960**

1950		1960		NET CHANGE	
AGE GROUP	POPULATION			NUMBER	PERCENT
<b>MARTIN COUNTY - TOTAL POPULATION</b>					
0 - 9	7,577	6,974			
10 - 19	6,077	6,161	-1,416	-18.7	
20 - 29	4,177	2,858	-3,215	-52.9	
30 - 39	3,688	3,192	-985	-23.6	
40 - 49	3,332	3,211	-477	-12.9	
50 - 59	1,825	2,267	-1,065	-32.0	
60 - 69	1,224	1,510	-315	-17.3	
70 & OVER	706	966			
<b>NONWHITE POPULATION</b>					
0 - 9	4,466	4,221			
10 - 19	3,275	3,506	-960	-21.5	
20 - 29	2,150	1,293	-1,982	-60.5	
30 - 39	1,604	1,399	-751	-34.9	
40 - 49	1,068	1,324	-280	-17.5	
50 - 59	722	867	-201	-18.8	
60 - 69	492	577	-145	-20.1	
70 & OVER	303	373			
<b>WILLIAMSTON - TOTAL POPULATION</b>					
0 - 9	1,219	1,833			
10 - 19	853	1,358	+139	+11.4	
20 - 29	835	786	-67	-7.9	
30 - 39	807	919	+84	+10.1	
40 - 49	569	863	+56	+66.9	
50 - 59	380	548	-21	-3.7	
60 - 69	191	402	+22	+5.8	
70 & OVER	121	214			

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

substantially influence the data.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that the net change in population for the middle and lower age groups accurately reflects the rate of migration. In the 1950 age group of 10 - 39 years, the county population decreased by 4,677 people during the decade following 1950. This decrease of

<sup>1</sup>In the United States, the mortality rate in 1963 for people from 10-39 years old was 1.32 deaths per year per 1,000 people.

33.5 percent is an indication of the extensive out-migration of young people. Local agriculture no longer provides adequate employment opportunities for the rural population.

Unfortunately, available data is not sufficient to determine the amount of migration into or out of Williamston. This is true because areas annexed to the town between 1950 and 1960 contributed to the town's population increase. In the ten years following 1950, the population that was 0-59 years old in 1950 increased by 213 people. However, during this period, areas containing 515 people were annexed to the town. Therefore, it is evident that the town experienced a certain amount of out-migration. Percentagewise, out-migration from the town was much lower than out-migration from the county as a whole.

It should be pointed out that excessive out-migration, especially of young adults, is not merely a loss of population. Rather, it represents the loss of a large investment by the local people. An investment is made in every person who attends public school in Williamston. This investment, in the form of education, is not repaid until a person reaches adulthood and begins paying taxes and serving the community in other ways. Therefore, the investment in those who leave upon completion of their training at public expense is never repaid. Each person who completes his training and then migrates from Williamston in search of opportunity leaves the town somewhat poorer than it previously was.

## ANNEXATION

Another way by which a town can gain population is through annexation, or, in other words, extension of the corporate limits. As shown in Table 1, three areas were annexed to Williamston between 1950 and 1960. These areas contributed 515 people to the population of Williamston. No area has been annexed since 1956. However, some areas outside the town limits are being developed for urban use. These areas will probably be annexed during the next ten years.

TABLE 1. ANNEXATION BY THE TOWN OF  
WILLIAMSTON, 1950-1960

DATE OF ANNEXATION	POPULATION IN ANNEXED AREA
May 4, 1955	90
December 5, 1955	225
June 16, 1956	200
Total Population Annexed	515

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

## NATURAL INCREASE

The final way for a town to gain population is through natural increase, an excess of births over deaths. In recent decades, the major portion of Williamston's population increase has occurred as a result of natural increase. In Table 2, fertility ratios for Williamston and the surrounding area are compared with fertility ratios for North Carolina. The fertility

ratio for Williamston is approximately 100 higher than the ratio for North Carolina. With such high fertility ratios, it is obvious that a large part of Williamston's growth is a result of natural increase.

TABLE 2. FERTILITY RATIO FOR SELECTED AREAS, 1960.<sup>1</sup>

Area	FERTILITY RATIO	
	Total Population	Nonwhite Population
Williamston	543	641
Williamston Township	539	645
Martin County	553	704
North Carolina	448	525

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

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<sup>1</sup>The fertility ratio is the number of children under five years old per 1,000 females from 15 to 49 years old.

## CURRENT POPULATION

Analysis of past trends provides a basis for projecting population growth in addition to background information on the current population. Analysis of the current population provides basic information on the distribution of the population geographically and by age, sex and race. In addition, social characteristics such as education and income are analyzed.

### ESTIMATE OF CURRENT POPULATION

According to a special census conducted in November, 1965, Williamston had a population of 6,888 people. This figure includes 37 fewer people than the 1960 population of 6,925. However, it is questionable whether the population actually did decrease. Due to the nature of the special census and the conditions under which it was taken, it is probably a low estimate of the 1965 population.<sup>1</sup> However, it is accepted as the most accurate estimate of the current population available.

The current population of the one mile extraterritorial planning area was computed by obtaining the number of occupied dwelling units in the area and multiplying this number by 3.87, the 1960 population per

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<sup>1</sup>The special census was taken to determine whether 50 percent of the eligible voters voted in the last general election. Therefore, it was not necessarily as accurate as a decennial census would be. In addition, the special census was taken during a snow storm which might have discouraged the enumerators from being as comprehensive as possible.

household for Williamston Township. By this method, the population of the extraterritorial planning area is 423 people.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

The geographical distribution of the population of Williamston and the extraterritorial planning area is shown in Map 2. This distribution was calculated by allocating the current population to each area according to each area's percentage of the total number of occupied dwelling units. There is very little population in the extreme eastern and extreme southern parts of town. The population is almost evenly distributed throughout the remainder of the town.

The distribution of population in the extraterritorial planning area is very unusual because of the nature of the land surrounding the town. The land to the east, northeast, and southeast of the town is either poorly drained or in the Roanoke River flood plain. Therefore, no development has taken place in these areas. The major portion of the extraterritorial area population is distributed along U.S. Highway 64 west and U.S. Highway 17 south. Most of the remaining population is distributed along McCasky Road and N.C. Highway 125 toward Hamilton.

#### DISTRIBUTION BY AGE, SEX, AND RACE

The latest accurate information available concerning the distribution of Williamston's population by age, sex, and race is from the 1960 Census of Population. This information is used with the assumption that population distribution by age, sex, and race does not change significantly over a short period of time.



# WILLIAMSTON NORTH CAROLINA



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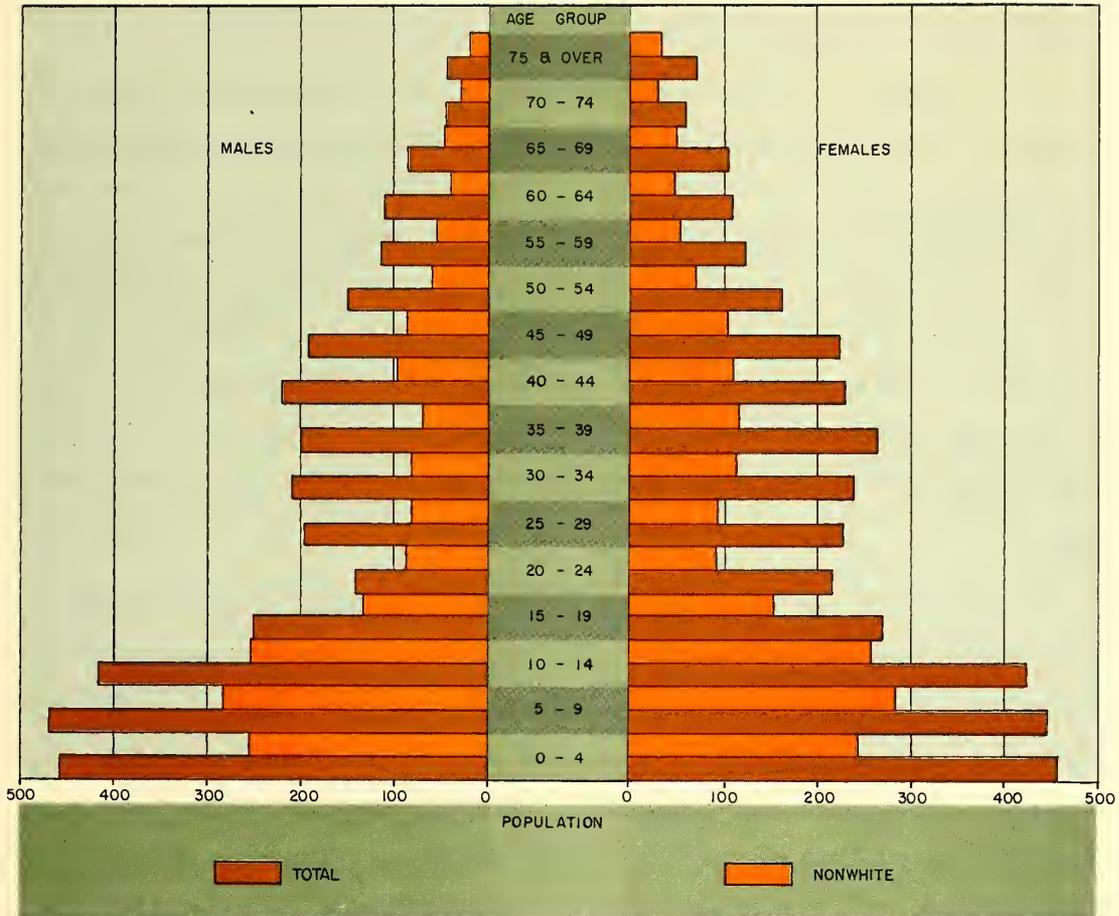
Population Distribution  
1967

 50 PEOPLE





Chart 3. Population Distribution By Age, Race, And Sex, Williamston, 1960.



SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

A breakdown of the population by age group, by sex, and by race is shown in Chart 3.

Age

The age distribution of the Williamston population is not unlike that of many other Eastern North Carolina towns. The population per age group of the 15-34 year age groups is much lower than normal in relation to the total population distribution. This is a reflection

of the aforementioned out-migration of young adults who could not find satisfactory employment locally.

In Table 3, the median age of the population is used to compare Williamston's age distribution with that of other areas.<sup>1</sup> Generally, the Williamston population is older than the population of the surrounding rural area. However, in comparison with the other urban areas in the table, Williamston has a relatively young population. This is further evidence of the out-migration of young adults, especially nonwhites. The low median age also reflects the high fertility ratio for the town.

#### Sex

In 1960, 47.5 percent of Williamston's population was male and 52.5 percent was female. This compares with the North Carolina population which includes 49.3 percent males and 50.7 percent females. Due to the longer life span of females, they normally comprise a greater percentage of the population. However, the percentage of females in the Williamston population is greater than normal, probably because of a greater volume of out-migration of males than females.

#### Race

The racial distribution of the population is significant to the planning board because a higher percentage of nonwhites than whites is in the lower income groups and in substandard housing. Hopefully, this

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<sup>1</sup>The median age divides the population in half. In other words, half the population is younger than or equal, in age, to the median and half the population is older than or equal, in age, to the median.

TABLE 3. MEDIAN AGE OF THE POPULATION,  
WILLIAMSTON AND SELECTED AREAS, 1960.

	MEDIAN AGE					
	Total		White		Nonwhite	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Martin County	20.2	22.6	27.8	29.4	16.0	17.3
Williamston Township	22.4	23.7	27.2	27.9	18.3	18.6
Williamston	21.9	25.0	28.3	29.2	16.0	19.4
Edenton	27.8	31.4	Not Available		22.8	29.5
Ahoskie	27.6	30.1	Not Available		Not Available	
Urban North Carolina	26.3	28.6	27.6	29.6	21.7	25.4

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

situation will not exist in the future. However, since the situation does exist now, the Planning Board should recognize it and should be aware of the racial distribution of the population.

The 1960 population of Williamston included 3,482 nonwhites and 3,443 whites. In Table 4, the racial distribution of Williamston's population is compared with that of other selected areas. Williamston has the highest percentage of nonwhites (50.3 percent) of any of the areas listed in Table 4. Williamston's percentage of nonwhites is significantly higher than that of any of the other urban areas in the table.

TABLE 4. DISTRIBUTION OF THE 1960  
POPULATION BY RACE.

Area	Percent White	Percent Nonwhite
Martin County	50.0	50.0
Williamston Township	52.4	47.6
Williamston	49.7	50.3
Edenton	61.9	38.1
Ahoskie	58.9	41.1
Urban North Carolina	74.6	25.4

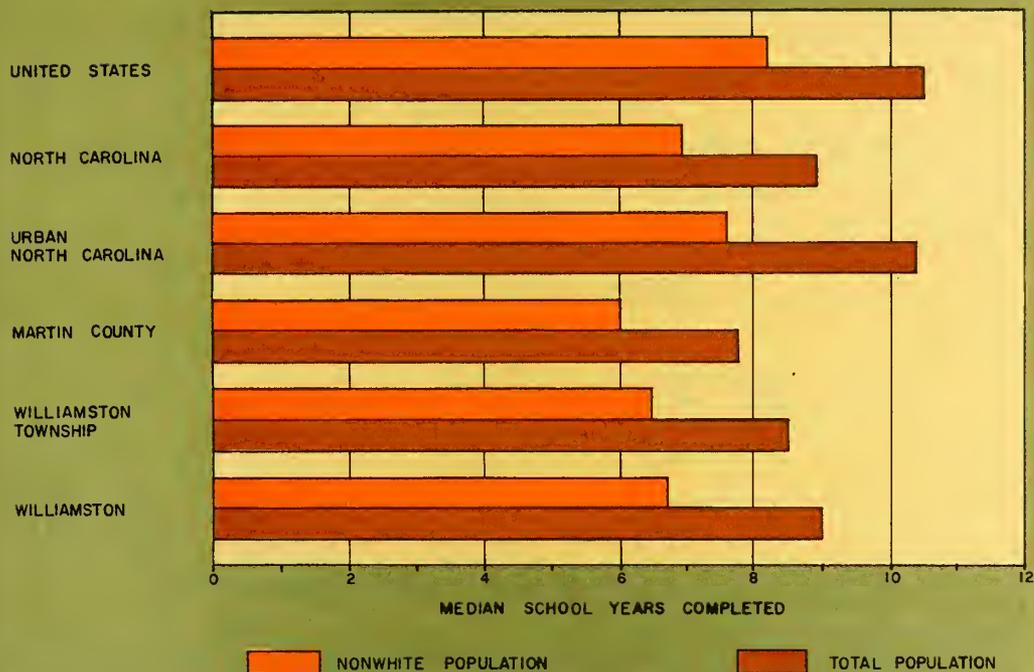
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

#### EDUCATION

Possibly the most important asset which any community can have is a well educated population. In this age of advancing automation and mechanization, employment opportunities for the uneducated are dwindling rapidly. Most employers demand at least a high school education of all employees with any degree of responsibility. If two towns are identical except for the level of education and are competing for a new industry, the town with the better educated population will normally get the industry.

A generally accepted measure of the educational attainment of a population is the median school years completed by persons 25 years old and over. In 1960, the median school years completed by Williamston's population 25 years old and over was 9.0. In Chart 4, this figure is compared with that of other areas.

Chart 4. Median School Years Completed By Persons 25 Years Old And Over, 1960.



SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

In comparison to rural areas in North Carolina the median for Williamston is high. However, compared to the United States average (10.5) and the average for Urban North Carolina (10.4), Williamston's median is quite low. The nonwhite median for Williamston is also low, both relatively and absolutely.

It is obvious that the educational attainment of the local population needs to be increased. However, in all fairness to the local people, it should be stated that one reason for the low educational attainment is out-migration. Many people with a high school education migrate from the area because of limited job opportunities. Job opportunities for college graduates are even

more limited. As these people migrate out of the area, a larger percentage of those remaining has not completed high school or college.

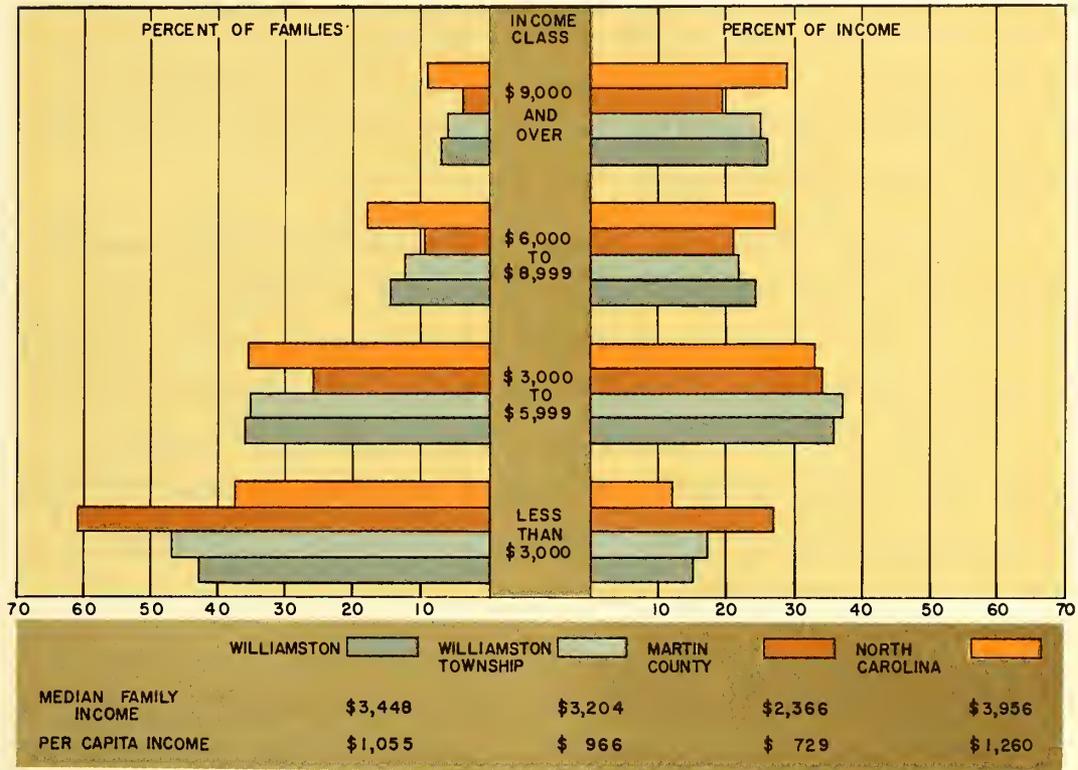
Whatever the current situation is, the people of Williamston should continually strive to improve the quantity and quality of education for their young people.

