

Robbins  
Moore County

A Community Diagnosis including Secondary  
Data Analysis and Qualitative Data Collection

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This document is the product of a community diagnosis of Robbins, North Carolina. A community diagnosis is a process that aims to understand the strengths, challenges, and issues of importance for a community, through a review of existing data and interviews with community members and service providers. The document is intended to serve as a comprehensive resource for Robbins residents to use in order to achieve community goals. It was created by six graduate students in the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education at the School of Public Health, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with the support of FirstHealth of the Carolinas.

The community diagnosis of Robbins began in September of 1999 and lasted through April of 2000. The process included three phases. The first phase, secondary data collection, began in the fall of 1999. This phase included the collection of existing data, such as U.S. Census data, economic data, health statistics, and other indicators from local, county, and state sources. To gain an understanding of the town's history and current issues, local newspapers and town documents were also utilized. When possible, information was collected from Robbins, Moore County, and North Carolina for comparison purposes. The second phase of the community diagnosis was the primary data collection, which began in November of 1999 and continued through the spring of 2000. The primary data collection included interviewing community members and service providers highlighting the strengths and challenges of the community. The final phase of the community diagnosis was a community forum (the Northern Moore Community Forum), held in Robbins. This included a presentation to Robbins residents, of the primary and secondary data collected, a discussion among the residents of the findings, and a consideration by the residents of possible solutions to issues presented.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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It was clear that residents have a clear comprehension of issues in the community. Salient issues that emerged from the qualitative data from the interviews almost exactly mirrored the quantitative data collected earlier. Some residents felt that the health issues that the secondary data described were not representative of the same health problems Robbins residents faced, but health problems were not considered a pertinent issue to the town much, if at all. Overall, the secondary and primary data were reflective of each other.

Robbins, North Carolina is located in northwest Moore County. The incorporated town of Robbins is one square mile; the Robbins zip code encompasses this area, and several other rural areas surrounding the town. As we began to work in Robbins, we learned that many people define the Robbins area differently. To some, Robbins represents northern Moore County, and includes neighboring communities such as High Falls and Westmoore. Others felt that those communities had their own sense of identity and were separate from Robbins. For the purposes of this document, we chose to define Robbins by its zip code, and include some of the neighboring rural areas. Additionally, we chose to interview people that identified themselves as Robbins residents or service providers in the area. Because of the size of the town, many of the service providers were also residents.

There were limitations in the data collection process that are important to consider. Most of the secondary data was only available at the county level; therefore, the secondary data found may not be representative of the town of Robbins. The only source that provided community-level information was the 1990 U.S. Census. However, because the Census is ten years old, the information presented may not be completely descriptive of the community. In an effort to describe changes in the demographics of the community, we utilized current hospital birth records and school enrollment figures.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Limitations in the primary data collection include population sample, “social desirability” bias (the tendency to report answers to interview questions that are considered socially desirable), and sample size. Although attempts were made to interview people of all age, racial, and socioeconomic groups in Robbins, it is apparent that the interviews we conducted may not be representative of the entire Robbins community. We were aware of the population growth of Hispanics, but due to language barriers, we were only able to interview four Hispanic individuals. Due to time constraints, we did not conduct a random selection of the community, and so we cannot be assured of representativeness. Additionally, as with any type of social research about delicate issues, it is possible that the answers we were given to certain interview questions were not as accurate as possible; some participants may have tried to give “socially desirable” answers, and some may not have answered to the best of their knowledge due to the fear of being labeled in such a small town (note: confidentiality was assured in all interviews). Finally, our sample size was smaller than we would have liked due to inclement weather in January and time constraints. Because a larger sample size is more likely to be generalized to the whole population of Robbins, this is a considerable limitation.

During our interviews, we learned of many of the issues most pertinent to Robbins residents. Community members and service providers enjoyed talking about their town, and described Robbins as a community of many strengths. Residents of Robbins are proud to live in a small, safe, close-knit community, and they feel strong ties to their neighbors. We were repeatedly told that the strength of Robbins is its people. This feeling of community connectedness among the townspeople is illustrated in the community projects that the town has undertaken together.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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In recent years, Robbins has experienced an influx of Hispanics, and this change has presented a significant challenge to the town. The biggest obstacle posed is the language barrier, and Robbins is working towards solutions to this issue. The schools employ bilingual teachers in an effort to meet this need, and many residents expressed that they would like the opportunity to take Spanish classes. Many community members feel that the Hispanic community is separated from the larger town, and although this division is partially due to language barriers, understanding cultural differences is also a problem the town is trying to address.

In the past decade, Robbins has experienced a shift in the town industry. Traditionally a mill town, Robbins is now experiencing growth in the poultry and furniture industries. Still, many residents are leaving Robbins to work elsewhere. Some residents expressed concern that the community will not grow unless more industry and jobs are available in the town. It is possible that Robbins' children may not return to their hometown to work and raise their families if the lack of employment opportunities continues.

Other issues that emerged during our interviews with community members and service providers include housing, education, and health care. Residents remarked about the need for improvements in the quantity and quality of adequate housing in the town. Education was a concern, especially regarding the debate over the consolidation of the middle school and the need to address the issues related to the rise in the Hispanic population within the Robbins school system. The need for more health care providers in Robbins was an issue expressed numerous times by residents, and is a topic that needs further attention in order to offer Robbins more options for convenient health care. At the community forum residents enthusiastically discussed these issues, and many expressed a desire to address the challenges that each poses.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Recommendations concerning these issues are highlighted as a means to assist future decisions and solutions for the Robbins community.

We hope that the information presented in the following chapters will be a tool to assist with decision making for the present and the future. Robbins is a strong community, built on a foundation of committed citizens dedicated to ensuring a bright future for their town.

## **METHODOLOGY**

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This section will describe the methods employed to gather information about the Robbins community. We will examine the secondary as well as primary data sources and how each was collected and analyzed. In addition, this section will also discuss the methodological limitations of the data collection process.

### **Secondary Data**

#### *Sources:*

In order to get a broad background of information about Robbins, secondary data was collected at the beginning of the project. Sources such as the 1990 US Census, the National Center for Health Statistics, the Moore County Health Department 1999 Community Diagnosis, historical documents from the town of Robbins, and the Moore County newspaper, The Pilot, were used to supply a great deal of secondary information. State and county web pages were used as well, and phone calls and informal interviews also provided background information.

#### *Limitations:*

Most of the information found was only available at the county level. As a result, the quantitative data found may not be representative of the town of Robbins. The only source that provided community-level information was the 1990 US Census. However, because the Census is ten years old, the information presented may not be completely descriptive of the community. Several major demographic changes in the past decade in Robbins are indicative of this limitation.