## INCOME

Another important social characteristic of a population is its income earning power. Family and personal income measures give an indication of the affluence of the local economy. Although seven years old, the income measures used here from the 1960 Census of Population are the latest accurate data available. Since 1959, the income levels throughout the country have increased by large amounts. For example, the median family income for families in the United States in 1959 was \$5,660, compared to the 1963 estimate of \$6,265. At any rate, the 1959 income measures are used to compare Williamston's personal income with that of other areas.

In Chart 5, the 1959 family income distribution for Williamston and other selected areas is shown. In the chart, the percent of families in each income class is compared to the percent of total income in each class. Williamston has a more even distribution of personal income than either Martin County or Williamston Township. Each area in the chart has a large percentage of families in the less than \$3,000 income class. However, the less than \$3,000 income class includes the lowest percentage of total income for each area except Martin County, which had 61 percent of its families and 27

## Chart 5. Family Income Distribution, 1959



SOURCE: U. S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

percent of its personal income in this class. At the opposite extreme, the \$9,000 and over income class, the percentages are reversed. For Williamston, this class includes only seven percent of the families and almost 26 percent of the income.

It is obvious that there is a less than even distribution of income for each area in the chart. However, Williamston, Williamston Township, and Martin County each has a larger percentage of families in the bottom income class than North Carolina has. The median family income and the per capita income listed at the bottom of the chart provide further evidence of the

unequal distribution of income among the four areas.<sup>1</sup> North Carolina has by far the highest median family income and per capita income. Yet, when compared to the United States median of \$5,660, the North Carolina median seems very small.

From the above analysis it is obvious that steps should be taken to increase the income level of the people of Williamston and the surrounding area. Higher incomes would mean a higher standard of living for the local people as well as a greater volume of retail trade for local firms. A higher average income for the local population would lead to a stronger and more stable local economy.

#### HOUSING CONDITIONS

The final social characteristic of the population to be analyzed is housing conditions. Housing conditions can be used as a good indicator of the social and economic affluence of a community. One can be reasonably sure that people living in dilapidated houses are not enjoying a high standard of living. Housing conditions can also be a key to future residential construction needs. A large number of dilapidated housing units is an indication that some type of sound housing must be provided for low income people in the future.

The housing data used in this report is from the 1960 Census of Population. The housing units in an

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<sup>1</sup>One-half of the families in an area have incomes equal to or greater than the median and one-half of the families have incomes equal to or less than the median. Per capita income is the total personal income of an area divided by the total population of the area.

TABLE 5. HOUSING CONDITIONS FOR WILLIAMSTON AND SELECTED AREAS, 1960.

	Martin County		Williamston Township		Williamston		Ahoskie		Edenton	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
All Housing Units	7,068	100.0	2,528	100.0	1,982	100.0	1,416	100.0	1,474	100.0
Sound	3,752	53.1	1,452	57.4	1,196	60.3	1,006	71.0	1,081	73.3
With All Plumbing	2,541	36.0	1,243	49.2	1,050	53.0	910	64.2	939	63.7
Lacking Some or All Plumbing	1,211	17.1	209	8.2	146	7.3	96	6.8	142	9.6
Deteriorating	2,068	29.3	774	30.6	556	28.1	408	28.8	235	15.9
With All Plumbing	303	4.3	192	7.6	159	8.0	82	5.8	86	5.8
Lacking Some or All Plumbing	1,765	25.0	582	23.0	397	20.1	326	23.0	149	10.1
Dilapidated	1,248	17.7	302	11.9	230	11.6	2	0.2	158	10.7

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

area are divided into three categories; sound, deteriorating, and dilapidated.<sup>1</sup> Housing conditions for Williamston and other selected areas are shown in Table 5. Williamston has a much higher percentage of sound housing than the surrounding rural area. However, of the three urban areas in the table, Williamston has by far the lowest percentage of sound housing. Forty-seven percent of Williamston's housing in 1960 was either deteriorating, dilapidated, or lacking plumbing facilities, compared with 29 percent for Ahoskie and 26.7 percent for Edenton. Assuming that housing conditions are related to the economic position of the occupant, Williamston has a high percentage of people with low incomes.

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<sup>1</sup> Sound housing is housing which has no major structural defects. Deteriorating housing has one or more major structural defects, but the defects are such that they can feasibly be repaired. Dilapidated housing has one or more major structural defects which cannot feasibly be repaired.

Another point of interest concerning housing conditions in Williamston is the percentage of poor housing occupied by nonwhites. Although only 41.1 percent of the town's total housing was occupied by nonwhites in 1960, nonwhites occupied 71.8 percent of the deteriorating and dilapidated housing. This can be construed as an indication that the majority of nonwhites are included in the low income group.

## PROJECTED POPULATION

In projecting a population into the future, it is desirable to have a large population base to work with. In other words, a projection of the United States population or the North Carolina population would be reasonably accurate. However, when the population base is very small, as is the case with Williamston, a ten or twenty year projection is, at best, a calculated guess. A number of very small changes could drastically affect the population growth of a small town. For example, according to a U.S. Chamber of Commerce study, a new plant with 100 new workers would bring over 350 people into an area. Other factors such as a change in the rate of migration, a change in the fertility ratio, or the failure of a local business firm would change the rate of population increase for Williamston.

Because of the many factors which might affect the population growth of a small town, two population projections have been made for Williamston. These projections are shown in Table 6. The low estimate takes into account the special census taken in Martin County in 1965 but the high estimate does not. As stated earlier, many local people feel that the special census yielded an inaccurate count of the population of Williamston because of the purpose of the census and the conditions under which it was taken. However, this does not represent the only difference between the high and low population projections.

Essentially, the low projection reflects what the population will be if the local people are complacent and allow the town to grow unaided by public investment

TABLE 6. PROJECTED POPULATION FOR WILLIAMSTON.

	Projected Population			
	1970	1977	1980	1987
High Projection	7,684	8,601	9,213	10,283
Low Projection	6,576	6,771	6,905	7,200

and the active support of the local people. On the other hand, the high projection reflects an entirely opposite perspective of the local situation. It is based on the assumption that the local people do have an active interest in making their town a more attractive place for people and industry.

As revealed in the economy section of this study, Williamston has the potential for industrial development. Also, it is obvious that the local people are interested in the development of their own town.

This is attested to by the establishment of the planning board, the local support for the Martin County Economic Development Commission, and current plans for a new county airport and other public improvements. Based on these observations, it is not unrealistic to assume that the Williamston population will be numerically near the high projection.

To this point, no mention has been made of a projected population for the one mile extraterritorial planning area. At the present time, the extraterritorial area has a population of approximately 425 people. However, the majority of these people are concentrated in only four areas (see Map 2). Much of the growth in

the Williamston area will occur in these four areas outside the present municipal limits because of a lack of residential land inside the present municipal limits. As these areas become more built up, they will be taken into the town and will become a part of the town's population. Therefore, the high projection of the town's population can be considered as a projection of the population of the town and the current planning area.



# ECONOMY



## INTRODUCTION

The first section of this study is an analysis of Williamston's population growth, distribution, and characteristics. This section is an analysis of the reason that Williamston has a population - the local economy. Almost everyone has a source of income, usually some type of employment. It is obvious that a town exists because there is a concentration of employment opportunities in and around it. Also, a town's population will not increase significantly without an increase in local employment opportunities.

From the above analysis, it is apparent that any comprehensive planning program for a town should be based upon a thorough understanding of the local economy, including the potential for economic growth. Therefore, the economy section of this study is an essential element in Williamston's planning program.

The study of Williamston's economy is divided into two distinct but related parts. The first part is a study of the labor force and employment in Williamston and the surrounding area. This includes a qualitative as well as quantitative analysis of employment. The second part of the economy study is an analysis of the economic activity in Williamston and the surrounding area. The economy is broken down into various broad categories including agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing, travel, and commerce. Each part of the economy is analyzed as to the current level of activity and the potential for growth and expansion.

In both parts of the economy study, much of the data and analysis is on the county level. One reason for this is that the data is not collected for smaller units. Another reason is that some of the data is much more significant at the county level rather than for a smaller unit such as the town.

## LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT

This portion of the Population and Economy Study for Williamston is an analysis of the local labor force and employment; including such factors as participation in the labor force, the occupational structure of the labor force, unemployment, seasonal employment, and the availability of labor.

Since the majority of people earn their income through some type of employment, the income level of the population can best be raised by providing more and better job opportunities. Employment is one of the most important factors affecting the well-being of the individual and community as a whole.

Perhaps the best way to measure the relative strength and stability of an area's economy is through an analysis of the local labor force and trends in employment. Generally, an area with a high percentage of people in the labor force and only a small amount of unemployment has a stable and growing economy. Also, trends in employment can be used to reveal sections of the economy which are growing or declining.

### LABOR FORCE

A logical place for any study of an area's employment structure to begin is with the civilian labor force.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The civilian labor force includes all persons 14 years old or older who are not in the armed forces and are either employed or who are able and available for work and looking for work.

TABLE 7. CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, 1960.

Subject	AREA				
	Williamston	Williamston Township	Martin County	North Carolina	United States
Males, 14 and over	2,013	2,773	8,316	----*	---
Civilian Labor Force	1,556	2,093	6,216	---	---
Participation Rate	77.3	75.5	74.3	76.1	79.7
Females, 14 and over	2,382	3,059	8,923	---	---
Civilian Labor Force	997	1,197	2,785	---	---
Participation Rate	41.9	39.1	3.12	37.5	36.1
Nonwhites, 14 and over	2,025	2,581	7,727	---	---
Civilian Labor Force	1,163	1,402	3,972	---	---
Participation Rate	57.4	54.3	51.4	53.1	---
Total, 14 and over	4,395	5,832	17,284	---	---
Civilian Labor Force	2,553	3,290	9,001	---	---
Participation Rate	58.1	56.4	52.1	56.3	57.4

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

\*Omitted figures are either not available or not necessarily needed for analysis.

In Table 7, the total civilian labor force and the labor force participation rate are given by sex and race.<sup>1</sup> Although this data is seven years old, it is the only available data which includes a breakdown of the labor force for the town and township. Williamston has a higher total labor force participation rate than either North Carolina or the United States, due primarily to a higher participation rate by females. This might be an indication that Williamston has an unusually high percentage of jobs available to females or it might be an indication that a larger percentage of Williamston's families find it necessary for both husband and wife to work in order to accomplish their

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<sup>1</sup>The civilian labor force participation rate is the percentage of people 14 years old or over who are in the civilian labor force.

goals. At any rate, labor force participation rates in Williamston, Williamston Township, and Martin County are neither excessively high nor low in comparison to rates for North Carolina or the United States.

More current data on the size of the Martin County labor force is provided by the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> These figures, in Table 8, are an indication that the size of the county labor force has not increased substantially in recent years. However, this does not necessarily mean that employment has not increased.

TABLE 8. ESTIMATES OF MARTIN COUNTY  
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE

Year	Estimated Labor Force
1962	12,130
1963	12,600
1964	12,470
1965	12,150

SOURCE: Employment Security Commission of N.C., Bureau of Employment Security Research

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<sup>1</sup>Employment Security Commission data should not be compared with Census data on the labor force. Census data is counted by "place of residence" while the Employment Security Commission estimates are based on "place of work."

## OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

An occupational breakdown of the local labor force is shown in Table 9. It should be remembered that this is an occupational breakdown for workers who live in Martin County or Williamston and it does not necessarily include all people who work in either of the areas. Also, it may include local residents who are employed elsewhere.

The largest class of workers in Williamston is operatives and kindred workers which includes 19.6 percent of the employed workers. The second largest group is professional, technical, and kindred workers, which includes 12.1 percent of the employed workers. From these facts, it is obvious that employed workers in Williamston are well distributed among the various occupational groups.

In Martin County, the largest two occupational groups are farmers and farm managers and farm laborers and farm foremen. Together, these two farm related groups include 37.5 percent of the employed workers. This is an indication of the importance of agriculture in the local economy.

Overall, the local labor force is well distributed among the various occupations. However, as more modern equipment and methods are employed in agriculture, the agricultural occupations will continue to decline. Increases in other occupations, such as operatives and craftsmen, will be necessary in order to offset the decrease in the number of people employed in agriculture. Many of the agricultural workers in the county will turn to Williamston for other employment.

TABLE 9. OCCUPATION OF EMPLOYED WORKERS, 1960.

Occupation	Williamston				Martin County			
	Total	Male	Female	Nonwhite	Total	Male	Female	Nonwhite
Professional technical and kindred workers	285	156	129	117	608	289	319	236
Farmers and farm managers	34	30	4	8	1,770	1,720	50	614
Managers, officers, proprietors, excluding farm	234	204	30	17	443	376	67	22
Clerical and kindred workers	270	58	212	15	513	148	365	19
Sales Workers	188	118	70	8	516	300	218	26
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	265	265	--	54	750	734	16	120
Operatives and kindred workers	462	329	133	324	1,034	721	313	581
Private household workers	190	--	190	182	441	--	441	406
Service workers, excluding private household	182	91	91	115	370	140	230	192
Farm laborers and farm foremen	33	25	8	22	1,431	1,031	400	1,018
Laborers, except farm and mine	150	150	--	117	511	487	24	359
Occupation not reported	60	56	4	34	151	113	38	75
Total employed	2,353	1,482	871	1,013	8,536	6,057	2,479	3,669

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

## EMPLOYMENT

The size of the labor force and the occupational structure are only indications of the number and type of workers involved in the economy. Other measures must be used to determine how efficiently the labor force is being employed. The study of such factors as the rate of unemployment helps to broaden one's understanding of the local employment situation.

In 1965, annual average employment in Martin County was estimated to be 11,450. As is revealed in Table 10, this is a decrease from the 1964 estimate. However, the 1965 estimate includes an increase of 330 workers since 1962. Although total employment peaked and began to decrease during the period 1962-65, manufacturing employment continued to increase throughout

the period. This trend in manufacturing should continue because manufacturing is an important source of new employment opportunities.

TABLE 10. ESTIMATES OF EMPLOYMENT  
IN MARTIN COUNTY.

Employment	YEAR			
	1962	1963	1964	1965
Total	11,120	11,640	11,620	11,450
Manufacturing	2,660	2,780	2,940	3,270
All Other	8,460	8,860	8,680	8,180

SOURCE: Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, Bureau of Employment Security Research.

### Unemployment<sup>1</sup>

The rate of unemployment is commonly used as a measure of the strength of an area's economy.<sup>2</sup> A high rate of unemployment in an area is an indication that a labor surplus exists and an adequate number of employment opportunities is not available.

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<sup>1</sup>The unemployed are all persons, 14 years old or older, who are not working at all, are able and available for work, and are actively seeking employment.

<sup>2</sup>The rate of unemployment is total unemployment expressed as a percentage of the civilian labor force.

The rate of unemployment for the Williamston area is shown in Table 11. From the data in the table, it is obvious that Martin County has a persistently high rate of unemployment. The county rate of unemployment has remained high throughout a period of great prosperity for the state and the nation. This high rate of unemployment also occurred in spite of continuous increases in manufacturing employment. Obviously, the increase in manufacturing employment has not been sufficient to absorb the labor surplus caused by decreasing employment in some other areas of the economy, primarily agriculture. Portions of the economy experiencing decreasing employment are discussed in the section titled Economic Activity.

No matter what goals a person might have, economic factors are a prime consideration in determining where and how a person will live. Therefore, if sufficient employment opportunities are not provided in the Williamston area, many of the unemployed people will either migrate to other areas in search of employment or be forced to live off public welfare or charity. It is evident that if the area is to retain its population and provide an adequate level of income, new employment opportunities must be provided.

#### Insured Unemployment<sup>1</sup>

Analysis of the unemployment rate revealed that total unemployment in the Williamston area is high. However, it is important to determine whether the unemployment is concentrated among agricultural workers and new entrants into the labor market or whether

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<sup>1</sup>Insured unemployment consists of unemployed people who are covered under the Employment Insurance Law.

TABLE 11. RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR  
MARTIN COUNTY AND NORTH CAROLINA.

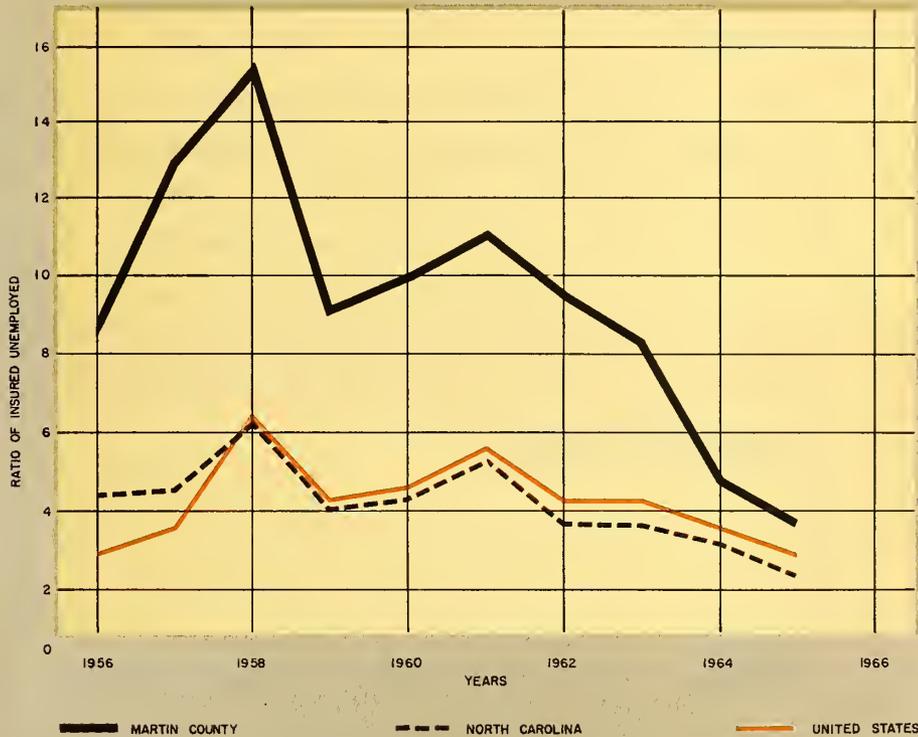
	Average Rate of Unemployment	
	Martin County	North Carolina
Annual		
1962	8.3	5.3
1963	7.6	5.1
1964	6.8	4.8
Quarterly, 1965		
1st quarter	5.9	4.5
2nd quarter	6.1	4.6
3rd quarter	6.3	4.1
4th quarter	4.6	3.5
Quarterly, 1966		
1st quarter	6.4	3.5
2nd quarter	6.6	3.5
3rd quarter	6.6	3.1

SOURCE: Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, Bureau of Employment Security Research.

experienced professional, clerical, and industrial workers are included among the unemployed. The employment situation is more critical when a large percentage of experienced workers is unemployed.

Since only people who are employed, or have been employed, by a firm with four or more employees are covered by the employment insurance law, insured unemployment serves as a good measure of unemployment among experienced workers. The ratio of insured employment, as shown in Chart 6, is an indication of Martin County's relation to the state and nation in this

Chart 6. Ratio Of Insured Unemployment For Martin County, North Carolina,  
And The United States, 1956 - 1965.