# **METHODOLOGY**

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## **Primary Data**

### *Procedure:*

In order to begin qualitative data collection, a tool was needed: the interview guide (See Appendix B). This guide was developed by previous graduate students, and the current team tailored it to fit the Robbins community. After any changes were made to the interview guide, it was submitted to the University of North Carolina, School of Public Health Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval (See Appendix B ). This is a standard procedure for any research proposal using human subjects for any means. The proposal was approved and interviewing began.

There were two different interview guides submitted to the IRB: the service provider interview and the community member interview (See Appendix B). The service provider interview guide consisted of questions that inquired about the role the organization or agency played in the community. Some service providers interviewed were: the mayor, the chief of police, health care providers, school officials and religious leaders. The community member interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that asked community members to describe their experience living in Robbins. The strengths and challenges of the community were also discussed, as well as changes in the community and what the community members would like to see for the future of Robbins. Due to the nature of qualitative data collection and the structure of the open ended interview, it was not difficult to probe the interviewees for more information about certain areas of interest that required more elaboration.

### *Data Collection:*

Interviewing took place between November 1999 and February 2000. Twenty interviews were conducted, ten service providers and ten community members. There was some crossover

## **METHODOLOGY**

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between service providers and community members in that most service providers also made their homes in Robbins. However, the team felt comfortable interviewing the service providers as such, because in their roles as agency or organizational employees, their perspective on community affairs is different than that of a community member's perspective on the same issue. There was no difference between the processes for interviewing service providers and community members.

The team started the interviewing process by first contacting service providers in Robbins and asking if they would be willing to be interviewed. At the end of the interview, each participant was asked if he/she knew of anyone in the community who would be important to interview and whether or not he/she would agree to being interviewed. Most of the contact information was given per referral. Only occasionally was it necessary to use the Moore County phone book to search for a phone number.

Interviews were conducted wherever it was most convenient for the participant. Most community member interviews were held in the participants' homes. Most service provider interviews were held in the place of business.

Each participant was provided with a fact sheet explaining the community diagnosis and interview process. In addition, the interviewer explained what a community diagnosis was and the purpose of the interview and project.

Two team members participated in each interview. One team member was the primary interviewer and asked the questions, while the other team member served as the note-taker. Each team member was able to both ask questions and take notes, but having designated roles helped facilitate the interview.

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All interviews were confidential and this issue was discussed with each participant. Each interview was tape-recorded, but in the interest of confidentiality, the participant had the option of not recording the interview, as well as stopping the tape-recorder if he/she did not want a certain part of the conversation recorded. In addition, all interview tapes will be destroyed at the end of the project so as to further protect the confidentiality of our participants.

It is necessary to note that due to the inclement weather in the end of January and the time restraints it imposed, the team felt that it was imperative to interview some community members over the phone. All the same procedures were followed for a face-to-face interview, except that a phone appointment was made instead of a personal appointment.

The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. At the end of the interview, participants were asked for any referral information they could give regarding possible contacts for future interviews. They were also told to contact the team if they needed any further information. Thank you cards were sent to all participants within three days after the interview took place.

### *Data Analysis:*

After all the interviews were completed, the note-takers typed up their notes and listened to the tapes to fill in any missing information they overlooked at the interview. The team then read all of the interviews, looking for ideas that emerged frequently. The result of this review was the creation of a codebook, which is a list of codes, or abbreviations, for certain themes that came up numerous times throughout all the interviews. The interviews were then split up among the group and two team members assigned the same codes to relevant parts of the interviews. For example, two members both labeled anything mentioned in the interviews having to do with recreation as “R” for “recreation.” Because two team members coded for the same issues, there was a greater probability that all material needed to be coded was covered, rather than if just one

## METHODOLOGY

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team member coded for each theme. After the interviews had been coded, two team members compiled all the data for each code onto one document using Microsoft Word. The document is split up into sections by each code, facilitating searching for material when needed.

### *Limitations:*

It is important to examine the limitations of our qualitative data collection process. First, it is apparent that the interviews we conducted, although of good quality, may not be representative of the entire Robbins community. We were aware of the population explosion of those of Hispanic origin, but due to cultural and language barriers, we were only able to interview four Hispanic community members. Due to time restraints, we did not conduct a random selection of the community, and so we cannot be assured of representativeness. Secondly, as with any type of social research about delicate issues, it is possible that the answers we were given to certain interview questions were not as accurate as possible; some participants may have tried to give “socially desirable” answers and some may have not answered to the best of their knowledge due to the fear of being labeled in such a small town. Lastly, our sample size was smaller than we would have liked due to the weather and time constraints. Because the larger the sample size, the less chance for variability, this is a considerable limitation. These are all reasons why the qualitative information we obtained may not be as accurate as possible. However, we suggest that this document can serve as a starting point in gathering relevant data describing current issues prevalent in the Robbins community.



# SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

# **COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

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## **Geography**

The town of Robbins is located in the northwest quadrant of Moore County, ten miles from the geographic center of North Carolina. Robbins is twelve miles from the County seat of Carthage, 35 miles south of Asheboro, and 23 miles north of Pinehurst. Robbins is geographically different than the rest of Moore County. The town lies in the Piedmont, or clay soil area. The remainder of the County is in the Sandhills, or coastal plain. The foliage in the southern part of the County consists primarily of pine trees, while in Robbins the foliage is much more diverse with many different hardwood trees.

Defining the Robbins area is very difficult. The incorporated town itself is one square mile; however, there is an extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) for zoning and police patrol; this ETJ extends one mile outside of the town limits in all directions. This area is rural, so many people outside this ETJ define themselves as living in Robbins. The Robbins zip code encompasses these rural areas, as well as several surrounding communities. Although these unincorporated communities have their own sense of identity, they are still considered an integral part of the Robbins area because they utilize many of their services.

The town of Robbins has one main road, Highway 705, where most businesses are located. There is a wide variety of housing, ranging from numerous trailer parks to modest homes. Plank Road lies at one end of the town and normally connects the town to Carthage via route 24/27. However, Plank Road is currently closed due to the construction of a new bridge. The area north of the town limits of Robbins on highway 705 is heavily populated with pottery shops.

# COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

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## History

The town of Robbins began in 1795 when Alexander Kennedy, a revolutionary war soldier, settled in the area and established a gun factory. The promise of jobs drew others to the area, which became known as Mechanics Hill. In 1823, a post office was established, and in 1832, the first church, Mechanics Hill Baptist, was founded. In 1838, the gun factory closed and the townspeople cleared the land to use for agricultural purposes. It was during this time that gold was discovered in the area, and the town experienced a minor gold rush (Dunlap, n.d.).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Durham-Charlotte railroad came through, and a depot was built in the town. In 1900, the town registered its name as Elise, in honor of the daughter of the president of the railroad. The railroad brought many more jobs and people to the town. In 1904, Elise Academy, now Elise Middle School, was established to educate the children of Elise (Dunlap, n.d.). It was at this time that the townspeople applied for an *official* U.S. post office; they were notified that there was already a town in North Carolina with the name Elise. The post office assigned the town the name of Hemp, and after much argument among the townspeople, the new name was begrudgingly adopted in 1915. However, many people continued to refer to the town as Elise for years to come. In 1935, Hemp was incorporated as a town (Changing The Name of Hemp, 1943).

During the 1920's, the town experienced industrial growth. Hemp was supplied with power in 1923, and the following year, Moore Mills Textile plant, the first textile mill, was established. The mill was purchased by Karl Robbins in 1930 and renamed the Robbins Silk Mill. The textile industry continued to play a significant role in the town until 1990.

Karl Robbins was committed to developing and improving the community. His philanthropy was far reaching; Robbins donated money to the schools and churches, built

## **COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

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playgrounds and parks, and funded the first water and waste system in 1937 (Changing the Name of Hemp, 1943). In 1943, the citizens decided to change the town name to Robbins, in honor of its great benefactor. The Robbins family continues to support the town; in 1994, the Robbins Foundation donated funds to help build a town library (A. Moore, personal communications, October 19, 1999).

Robbins has a long history of community pride. For 44 years, Robbins has celebrated its past and its present with Farmers Day, an annual festival held on the first Saturday in August. Members of the town get together to showcase livestock, listen to music, eat, and socialize. The town is proud of its hometown heroes, Astronaut Charles Brady, Jr., and U.S. Senator John Edwards (T. Brady, personal communication, November 4, 1999).

### **Economy**

The economy of Robbins has been marked by periods of growth and decline. In 1795, the Kennedy family opened the largest gun factory in the south in an effort to supply revolutionary war soldiers with rifles. The Kennedy gun factory created 75-100 jobs for the area; the factory continued to grow through the early 1800s, employing 150 people at its peak (Changing the Name of Hemp, 1943). When the gun factory closed in 1838 the land was cleared for agriculture. It was at this time that gold was discovered (City Government of Robbins, n.d.). Mining kept the town alive through the transitions in major industries. The gold mines are now being utilized to mine for talc.

The textile industry has been very influential throughout the last century. A single mill established in the 1920's has provided many jobs and has been the focal point of the economy. Originally called Moore Mills, the name was changed to Robbins Mill after Karl Robbins purchased the business in 1930 (City Government of Robbins, n.d.). The mill was the major

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employer in Robbins and helped to sustain the town through the depression (Changing the Name of Hemp, 1943). Eventually, the mill was taken over by Milliken Company. At its greatest capacity, Milliken employed 1500 people, but gradually downsized to 300 employees by the time of its closing in 1990 (M. Shamberger, personal communications, September 29, 1999).

During the 1990's, Robbins experienced many economic changes. Along with the closing of the mill, Ithaca Industries, a large hosiery plant, closed in 1997. The loss of these industries has had a lasting impact on the town, and has shifted the economic focus from the textile industry to several smaller businesses. One consistent influence on the economy has been the pottery industry; at this time there are 22 well-known potters working in the area. In the past decade, the potters have experienced a growth in popularity, increasing tourism to the region (A. Moore, personal communications, October 19, 1999).

The economy of Robbins has been revitalized in the past year and a half despite the major loss of jobs due to the factory closings (M. Shamberger, personal communications, September 29, 1999). Currently, the major employers in Robbins are: Perdue Farms Inc. (470 employees), Mansion Homes (180 employees), and Candor Hosiery (275 employees). Additional employers are: North Carolina Lace Corporation, Klaussner Furniture, Standard Mineral (talc mining), U.S. Sign Co., and Gullistan Carpet.

Presently, there is no formal economic development plan for the town of Robbins. However, there is an "Industrial Recruitment Committee" that hopes to strengthen the economy. The town is growing and developing. A new library was built in 1994, a town park opened in the summer of 1999, and an overhaul of the waste management system is planned for the near future (A. Moore, personal communications, October 19, 1999).

## **COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

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Geography, economy, and history all interact to define the direction and trends of a community. These three components have all worked together to shape the town. Robbins has enjoyed a rich and diverse history, marked by the numerous name changes, for the past 200 years. Additionally, the location and geographic composition of the town sets Robbins apart from the rest of Moore County. Economically, Robbins has relied heavily on the textile industry, although the employers have changed over time. These changes have led to periods of significant economic growth and decline. Throughout the years, Robbins has remained a strong and supportive community, integrating its past with its vision for the future.

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

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## Demographics

Robbins is a community that has endured numerous structural vicissitudes. Since its inception in 1795, the town has experienced an evolution of identity. A seemingly superficial series of town name changes has had profound implications on the culture of the community. Additional influences on the change of identity resulted from the economic instability caused by the closing of the textile mill in 1990, and an influx of those of Hispanic descent. The 1990 United States Census data was used as the primary resource for the preceding information. In order to paint a more accurate picture of Robbins, more recent information will be added when available.

There has been a significant countywide population growth in the past few years. According to the 1990 Census, the total population of Robbins was 970 residents; however, Robbins' Mayor, Mickey Brown, gave a current estimate of 1100 (personal communication, December 2, 1999). Moore County population was estimated at 70,307 for 1997 (Government Information Sharing Project, 1999) compared to 1990 population of 59,013 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990). In 1990, there were 450 male residents (46.4%) and 520 female residents (53.6%). In analyzing the census data by age, it is apparent that close to half (47.7%) were between the ages of 18 and 55 years, in 1990. The remaining population is divided among those under 18 (23.5%) years of age and those over 65 (28.8%) years.