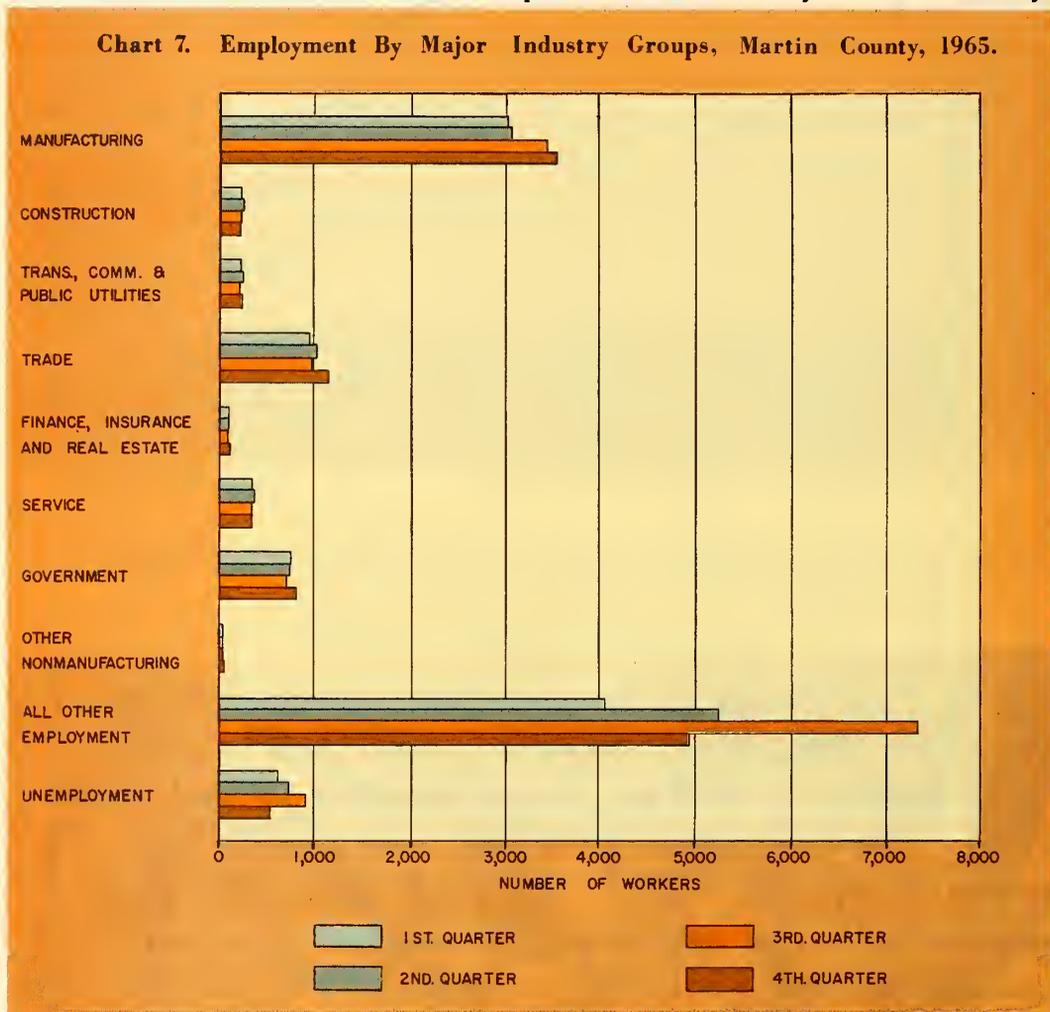
SOURCE: EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION OF NORTH CAROLINA

respect.<sup>1</sup> Although changing in the same general direction since 1956, Martin County's ratio has remained higher than the ratio for North Carolina or the United States. However, since 1961 the county ratio has decreased rapidly. This is an indication that some progress is being made toward strengthening the local economy.

<sup>1</sup>The ratio of insured unemployment is insured unemployment expressed as a percentage of insured employment.

## Seasonal Employment<sup>1</sup>

In an area, such as Martin County, which is strongly oriented toward agriculture, an extensive amount of seasonal employment sometimes exists. In Chart 7, it is shown that the bulk of seasonal employment in Martin County occurs in the third quarter of the year. Nearly



SOURCE: EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION OF NORTH CAROLINA

<sup>1</sup> Seasonal employment is annually recurring employment during only a certain portion of the year.

all of the third quarter seasonal employment is in the "all other employment" category which includes agricultural and nonagricultural self-employed, unpaid family, and domestic workers. Many people enter the labor force during the third quarter only. However, many of these people are students who are in school during the balance of the year. For those who are not students, some type of employment during other seasons would be desirable as an additional source of income.

#### AVAILABILITY OF LABOR

Another area of interest concerning the employment situation in Williamston is the availability of labor for any new or expanding industries. The first step in determining the availability of labor is to arrive at an estimate of the labor market area for skilled and semi-skilled labor. In order to do this, a knowledge of local worker mobility patterns is helpful.

#### Worker Mobility

The latest available information concerning the commuting patterns into and out of Martin County is 1960 Census data. Although this has probably changed due to new industrial development, the 1960 mobility patterns may be used to reveal which counties have a large number of workers either commuting to or from Martin County. These counties, or portions thereof, would be included in the local labor market area. The worker mobility pattern for Martin County is shown in Table 12. Of the eleven counties listed in the table, the only six with any significant exchange of workers with Martin County are the six counties which border Martin at some point. Of these six counties, only

TABLE 12. WORKER MOBILITY PATTERN,  
MARTIN COUNTY, 1960.

Counties in Mobility Pattern	Left Martin County to Work	Entered Martin County to Work
Beaufort County	74	95
Bertie County	57	36
Craven County	--	7
Edgecombe County	51	15
Halifax County	43	28
Hertford County	3	--
Hyde County	--	4
Northampton County	4	--
Pitt County	94	55
Tyrrell County	3	16
Washington County	148	815
Elsewhere	107	--
Totals	584	1,071

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Beaufort and Washington have a net loss of workers commuting to Martin County.

Labor Market Area

Based on worker mobility patterns, Williamston's labor market area for production type workers includes

all of Martin County and portions of Beaufort, Bertie, Edgecombe, Halifax, Pitt, and Washington Counties. In order to have a more clearly defined area, a radius of 25 road miles from Williamston is used to depict the labor market area. This is appropriate because the majority of manufacturing firms recruit production workers within a 25 road mile radius. Based on 1960 Census data, approximately 94,000 people reside within this 25 mile radius. Therefore, firms in Williamston may recruit labor from an extensive population.

### Potential Labor Supply

An estimate of recruitable workers for industrial expansion in the Williamston area was prepared in April 1967 by the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, Bureau of Employment Security Research. The labor supply estimates include only those persons who already possess production job skills and those under 45 years of age, who are considered to be adaptable, trainable, and referable for manufacturing jobs. The recruitable and referable labor supply includes the following two groups:

#### I. Persons Currently Seeking Work:

1. The unemployed
2. Persons with less than full-time employment
3. Persons holding jobs which do not utilize their highest potential.
4. Certain others, such as school dropouts and returnees from military service.

#### II. Potential Jobseekers:

1. Housewives who would join the labor force, if more suitable work or better job opportunities were available.
2. Workers who now commute to jobs in other areas but who prefer local employment.

3. Young people who expect to find jobs upon completion of their schooling.
4. Agricultural workers who are interested in industrial jobs.

The potential labor supply in the Williamston area is shown in Table 13. In addition to the number of potential workers shown in Table 13, approximately 650 high school graduates in the area enter the labor force annually. This figure does not include those who continue their education or who do not seek employment.

These figures represent the distribution of potential workers in terms of commuting distance. The extent to which available workers may be induced to commute to Williamston from outlying areas will depend upon such factors as type of industry, wages offered, and working conditions. Also, these factors relevant to industry in other nearby areas will influence the number of workers that will be attracted to Williamston.

TABLE 13. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF RECRUITABLE PRODUCTION - RELATED WORKERS WITHIN THE WILLIAMSTON AREA, MARCH, 1967.

Williamston	Total Available Workers			Experienced Manufacturing Workers		All Other Experienced Workers		Inexperienced but Referable and Trainable	
	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total	3,550	1,795	1,755	480	555	750	740	665	460
0 to 15	1,560	805	755	170	225	375	370	260	160
15 to 20	960	490	470	155	150	195	180	140	140
20 to 25	1,030	500	530	155	180	180	190	165	160

SOURCE: Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, Bureau of Employment Security Research.

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The first portion of the economy section of this study is an analysis of the labor force and employment. As is suggested by the title, this section is an analysis of the various types of economic activity which employ the local labor force and other resources. The major types of economic activity in the area - agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing, the travel industry, and commercial activity - are analyzed individually. First, however, the distribution of employment among various industries is shown in Table 14.<sup>1</sup>

Over 40 percent of Williamston's residents are working in manufacturing or retail trade. Based on employment, it is obvious that manufacturing and commerce are major sectors of the local economy. Also, the importance of agriculture is revealed by the fact that over 38 percent of employed Martin County residents were employed in agriculture in 1960. A major portion of Williamston's commercial activity is dependent on the support of the surrounding agricultural population. As a consequence, although agricultural employment is declining, agriculture remains the dominant sector of the local economy.

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<sup>1</sup>This data depicts employment of local residents in 1960 and does not include local industries exclusively.

TABLE 14. EMPLOYMENT DATA FOR WILLIAMSTON  
AND MARTIN COUNTY, 1960.