The 1990 Census data for Robbins regarding race states that there were 861 (88.8%) white residents, 45 (4.6%) African-American residents, 0 American-Indian/Eskimo/Aleut residents, 0 Asian or Pacific Islander residents, and 64 (6.6%) residents who described themselves as "Other." The 1997 Moore County data estimate an African American population of 13,205 (18.8%) and a white population of 55,375 (78.8%) (Government Information Sharing

## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

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Project, 1999). The 1990 Census noted there were 66 (6.8%) Robbins residents out of the total population who described themselves as Hispanic. Community members have stated that this number has grown significantly in the past 10 years (Officer Brady, personal communication, October 1999). The Moore County Hispanic population estimate for 1999 was 3,577, compared to an actual population of 470 in 1990. There were 84 Hispanic births in 1998 (N.C. Office of State Planning, 1999). From September 30, 1998 to October 1, 1999, Moore Regional Hospital reported 52 Hispanic births from Robbins; this comprises 62% of the Hispanic births in Moore County (S. Phillips, personal communication, November 30, 1999). An additional estimate came from the Robbins Elementary School Principal, who stated that 37% of the elementary school population is comprised of Hispanic children (Mr. Lynch, personal communication, October 1999). This figure, when compared to the 6.8% of the total Hispanic population of Robbins in 1990, implies a drastic increase over the last 10 years.

### **Housing**

Robbins has a variety of different types of homes. United States Census data from 1990 states that mobile homes (17.2%) and one-family houses (84.3%) make up the majority of homes. Upon observation, however, it is apparent that the number of trailer parks has grown. Aside from mobile homes, most of the houses are small, one-family dwellings. There is one federally subsidized housing project, Randomwoods Apartments (D. Brown, personal communication, November 30, 1999). The majority of Robbins residents own their home (66.6%), while the remainder of the residents rent their home. Approximately two persons per unit reside in both homes rented and owned (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). A household, as defined by the census, is one in which a legal or blood relationship exists between members. In



## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

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Robbins, 362 (91.4%) of the householders were white, 16 (4.1%) were African American and 17 (4.3%) were Hispanic (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990).

As of 1990, there were 54 vacant housing units, but the vacancies were not due to the use of the home as seasonal, recreational, or occasional. This differs from Moore County statistics in that 19.9% of vacancies in the county were due to recreational use. A vacancy rate refers to the proportion of people that leave the area. Robbins residents had a vacancy rate of 3.3% if they own their homes, and 9.6% if they rent their homes (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990).

### **Economic Status**

The median family income of Robbins, according to the 1990 census data, was \$22,833 per year, which means that half of the population had incomes below and half had incomes above this number. In Moore County, the median was nearly \$10,000 more per family (\$32,747). There has been a small increase in the median family income for Moore County. According to the estimates released in 1999, the median income for the county was \$34,412 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). Due to a lack of Robbins specific information, it is assumed, from the Moore County data, that there was not a significant increase in the median income for Robbins.

The 1990 per capita income for Robbins was \$10,512, compared to \$14,934 for Moore County. In 1996, the estimated per capita income for Moore County was \$21,458 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). Recent racial breakdowns for per capita income were not available; therefore, 1990 census data will be referenced. By race, the per capita income for whites was \$11,210 in Robbins and \$16,630 in Moore County. African-American per capita income was significantly lower, at \$6,065 in Robbins and \$7,811 in Moore County. Unlike the white and African-American populations, the Hispanic per capita income varied greatly, with Robbins at

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\$6,610, and Moore County at \$11,561 per year. Of the 397 households in Robbins, 281 (77%) had either wage or salaried incomes. Nineteen (4.8%) households were supported by public assistance and 43 (10.8%) with retirement income. In Moore County, nearly 25% of the households were supported by retirement income (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990).

In 1990, there were 129 (13.4%) persons below the poverty level in Robbins of which 40 (4.1%) were children. In 1995, 13.1% of all people in Moore County lived at or below the poverty level (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Recent racial breakdowns for those below poverty level were not available; therefore, Robbins' census data from 1990 will be used. Ten percent of those below the poverty level were white (as compared to 6.0% in Moore County), and 2.9% were African-American (as compared to 4.6% in Moore County). There is no data for Hispanics. Of the 274 families in Robbins, 30 (10.9%) of them were below poverty level, and more than 50% of those families had children under 5 years of age in the household. There were 54 (13.6%) female headed households, 11 (20.4%) of which had incomes below poverty level and all of which had children under the age of eighteen. In Moore County, 9.8% of households were female headed. Twenty-nine percent of these households were below poverty level (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

The director of the Northern Moore Family Resource Center (NMFRC) said that the majority of Robbins residents began working outside of the immediate area after the closing of the textile mill in 1990 (M. Shamberger, personal communication, September 29, 1999). In Robbins, of those in the labor force, 27 (5.4%) were unemployed; 85% of those unemployed were white, while 15% were African-American. Of those unemployed, 9 (33.3%) were male and 18 (66.7%) were female (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). A more recent unemployment rate for Moore County in 1999 was 3.2 % (North Carolina Employment Commission, 1999).

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

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## **Education**

Presently (1999), Robbins residents are served by Robbins Elementary (420 enrolled), Elise Middle School (310 enrolled), and Northern Moore High School (500 enrolled) (L. Ritter, personal communication, December 6, 1999). Westmoore and High Falls Schools, both of which are kindergarten through eighth grade, serve northern Moore County residents that live outside of the Robbins city limits.

Table 1 shows the racial breakdown of education levels for Robbins residents in 1990, compared to Moore County. The percentages of African Americans and whites who completed high school were very similar (19.2% and 20.0% respectively). There were 61 (9.6%) residents with bachelor's degrees or higher, and 359 (56.4%) residents with at least a high school education. In comparison, in 1990, 74.3 % of Moore County residents had at least a high school education, while 19.9% had a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

Table 1. Educational Attainment in Community By Race/Ethnicity  
(Percentage of Adults who completed)\*

Education Level	Robbins			Moore		
	White 861	AfAm 45	Other 64	White 47464	AfAm 10882	Other 667
Less Than 9th Grade	11.4%	6.7%	32.8%	6.4%	11.0%	12.4%
Some High school No Diploma	16.6%	15.6%	7.8%	9.5%	15.7%	7.3%
High School Graduates	19.2%	20.0%	7.8%	19.5%	17.2%	10.0%
Some College No Degree	7.0%	15.6%	3.1%	14.4%	7.7%	13.0%
Associate Degree	5.7%	0	0	6.3%	2.7%	7.2%
Bachelor's Degree	3.3%	4.4%	9.4%	11.5%	2.3%	1.5%
Graduate School	2.9%	0	0	4.9%	1.1%	.90%

Source: 1990 US Census Data  
Database: C90STF3A

Moore County is growing. According to a recent community diagnosis done by the Moore County Health Department, the county has a migration rate (percentage of incoming residents) of 2.4%, which is 100% greater than the state's net migration (1999). This becomes extremely relevant when considering the preceding data for several reasons. It is necessary to take into consideration the variation between the characteristics of Robbins and the other locales of Moore County. For example, the community of Southern Pines in southern Moore County is a popular resort area known for its recreational and leisure activities. The neighborhoods in this area foster an environment that attracts affluent people of retirement age. Even though the percentage of those not in the labor force in both Moore County and Robbins are very similar,

## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

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the residents may not be in the labor force for different reasons. Secondly, there is a bipolar characteristic in Moore County. The northern part displays a vastly different lifestyle than that of the southern part. Additionally, as noted in the community description, the topography of Moore County also displays disparate characteristics. However, it is these differences which constitute the identity of Robbins. Although the town does not seem to be enjoying the same economic and demographic growth as Moore County on the whole, it has grown in size significantly. In doing so it has welcomed a new population into its community and at the same time maintained its small-town southern geniality.