SUBJECT	AREA			
	WILLIAMSTON		MARTIN COUNTY	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Employed	2,353	100.0	8,536	100.0
Agriculture	94	4.0	3,252	38.1
Construction	149	6.3	451	5.3
Manufacturing	451	19.2	1,241	14.5
Railroad & Railway Express Service	15	0.6	23	0.3
Other Transportation	55	2.3	124	1.5
Communication, Utilities, & Sanitation Service	130	5.5	183	2.1
Wholesale Trade	99	4.2	211	2.5
Eating and Drinking Places	39	1.7	88	1.0
Other Retail Trade	485	20.6	1,048	12.3
Business and Repair Services	39	1.7	119	1.4
Private Households	213	9.1	493	5.8
Other Personal Services	130	5.5	221	2.6
Hospitals	41	1.7	49	0.6
Educational Services	178	7.6	497	5.8
Other Professional and Related Services	60	2.5	118	1.4
Public Administration	72	3.1	136	1.6
Other Industries (including not reported)	103	4.4	282	3.3

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

## AGRICULTURE

Among the various trends in agriculture in the Williamston area, perhaps the most significant is the trend toward fewer and larger farms. As shown in Table 15, the number of farms in Martin County declined from 2,243 in 1959 to 1,626 in 1964, a decrease of 27.5 percent. During the same period, the average farm size in the county increased by 30.7 percent. The average value of land and buildings per farm and per acre also increased. This trend toward larger farms is a result of the nature of modern farming operations. Modern machinery and technology are designed for the production of agricultural products in large quantities and small farms with limited production capabilities cannot bear the overhead cost connected with them. Therefore, it

TABLE 15. FARMS, ACREAGE, VALUE AND FARMS BY ECONOMIC CLASS, MARTIN COUNTY, 1959 AND 1964.

SUBJECT	1959	1964
Total Farms	2,243	1,626
Acres in Farms	190,287	180,149
Percent of Total Acres	61.8	58.5
Average Size of Farm (Acres)	84.8	110.8
Value of Land and Buildings:		
Average Per Farm	\$21,404	\$30,349
Average Per Acre	255.88	274.59
Commercial Farms	1,847	1,425
Class I (sales of \$40,000 or more)	15	59
Class II (sales of \$20,000 - \$39,999)	63	165
Class III (sales of \$10,000 - \$19,999)	213	371
Class IV (sales of \$5,000 - \$9,999)	702	488
Class V (sales of \$2,500 - \$4,999)	543	201
Class VI (sales of \$50 - \$2,499)	311	141
Other Farms	355	201
Part Time	225	127
Part Retirement	130	74

SOURCE: "1964 United States Census of Agriculture."  
Preliminary Report.

is no longer practical to operate a small farm. In Martin County, the changing nature of farming operations is reflected by the increase in the number of commercial

farms with annual sales of \$10,000 or more and the decrease in the number of all other farms. This is a trend toward a stronger and more stable agricultural sector of the local economy.

Perhaps the best way to reveal the importance of agriculture in the local economy is through an analysis of agricultural production. In Tables 16 and 17, recent trends in agricultural production are shown. Other than forestry products which are discussed in another section, field crops and livestock make up the bulk of production on Martin County farms.

From Table 16, it is obvious that tobacco is the backbone of agricultural production in Martin County. Tobacco is followed in importance by peanuts and corn. In 1964, these three crops combined accounted for over 90 percent of the value of field crops produced in the county. Other major crops are soybeans, cotton, sweet potatoes, and hay. Of these major crops, only peanuts, soybeans, cotton, and sweet potatoes have shown a definite trend toward increased production.

The sale of livestock and livestock products is a major source of income for Martin County farms. In Table 17, the number of livestock on Martin County farms on January 1 of each year from 1955 to 1965 is shown. During this period, the number of cattle on farms increased, and the number of milk cows, hogs, and chickens decreased. However, the annual value of livestock and livestock products sold increased from \$2.212 million in 1959 to \$2.356 million in 1964.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1964," Preliminary Report for Martin County.

TABLE 16. VALUE OF ELEVEN PRINCIPAL FIELD CROPS, MARTIN COUNTY, 1960 - 1964

Crop	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964
Tobacco	\$10,393,000	\$11,698,000	\$ 8,338,000	\$11,823,000	\$10,450,000
Cotton	229,000	346,500	355,000	566,000	506,000
Peanuts	3,103,000	3,327,000	3,965,000	4,572,000	3,966,000
Irish Potatoes	74,000	48,800	73,500	62,400	99,000
Sweet Potatoes	194,000	255,500	277,500	193,000	263,000
Corn	1,901,000	1,531,000	1,889,000	1,823,000	1,656,000
Wheat	4,950	16,100	7,320	12,900	6,860
Oats	3,440	1,600	4,300	2,320	360
Soybeans for Beans	576,000	656,000	604,000	702,000	701,000
Lespedeza Seed	1,610	-----	-----	-----	-----
All hay	127,500	154,500	119,000	161,500	108,000
Total	\$16,608,100	\$18,035,000	\$15,632,620	\$19,918,120	\$17,756,220

SOURCE: North Carolina Agricultural Statistics, N.C. Department of Agriculture, (Raleigh, 1962-1965).

TABLE 17. LIVESTOCK ON FARMS, MARTIN COUNTY,  
JANUARY 1, 1955 - 1965.

Year	Cows & Heifers 2 Years Plus			Hogs	Chickens
	Cattle	For Milk			
1955	5,200	1,100		38,900	100,000
1956	5,030	980		37,170	97,000
1957	4,810	1,020		37,300	106,000
1958	4,700	850		39,900	109,000
1959	5,250	580		40,350	104,000
1960	5,360	490		40,650	87,000
1961	5,140	500		35,400	88,000
1962	5,360	470		35,950	95,500
1963	5,690	380		36,750	88,100
1964	6,140	380		34,950	80,900
1965 <sup>1</sup>	6,090	380		32,200	67,600

SOURCE: North Carolina Agricultural Statistics, North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1962, 1965).

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary data.

With an abundance of corn produced locally, Martin County is well suited for livestock production. In the future, livestock production should continue to be an important element in local agriculture.

Overall, the future for agriculture in Martin County is very promising. The trend toward larger farms is a trend toward more productive units capable of becoming more specialized. Also, there is little doubt that the demand for agricultural products produced in eastern North Carolina will increase in the future. This area is in a good location from which to supply the growing metropolitan areas of the North as well as the emerging metropolitan system in the Piedmont Crescent of North Carolina. In addition, increased emphasis on United States farmers supplying food for a rapidly increasing world population is adequate assurance that world-wide demand for agricultural products will greatly exceed supply unless production is increased significantly.

#### FORESTRY AND FISHING

Two other parts of the local economy based on the surrounding land and water resources are forestry and fishing. Of the two, forestry is the more significant industry. Martin County's largest manufacturing firm, the Weyerhaeuser Company plant at Jamesville, is a processor of forestry products. In 1965, over 50 percent of Martin County's manufacturing employment was engaged in processing forestry products. Therefore, it is evident that forestry is an important element in the local economy.

The area of commercial forest land in Martin County is shown in Table 18. Approximately 65 percent of the total land area in Martin County is commercial forest land. It is estimated that in 1963, Martin County's forests contained 4,525,000 cords of timber. From 1962 to 1963, round pulpwood production in Martin County increased significantly, from 14,000 cords to 21,422 cords.

TABLE 18. AREA OF COMMERCIAL FOREST LAND  
BY OWNERSHIP CLASS, MARTIN COUNTY, 1963

Ownership	Acres
Public	100
Forest Industry	48,800
Farmer	116,400
Miscellaneous Private	35,600
Total	200,900

SOURCE: Southeastern Forest  
Experiment Station,  
U.S. Forest Service,  
Asheville, N. C.

Commercial fishing is not a significant industry in the vicinity of Williamston. The only seafood landed in the county were 630,350 pounds of Menhaden at Jamesville.<sup>1</sup> This volume of activity provides only a

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

small amount of seasonal employment. Therefore, for Williamston the economic significance of fishing is minimal.

## MANUFACTURING

Another major type of economic activity in the Williamston area is manufacturing. With decreasing agricultural employment, manufacturing is becoming the most important source of employment in Martin County. As the major source of new basic employment, it provides the key to continued economic development in the Williamston area.<sup>1</sup>

In Table 19, recent trends in manufacturing employment in Martin County are shown. Although only insured employment is shown in the table, insured manufacturing employment includes nearly all of the manufacturing employment in the county. Therefore, the data may be considered equivalent to total manufacturing employment. Manufacturing employment in the county has increased rapidly since 1961. In 1965, manufacturing employment in the county was 3.3 times as high as it was in 1956.

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<sup>1</sup>"Basic" industry produces goods and services for export to other areas. In this way, money is brought into the local area. "Nonbasic" industry, on the other hand, produces goods and services for local consumption and therefore, re-circulates money that is already in the local economy. Many economists believe that if a town can attract new basic industry, nonbasic industry will follow automatically as a result of increased demand for local services.

The recent large increases have occurred as a result of the establishment of new industries in the county. Of particular significance is the Weyerhaeuser Company which employs approximately 2000 people near Jamesville. In 1965, the insured manufacturing employment included 45 firms and grossed a total of \$17,997,820 in wage payments.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 19. INSURED MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT,  
MARTIN COUNTY, 1956-1965.

Year	Insured Mfg. Employment
1956	978
1957	759
1958	992
1959	1,184
1960	1,012
1961	1,116
1962	1,396
1963	1,635
1964	2,926
1965	3,257

SOURCE: Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, Bureau of Employment Security Research.