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There are numerous factors that contribute to the health of a community and to the individuals who reside there. Social health, environmental health, and availability and access to health services all play a crucial role. Mortality and morbidity rates also serve as a measure of health, but the concept of health cannot be so narrowly defined. Moore County data was used in this description due to the lack of specific health data for the community of Robbins; however, Robbins data was utilized when available.

### **Mortality**

The overall adjusted mortality rate in Moore County for 1993-97 was 7.23 per 1,000, compared to North Carolina's adjusted mortality rate for 1993-97, which was 8.47 (State Center for Health Statistics (SCHS), 1999). Adjusted mortality rates refer to rates which would be expected if the age, sex, and race composition of Moore County were the same as the standardized rate of North Carolina. These rates are used so that a more accurate comparison of county and state can be conducted. The county followed the same trends as the state regarding the leading causes of death, which were cancer and cardiovascular disease (CVD). As noted in Table 2, mortality rates from 1993-1997 for motor vehicle injuries, suicide, and female breast cancer were higher in Moore County than in all of North Carolina (SCHS, 1999).

In 1991, Governor Jim Hunt created The Task Force on Health Objectives for the Year 2000 (North Carolina Governor's Task Force on Health Objectives for the Year 2000, 1992), in response to the national initiative of Healthy People 2000. Table 2 lists the top 10 causes of death in Moore County, as compared to North Carolina and the Healthy Carolinian Year 2000 Objectives.

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Table 2. Leading Causes of Mortality and Adjusted rates for Moore County & North Carolina Per 100,000, 1993-1997

Causes of Death	Moore County	North Carolina	Healthy Carolinian's 2000 Objectives
Heart Disease	206.0	251.6	248.9
Cancer	188.3	197.4	204.7
Cerebrovascular Disease	65.5	65.8	62.4
Female Breast Cancer	31.6	27.2	
Chronic obstructive lung disease	31.1	38.3	25.5
Pneumonia and Influenza	28.4	30.2	
Motor vehicle deaths	24.6	20.8	29.6
All other unintentional injuries	19.7	19.8	
Suicide	14.6	12.3	10.6
Diabetes	9.0	22.6	20.3
Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	7.3	9.0	

Source: Moore County Health Department, 1999

Source: North Carolina Governor's Task Force on Health Objectives for the Year 2000, 1992

The majority of Moore County adjusted rates were below both North Carolina rates and the Healthy Carolinian's Year 2000 Objectives, indicating that Moore County is successfully working towards achieving better overall health. However, cerebrovascular disease and suicide rates were above the state average and the Healthy Carolinian's Year 2000 Objectives, which implies a need for more preventive physical and mental health services.

Looking at mortality across race and gender, CVD was the leading cause of death for white males and females, as well as non-white females. It was also the leading cause of death in

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North Carolina (Moore County Health Department, 1999). Over half the deaths from CVD in North Carolina occur among women. Although the rates of CVD in North Carolina are declining, it is still a serious health concern, especially within Moore County. In addition, cancer is the number one cause of death for non-white males in Moore County (Moore County Health Department, 1999). For non-white males, the leading types of cancer were trachea, bronchus, prostate and lung, giving this population a cancer mortality rate almost 31% higher than the state (Moore County Health Department, 1999). White males were subject to the same types of cancer but with lower mortality rates, and CVD was the number one cause of death in that group. Both white and non-white females were susceptible to the same types of cancer: trachea, bronchus, breast and lung; however, the mortality rates differ dramatically between the two groups. White females exhibited cancer mortality rates that were 3% lower than the state, while non-white females had a cancer mortality rate 10% higher than the state (Moore County Health Department, 1999).

Causes of death other than disease are also concerns in Moore County. The overall rate of death due to injury, which includes suicide, homicide and motor vehicle accidents, was 74 deaths per 1000 in 1993-95 (DEHNR, 1997). It should be dually noted that although Table 2 cites the overall rate of motor vehicle accidents as 27.0, the rate for those ages 15-24 is significantly higher at 49.8 (DEHNR, 1997). For children, unintentional injuries are a leading cause of death and disability. According to the Moore County Health Department, from 1988-1997, 37 children died from unintentional injuries. Over a third of these deaths resulted from motor vehicle accidents.

The causes of death in Moore County are presented in Figure 1 with a clear illustration of the prevalence among the leading causes.



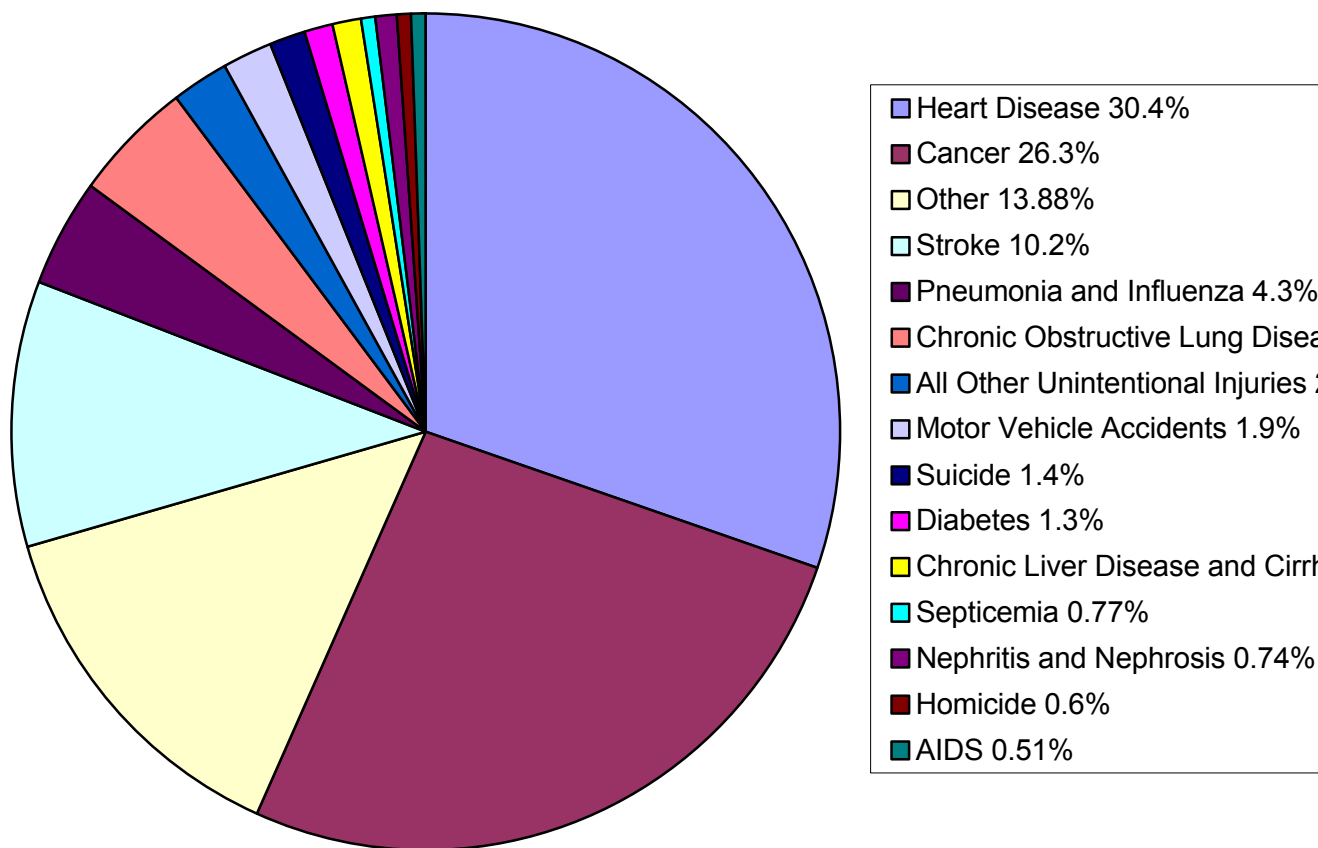


Figure 1. Causes of Death In Moore County by Percent, for 1993-97  
 Source: SCHS, 1999

### *Infant Mortality*

Moore County had an infant mortality rate of 13.6 per 1000 in 1998, nearly 43% higher than the state's rate of 9.3. Although this rate approached the Healthy Carolinian's Year 2000 Objectives (7.4), there was a disparity when those rates were broken down by race (North Carolina Governor's Task Force on Health Objectives for the Year 2000, 1992). For white babies, the rate was 4.1 per 1000, which was lower than the Healthy Carolinian's Year 2000

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Objectives, but for non-white babies, the rate was 44.4 per 1000 (SCHS, 1999), placing the non-white infant mortality rate significantly above the Healthy Carolinians 2000 Objectives of 8.7 per 1000 (Moore County Health Department, 1999). Based upon this information, it is apparent that infant mortality for minorities is an issue that needs attention in Moore County.

### Morbidity

Disease rates for Moore County were below the state rates for the following communicable diseases: AIDS, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B, pertussis, salmonellosis, and chlamydia. Table 3 compares the Moore County disease rates with the North Carolina disease rates. Based on the Healthy Carolinian's Year 2000 Objectives, all of the Moore County rates are still above the state goals.

Table 3. Disease Case Rates per 100,000, 1992-1996, unless otherwise noted

Health Indicators/Diseases	County Rate	NC Rate
Cancer <sup>a</sup>	403.4	359.7
AIDS <sup>b</sup>	4.4	11.55
Gonorrhea <sup>c</sup>	155.23	363.37
Tuberculosis <sup>b</sup>	9.18	8.35
Syphilis rate <sup>c</sup>	8.22	22.34
Hepatitis B <sup>d</sup>	4.06	4.79
Chlamydia rate (per 10,000) <sup>*c</sup>	10.8	23
Hepatitis A <sup>d</sup>	1.88	1.89
Pertussis <sup>d</sup>	.31	2.02
Salmonellosis <sup>d</sup>	10.32	16.66
Lyme disease <sup>d</sup>	.31	1.08

Source: DEHNR 1997 Note: a=1991-1993, b=1991-1995, c=1993-1995, d=1992-1996  
\*=Moore County Health Department, 1999

The incidence rate of cancer in Moore County is of significant concern, since it is the only morbidity rate that is considerably above the state's. The four most prevalent forms of cancer, listed in Table 4, were female breast, lung, colorectal, and prostate. All were above the state's rates, except for lung cancer.

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Table 4. Age-Adjusted Cancer Incidence 1991-1993 Per 100,000

Type of Cancer	County Rate	State Rate
Female Breast	123.1	108.5
Lung	53.9	56.2
Colorectal	43.1	41.3
Prostate	193.6	137.3

Source: DEHNR, 1997

## Health Services

Primary medical services are provided within Robbins for residents, but for other services, residents must travel either to places outside of Robbins, including: Carthage, Pinehurst, or Southern Pines in Moore County, or to Troy, in Montgomery County.

### *Medical Resources in Robbins*

Robbins has one family practice physician, one adult nurse practitioner, two dentists, one optometrist, and one pharmacist. Dr. William Bell, who practices family medicine, has served the Robbins area for more than twenty years. He reports a patient load of 60-75 people a day, does house calls, takes walk-ins, and is on-call 24 hours a day (W. Bell, personal communication, November 4, 1999). Dr. Bell accepts Medicaid, Medicare, and uninsured, self-pay patients. In 1998, the residents brought forth a petition, to the town board, requesting another medical provider. In response, St. Joseph of the Pines, a long-term medical care facility in Pinehurst, established Robbins Medical Center in June of 1998. The center employs one adult nurse practitioner, Vicki Cooke-Erdoes. This addition has provided an alternate provider option

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for persons over 18, but there is still a need for a provider trained in pediatrics (V. Cooke-Erdoes, personal communication, November 4, 1999).

Table 5 lists the rates of providers to population for both the state and county level. There are significantly fewer primary care providers in Moore County than the state average. However, this does not necessarily indicate a higher patient load or an under-served population, because many people may leave the county to receive care.

Table 5. Number of Providers to Population, 1997

<b>Providers</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>Moore County</b>
Primary Care Physicians	1: 1387	1: 1667
Primary Care Physicians plus Extenders	1: 1098	1: 1166
Registered Nurses	1: 118	1: 86
Dentists	1: 2488	1: 2299

Source: DEHNR, 1997

### *Health Department Services*

The Moore County Health Department is located in Carthage, 12 miles from Robbins. This facility offers numerous clinical, environmental, and health education programs, all with a focus on prevention. These services include: immunizations, family planning, pregnancy testing, maternity services, child health services, adult health services, breast and cervical cancer preventive services, communicable disease programs, including testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, neuromuscular/orthopedic clinic, and Women, Infant and Children's Nutritional Services (WIC). Some of these services are free, while others have income guidelines or a fee based on a sliding scale (FirstHealth of the Carolinas, 1999).