<sup>1</sup>North Carolina Insured Employment and Wage Payments, 1965. Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, Raleigh, N. C.) August, 1966.

According to a recent survey, approximately one third of the manufacturing employment in Martin County is within or near Williamston.<sup>1</sup> This survey credits Williamston with a total current manufacturing employment of 1,165 workers, of which approximately 450 are engaged in some type of seasonal industry.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, the prospects for continued growth in manufacturing employment in Martin County are good. Indeed, with declining agricultural employment, manufacturing employment must increase if the county is to keep from losing a large amount of its population. Since Williamston is the trade and financial center for Martin County and since the town also has a very good transportation system, it is the most logical location for new industry in the county.

Although Williamston and Martin County will continue to gain manufacturing employment, the increase probably will not be as rapid as it has been since 1963. One reason that the local rate of growth in manufacturing employment may not be as rapid during the next few years is because the national economy seems to be leveling off. If the national economy does not continue to expand rapidly, it will become more difficult for small population centers such as Williamston to attract new industry.

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<sup>1</sup>Data from Martin County Economic Development Commission.

<sup>2</sup>The seasonal industries include the processing of tobacco, peanuts, and other foods.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

The travel industry has gained prominence in Williamston during the past few years. Several travel-serving business firms have been built at Williamston along the major traffic routes. These routes are U.S. Highways 13 and 17 serving north-south traffic and U.S. Highway 64 serving east-west traffic. Many people from northeast of Williamston travel U.S. 17 or U.S. 13 to the resort areas of the southeast. In addition, U.S. 64 is one of the most popular routes to the North Carolina Outer Banks. Total receipts of firms engaged in serving travelers and expenditures by travelers are shown in Table 20. Of the total expenditures by trav-

TABLE 20. RECEIPTS IN TRAVEL BUSINESS AND EXPENDITURES BY TRAVELERS, MARTIN COUNTY 1964, 1965.

Year	Receipts in Travel Business	Total Expenditures By Travelers
1964	\$3,671,000	\$1,615,000
1965	4,109,000	1,766,000

SOURCE: Lewis C. Copeland, North Carolina Travel Survey, 1964, 1965.

elers in 1964, over 58 percent (\$939,000) was spent by out-of-state travelers. This is an indication that many north-south travelers on U.S. 17 and U.S. 13 utilize Williamston's facilities for the traveling public.

Although Williamston has adequate facilities for serving the traveling public, very little has been done to promote recreation or other activities which might

cause the overnight lodger or through traveler to extend his stay in the town. Sport fishing and other activities could be developed more extensively in conjunction with the Roanoke River. At present, proceedings are underway to rebuild a portion of the old riverfront area, including boat docks, as a historical attraction and incorporating a new restaurant. Also, the developers are contemplating the purchase of some type of boat, possibly an old steamship, on which scenic cruises may be taken. Developments such as this should result in greater employment and income in Williamston's travel business.

#### COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

The final element of Williamston's economic activity to be analyzed is commercial activity. Generally, this includes three major types of commercial activity; finance, wholesale trade, and retail trade. The first two activities are mentioned briefly. However, the emphasis in this section is on retail trade because it is a more extensive activity and more data is available about it.

##### Finance

For a principally rural county with less than 27,000 people, Martin County has excellent banking facilities. The banks and savings and loan associations are listed in Table 21. Three of the seven institutions are located in Williamston.

##### Wholesale Trade

Trends in wholesale trade in Martin County are shown in Table 22. Although the number of establishments

TABLE 21. FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, MARTIN COUNTY, 1966.

Name	Location	Total Assets as of June 30, 1966
Branch Banking and Trust Company	Williamston	\$ 152,327,156.09
Edgecombe Bank and Trust Company	Oak City	14,167,631.21
Martin County Savings and Loan Assoc.	Williamston	9,607,502.53
People Savings and Loan Association	Robersonville	1,016,667.84
Wachovia Bank and Trust Company Branch Bank Branch Bank	Hamilton Robersonville Williamston	1,161,306,547.00
Total Combined Assets		\$1,338,925,504.67

SOURCE: Virginia Electric and Power Company.

TABLE 22. WHOLESALE TRADE, MARTIN COUNTY, 1954-1963.

Subject	1954	1958	Percent Change	1963	Percent Change
Number of Establishments	23	34	47.8	37	8.8
Sales	\$20,991,000	\$25,991,000	23.8	\$22,524,000	-13.3
Payroll	480,000	885,000	84.4	1,086,000	22.7
Number of Employees	287	311	11.9	426	37.0

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

and the number of employees increased between 1958 and 1963, the volume of sales decreased. The major portion of Martin County's wholesale activity occurs in Williamston. In 1963; twenty-five out of 37 wholesale firms in the county were located in Williamston. These 25 firms had 83 percent of the wholesale trade in the county.

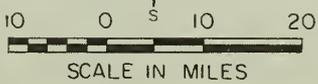
### Retail Trade

Retail trade includes the major portion of commercial activity in Williamston and Martin County. Williams-





**RETAIL TRADE AREA  
WILLIAMSTON, N.C.**





ton actually serves as the retail center for an area that extends beyond the borders of Martin County. The approximate area of retail trade influence of Williamston firms was estimated based on information learned from personal interviews with the managers of a clothing store, a department store, a food store, and an automobile dealership. This area, shown in Map 3, includes a population of approximately 43,000 people.

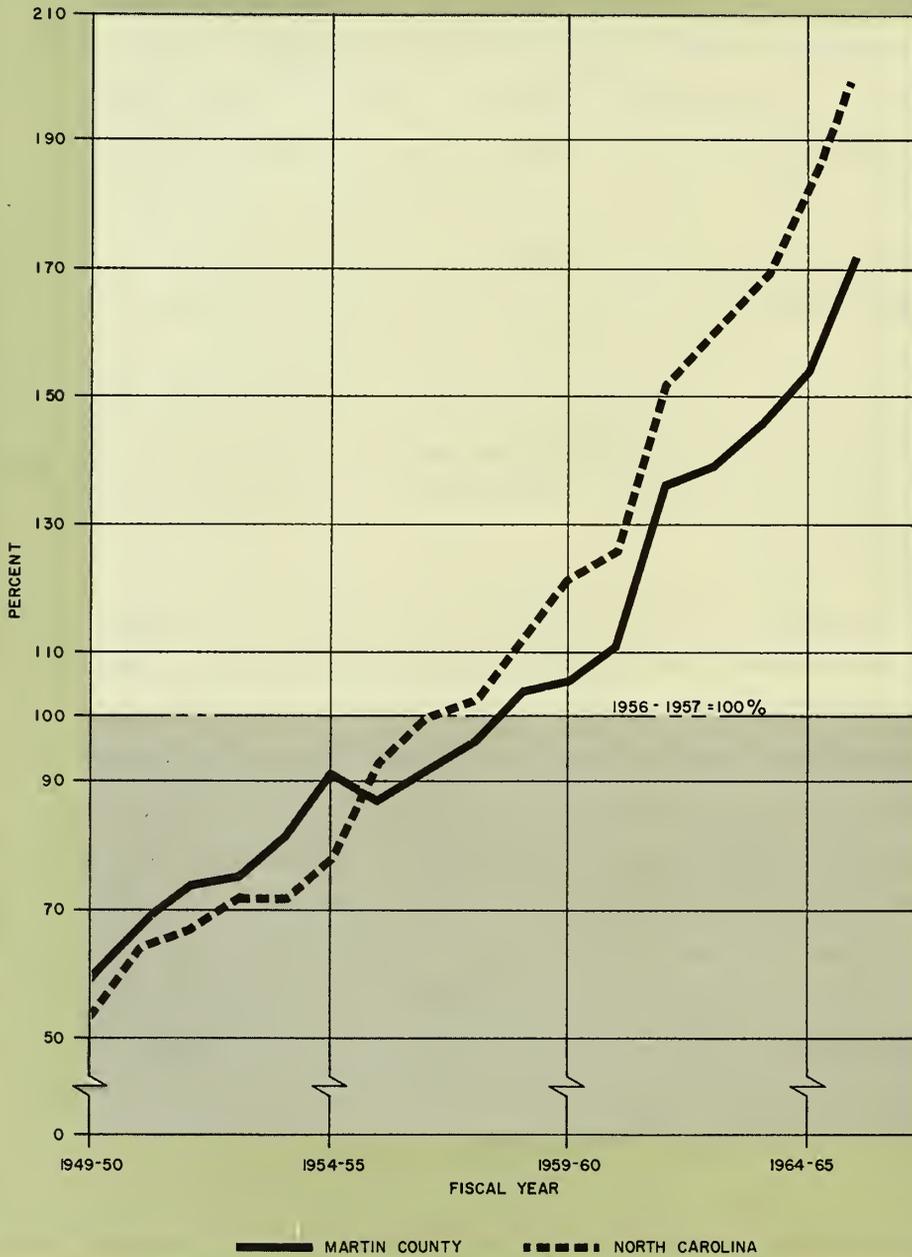
The year by year changes in the volume of retail sales for Martin County and North Carolina are shown in Chart 8. Martin County retail sales have increased in all but two years since 1949. Although the county's rate of increase in retail sales has been slightly below that of North Carolina, the county has had a healthy rate of increase.