The eleven member Moore County Board of Health acts as the policy making body for the County Health Department, and sets the health standards for the County. Under the direction

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of the local health director, the health department staff puts these standards, along with state and federal criteria, into action (FirstHealth of the Carolinas, 1999).

### *FirstHealth of the Carolinas*

FirstHealth of the Carolinas is a not-for profit healthcare network, formed when Moore Regional Hospital and Montgomery County Hospital merged in 1995, which provides an array of healthcare services to the residents of this region of North Carolina. Because Robbins is located in the northwest corner of Moore County, residents may access FirstHealth services in either Moore County, or in Troy, which is in neighboring Montgomery County (FirstHealth of the Carolinas, 1999).

Hospital Services Moore Regional Hospital, located in Pinehurst, is an acute care, not-for-profit hospital that serves as the referral center for a 15-county region in the Carolinas (FirstHealth of the Carolinas, 1999). This hospital is 23 miles from Robbins, has a capacity of 397 beds, and is the top referral of the primary care providers in Robbins (W. Bell, personal communication, November 4, 1999). Moore Regional provides comprehensive medical services. The hospital has 11 operating rooms, a full laboratory and pharmacy, 19 bays in the emergency room, and 67 intensive care beds (S. Phillips, personal communication, November 16, 1999).

In addition, Robbins residents also utilize Montgomery County Hospital, located in Troy, NC. This hospital is 27 miles from Robbins, and has a total of 37 primary care beds, 51 long-term care beds, and an emergency department with 24 hour physician coverage (FirstHealth of the Carolinas, 1999).

Primary Care Centers FirstHealth has primary care medical clinics in Carthage and in Troy; both provide services such as well child checks, adolescent care, adult medicine, and geriatrics. Both clinics accept Medicare and Medicaid, as well as self-pay, uninsured patients.

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From October 1, 1998 to September 30, 1999, the Carthage clinic served 9000 patients (D. Blinkman, personal communication, November 11, 1999).

Dental Services In October of 1998, FirstHealth opened a dental care center in Southern Pines, 26 miles from Robbins. A second dental clinic opened in Troy in January of 1999. These dental centers treat patients age 18 and under. Their services are limited to Medicaid and N.C. Health Choice recipients, as well as children whose families are 200% below the Federal poverty level. They provide basic dental services on a regular basis, and more intensive dental procedures as needed (L. Smith, personal communication, November 16, 1999).

FirstHealth Mobile Van FirstHealth has a mobile van that covers an eight county area, offering free mammograms, prostate cancer screening, diabetes screening, cholesterol checks, and blood pressure checks. From September 30, 1998 to October 1, 1999, the van provided 12,439 screenings. Data on the number of Robbins residents served was unavailable. The van comes to areas in response to requests from churches, businesses, community organizations, and for special events. In Robbins, the van comes to Davis Community Center at least once a month, and to other service areas in town as requested (P. Lariviere, personal communication, November 13, 1999).

### *Long-term Medical Care*

St. Joseph of the Pines, located in Pinehurst, offers long-term skilled nursing care to the elderly and the infirm. They recently partnered with Duke University to offer home health care to Robbins and other communities in North Carolina (Office manager, St. Joseph of the Pines, personal communication, November 5, 1999).

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### *Emergency Services*

There is a Moore County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) base located in Robbins that responds to calls for persons in need of medical assistance. They will provide immediate medical assistance, transport individuals to area hospitals, and serve as support for the Robbins Fire Department. There are 13 paramedics on call 24 hours a day, covering a ten-mile radius (B. Strickland, personal communication, November 12, 1999).

The fire department, located in Robbins, provides emergency safety to a ten-mile radius of Robbins. There are 25 volunteer members, and they are all on-call 24 hours a day (D. Brown, personal communication, November 16, 1999).

### **Health Insurance**

The primary care providers in Robbins both accept Medicaid, Medicare, and uninsured, self-pay patients. The recent initiation of the children's health insurance program, "North Carolina Health Choice for Children," which provides coverage for any N.C. resident under the age of 19 who does not qualify for Medicaid, has enabled many who were not previously eligible for insurance to get coverage. In 1996, fourteen percent of the population in Moore County was uninsured, compared to 12.8% for the state (North Carolina Health Care Reform Commission, 1996). In Robbins, 5% of Dr. Bell's patients are uninsured; additionally, 11.17% of the Robbins residents seen at Moore Regional are uninsured, as well as 76% and 40.3% of the Robbins residents seen at the FirstHealth dental clinics in Troy and Southern Pines, respectively (S. Phillips, personal communication, November 16, 1999).

## **HEALTH**

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### **Barriers to Accessing Medical Care**

In January of 1999, the Northern Moore Family Resource Center (NMFRC) surveyed, by mail, 2800 residents of Northern Moore. The 211 respondents ranked medical resources as the second most important need of the community; specifically, a doctor and an additional pharmacy were mentioned (M. Shamberger, personal communication, September 29, 1999).

#### *Transportation*

Moore County does not have a public transportation system available, so Robbins residents must secure their own transportation in order to access services provided outside of the town. Moore County provides transportation service to some county agencies. They will also transport individuals that are Medicaid or Medicare recipients. Although this service fills a need, it excludes persons that are not Medicaid or Medicare recipients (R. Cook, personal communication, November 5, 1999).

In response to this barrier, the NMFRC offers a transportation service to residents of northern Moore County. This service is available to anyone at no cost, and it can be used to meet daily needs. This service is entirely staffed by volunteers, for a limited amount of hours during the week. They will transport individuals anywhere within a 30 mile radius of Robbins (M. Shamberger, personal communication, September 29, 1999).

#### *Language*

The growing population of Hispanics in Robbins has posed a challenge to the service providers. The communication barrier frustrates the residents and the providers who are attempting to meet their health needs. There is no Spanish speaking medical provider in Robbins or in Carthage, and Spanish speakers often rely on their bilingual children to translate (V. Cook-



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Erdoes, personal communication, November 4, 1999). There is an interpreter available at the Moore County Health Department; however, there is not one at the Moore County Department of Social Services (B. Robinson, personal communication, November 5, 1999). FirstHealth of the Carolinas has a bilingual staff member at their dental clinic in Troy; otherwise, they rely on the BellSouth Language Line, and information sheets written in Spanish, to help them meet the need. There are Spanish speaking medical providers available at Moore Regional and Montgomery County Hospitals (P. Lariviere, personal communication, November 13, 1999).