Per capita retail sales can be used to reveal an area's importance as a retail trade center.<sup>1</sup> This has been accomplished by comparing local per capita retail sales with per capita retail sales for North Carolina. In Table 23, it is shown that Martin County has lower retail sales per capita than North Carolina. However, Williamston's estimated per capita sales in 1960 was \$1,989, over 70 percent greater than the state average. This figure is even more impressive when compared to Williamston's 1959 per capita income of \$1,055. This is evidence that Williamston serves as a retail center for the surrounding rural area.

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<sup>1</sup>Per capita retail sales is computed by dividing the total population into the total retail sales figure for the year.

**Chart 8. Index Of Retail Sales For Martin County And North Carolina, 1949 - 1966.**



SOURCE: YEARLY RETAIL SALES FIGURES FROM N. C. DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

TABLE 23. PER CAPITA RETAIL SALES, 1950, 1960.

Year	North Carolina	Martin County	Williamston
1950	\$ 672	\$449	Not Available
1960	1,164	758	\$1,989*

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Revenue and U.S. Bureau of the Census.

\*This figure was estimated by interpolating between Williamston's percentage of Martin County's retail sales in 1958 and 1963.

Finally, the total volume of retail sales in the area and retail sales by category are shown. In 1960, Williamston had total retail sales of \$16,780,000. These sales occurred in 145 establishments with 567 employees and a total payroll of \$1,580,000.<sup>1</sup> Retail sales are not broken down by categories for Williamston. However, the percentage of county retail sales per category is shown in Table 24, and Williamston's total is approximately 65 percent of the county total. Four categories - food, automotive, general merchandise, and autos and planes - absorbed almost 75 percent of the local retail dollar in 1965-1966.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census.

TABLE 24. GROSS RETAIL SALES FOR MARTIN COUNTY,  
JULY 1, 1965 - JUNE 30, 1966.

Category	Gross Retail Sales	Percent of Total
1% Retail Sales*	\$ 2,435,526	7.7
Auto and Planes	3,883,258	12.3
Apparel	806,512	2.6
Automotive	6,317,500	20.0
Food	7,540,747	23.9
Furniture	1,480,805	4.7
General Merchandise	5,735,105	18.2
Building Materials	1,127,664	3.5
Unclassified Group	2,236,994	7.1
Total	\$31,564,111	100.0

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Revenue.

\*Includes farm, mill, and laundry machinery; telephone, broadcasting, and freezer-locker equipment; and fuels sold to farmers, manufacturers, and laundries.

**SUMMARY  
AND  
EVALUATION**



This section of the Population and Economy Study for Williamston includes a brief outline summary of the study. This makes it possible to review the major points of interest without rereading the entire report. In addition, suggestions are made as to what may be done in order to strengthen the local economy.

### SUMMARY

#### I. Population

A. Factors relative to population growth in Williamston have been migration, natural increase, and annexation.

1. In the 1950 age group 10-39 years old, the Martin County population decreased by 4,677 people between 1950 and 1960, a decrease of 33.5 percent.
2. Areas containing 515 people were annexed to Williamston between 1950 and 1960.
3. Williamston has a high fertility ratio (543 compared to 448 for North Carolina).

B. The current population of Williamston and the extraterritorial planning area is approximately 7,300 people (6,888 people in town according to a special census taken in 1965, and 423 estimated in the extraterritorial area).

1. The median age of the 1960 population of Williamston was 21.9 for females.

2. In 1960, 52.5 percent of Williamston's population was female.
3. In 1960, 50.3 percent of Williamston's population was nonwhite (compared with 25.4 percent for North Carolina).
4. In 1960, the median school years completed by Williamston's population 25 years old and over was 9.0 (compared with 8.9 for North Carolina).
5. In 1959, Williamston's median family income was \$3,448 (compared with \$3,956 for North Carolina).
6. In 1960, forty-seven percent of Williamston's housing was either deteriorating, dilapidated, or lacking plumbing facilities.

C. By 1980, the population of Williamston and the current extraterritorial planning area should be approximately 9,200 people.

## II. Economy

A. In 1965, the Martin County labor force was estimated to be 12,150 people.

1. In 1965, annual average employment in Martin County was estimated to be 11,450 workers.
2. Martin County has a high rate of unemployment.
  - a. The annual average rate of unemployment from 1962 through 1965 was:

Year	Martin Co.	North Carolina
1962	8.3	5.3
1963	7.6	5.1
1964	6.8	4.8
1965	5.8	4.2

b. the county's ratio of insured unemployment has decreased from 11.0 in 1961 to 3.6 in 1965. (These figures are an indication that the local employment situation has improved).

3. A large amount of third quarter seasonal unemployment occurs in Martin County.
4. Many people from Beaufort, Pitt, and Washington Counties work in Martin County.
5. Williamston's labor market area generally includes the area within a 25 road-mile radius of the town. (The population of the area is approximately 94,000 people).
6. Within 25 miles of Williamston, there are 3,550 recruitable production-related workers, including 1,035 experienced manufacturing workers.

B. The major types of economic activities in Williamston are manufacturing and retail trade. The major types of economic activity in the county are agriculture, manufacturing and retail trade.

1. From 1959 to 1964, the number of farms in Martin County decreased by 27.5 percent and the average farm size increased by 30.7 percent.

2. Tobacco, peanuts, corn, and soybeans are the most important field crops produced in Martin County.
3. Livestock production is an important source of income.
4. In 1965, over 50 percent of Martin County's manufacturing employment was engaged in processing agricultural products.
5. Of the total land area in Martin County, approximately 65 percent is commercial forest land.
6. Manufacturing is the major source of new basic employment in Williamston and Martin County.
7. In 1965, manufacturing employment in Martin County was 3,257 workers (3.3 times as high as it was in 1956).
8. Approximately one-third of the manufacturing employment in Martin County is in or near Williamston.
9. In 1965, travelers spent \$1,766,000 in Martin County.
10. Williamston has adequate facilities for serving the traveling public.
11. Very little has been done in Williamston to promote recreation and other activities which might attract tourists.
12. On June 30, 1966, total banking assets in Martin County were over \$1.3 billion.
13. In 1960, twenty-five out of 37 wholesale firms in Martin County were located in Williamston.

14. In 1960, Williamston's per capita retail sales were estimated to be \$1,989 (compared with \$1,164 for North Carolina and \$758 for Martin County).
15. In 1965, Martin County's gross retail sales were \$31,564,111.

## EVALUATION

As is the case with people, each town has an individual personality. However, in many ways Williamston is not unlike the majority of small towns in Eastern North Carolina. In the past, Williamston, like other small towns in Eastern North Carolina, has existed principally as a retail trade and marketing center for the surrounding agricultural community. As a result of the rapid decline in agricultural population, the town's dependency on agriculture has helped to perpetuate many problems. These problems exist throughout Eastern North Carolina.

The first major problem is in part a result of the agrarian nature of the local economy. This problem is the lack of education, and it takes on great significance as a major cause of other problems. A large percentage of adults in the area has not completed high school and a larger percentage has no marketable skill or trade. As a result, the majority of industry attracted into the area has been low-wage industry which utilizes the semi-skilled and unskilled labor that is in great supply. Many of these people with almost no education and no skills are unable to qualify for employment which yields more than subsistence wages. Therefore, as a result of the low level of education and skill development, the problems associated with poverty -- low income, unemployment, underemployment, substandard housing, and others -- are intensified in the local economy.

The problems mentioned above exist in Williamston and other towns throughout Eastern North Carolina. These problems are all related to each other. However, all of

these problems can be related to one factor -- the inability of the individual to adjust successfully to a changing way of life, due to a lack of skills and training.

Obviously, the way to improve a town is through elimination of the problems stated above. The leaders of Williamston and Martin County have realized that many of these problems can be attacked through industrialization. As a result, the Martin County Economic Development Commission has been established and has been quite successful in attracting industry into the area. Williamston's location in relation to existing transportation facilities is an advantage not enjoyed by many towns in the area. In addition, recent and planned investments in public facilities such as a new hospital and the county airport will improve the town's competitive position in the game of industry hunting.

It is evident that the people of Williamston are interested in solving the problems with which their community is confronted. However, it is also evident that greater effort is needed in order to deal effectively with these problems. Specifically, the following points should be considered:

1. As stated earlier, the most critical factor hindering economic growth in the Williamston area is the limited level of training and skills among a large portion of the local population. Every possible effort should be made toward broadening and strengthening the local educational system. If necessary, the local property tax rate could be raised in order to provide greater financial support for education.

Progress has already been made in the area of vocational education and skill development

through the Pitt County Technical Institute. At the present, Beaufort County and Martin County are cooperating in an effort to have a new technical institute established on U.S. 17 between Washington and Williamston. The people of Williamston should give 100 percent support to this institute because it could become one of their most valuable assets.

2. A comprehensive long-range planning program (of which this study is a part) has been initiated in Williamston. If carried out successfully, this program can do much to enhance the town's attractiveness to both people and industry. For most modern industries, one of the most important criteria for locating a new plant is whether a location will be a desirable place for employees and their families to live. A successful planning program will help Williamston to develop in an orderly manner. Therefore, the planning program should have the full support of the people, especially the community leaders.
3. The amount and quality of public services offered in a town have a great influence on the town's ability to attract industry and people. Public investment in schools, hospitals, streets, libraries, police and fire protection, and other public facilities and services are necessary as prerequisites to economic growth. A town which makes these investments, particularly if the investments are made in accordance with a development plan, is in an advantageous position relative to attracting new industry or encouraging home industries to expand locally.
4. Another problem in Williamston is substandard housing. These dilapidated structures are occupied by low-income people who cannot afford adequate housing. Williamston should consider programs which would improve the quality of housing available to low-income families. A program leading to the elimination of dilapidated structures would also help to improve the appearance of the town.