### **Social Health**

Many social factors contribute to the health and well being of Robbins' residents. Robbins is a relatively small community with numerous opportunities for citizens to support each other. Churches are a common means of community involvement for residents. According to the secretary of the First Baptist Church of Robbins (personal communication, November 15, 1999), there are nearly 100 members, from ages 20 and over, who actively participate in community activities at their church alone. Three major churches, including First Baptist, Tabernacle Methodist, and Elise Presbyterian, are committed to the Robbins Area Christian Ministry. The Robbins Area Christian Ministry, governed by a board of directors, operates a food bank and thrift store. The proceeds are funneled back into the community to residents in need of funds (First Baptist Secretary, personal communication, November 15, 1999).

The first annual Health Fair, sponsored by Saint Joseph's of the Pines, was held November 13, 1999. Screenings for diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol, glaucoma, vascular disease, and prostate cancer were offered, along with free influenza immunizations. A Children's Health Fair is also annually hosted by the First Baptist Church. This is a well-

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attended event, sponsored by the Moore County Health Department, that provides immunizations for children (First Baptist Church Secretary, personal communication, November 15, 1999).

### *Mental Health and Substance Abuse*

Residents of Robbins who are in need of mental health services, or assistance with substance abuse issues, are referred to clinics and treatment centers outside of Robbins.

Sandhills Center for Mental Health (SCMH) is the main site in Moore County for such treatment. In addition, the Northern Moore Family Resource Center offers an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program, as well as family and individual counseling. There are also several AA groups located in Southern Pines, Pinehurst, and Aberdeen (Office Manager, SCMH, personal communication, December 3, 1999).

Sandhills Center for Mental Health offers adult and adolescent mental health counseling, and substance abuse counseling. They provide individual, group, and psychiatric therapy. The center is partially funded by the State government. Options for payment include private insurance, Medicaid, and a sliding scale. Recovery Associates and Pinehurst Treatment, both private centers, also provide substance abuse treatment (Office Manager, SCMH personal communication, November 15, 1999). Recovery Associates is a fee for service center in Southern Pines that offers drug and alcohol rehabilitation and testing for a small number of Robbins residents (Office Manager, personal communication, December 3, 1999). All centers noted that they work with Robbins residents but current statistics on Robbins were unavailable.

### *Crime and Violence*

Crime and violence has a tremendous impact on the health of a community. Robbins has experienced a decrease in criminal activity and violence since the town has implemented a

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proactive approach to crime prevention in the last few years (T. Brady, personal communication, November 4, 1999).

According to North Carolina statistics, the crime rate was 41 per 1000 people in Moore County in 1995 (North Carolina Office of State Planning, 1997). The county rate decreased between 1997 and 1998, from 40.8 to 34.5 per 1000, according to the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation (1998).

Data from the Robbins Police Department shows that there was an 18% decline from 1997 (2470) to 1999 (2024) in criminal activity in the town. These activities include shoplifting, vandalism and trespassing. There was also a 20% decrease in accidents from 1997 (80) to 1999 (60). From October 1997 to October 1999, the number of investigations, arrests, citations, and accidents all increased slightly. Between October 1998 and 1999, vandalism resulted in 25% (34) of the total number of offenses. A quarter (26) of the charges were for robbery, larceny, or theft; 14% (14) were for assault; and 13% (13) were against residents who were Driving While Intoxicated (DWI). From October 1997 to 1998, 64% (76) of the offenses were related to vandalism, burglary, or larceny. The percentages of charges for crimes were distributed similarly in 1999 (Robbins Police Department, 1998).

### *Recreation*

Civic Organizations Organized civic clubs, including Kiwanis and Lions Club, are active in Robbins. The Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of America also have troops in Robbins. There is a Veterans of Foreign War (VFW) Post as well (A. Moore, personal communication, November 15, 1999).

Seniors Every Monday through Friday seniors can meet at the Davis Community Center, for lunch and activities. The program, run through the Moore County Department of Aging,

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provides lunch for the 30 seniors that come to the Center; volunteers also deliver lunch to the homes of 28 elderly Robbins residents (E. Haywood, personal communication, November 15, 1999).

Parks and Recreation The Moore County Department of Parks and Recreation offer several programs to boys and girls in Robbins. These include baseball, softball, basketball, cheerleading, and dance classes. There is also a countywide softball team available for adults. The NMFRC also sponsors a girls and boys soccer league in the fall and spring. (M. Shamberger, personal communication, September 29, 1999).

In 1997 the town of Robbins applied for and received a grant to build a community park; construction of the Milliken Community Park was completed in the summer of 1999 (A. Moore, personal communication, October 19, 1999). The park has a picnic area, a swing set, tennis courts, basketball courts, a baseball diamond, and a track.

Additional Resources The Northern Moore Family Resource Center was established in Robbins in 1994 and programs began in 1995. The purpose of the NMFRC is to encourage and support the development of a strong community, by matching the resources available with the identified needs. The NMFRC is strongly committed to literacy and education; there is a family literacy program that works with parents and their young children, as well as GED and ESL classes. One of the most unique services provided is an occupational therapy program for children. The Executive Director feels that the services at NMFRC adequately reach a broad scope of the population, and new programs are routinely under evaluation (M. Shamberger, personal communication, September 29, 1999).

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## Environmental Health

Recently, the controversy surrounding the reallocation of water districts across Moore County has become a concern for its residents. This issue has become more heated in the aftermath of the dissolution of Moore County Water and Sewage Administration (MoWASA). This is a pivotal concern for the county planning office, where they are trying to prepare for the inevitable population growth of the coming decades. As Moore County continues to grow, the allocation of water resources is extremely urgent and salient. The majority of residents were against the county wide water system, and voiced two main concerns. Primarily, they argued that a countywide water system would promote growth in Moore County. Residents feared that such growth would overwhelm their rural county. Secondly, they were concerned that the proposed water system would create an unfair tax burden to all residents, while primarily benefiting those in the southern part of the county (Gilkeson, 1999).

It is important to consider the historical context in which this controversial subject was born. In 1976, the county sewage system was restructured with no opposition. In 1977, a countywide water system was proposed as the next logical step. However, the county's officials decided against a \$12 million dollar bond from the federal Environmental Protection Agency to create the water system. The rationale for turning down this option was that the residents thought that it would promote "undesirable growth" (Gilkeson, 1999). Now 23 years later, the issue arises again with the same level of controversy.

In this examination of the factors that influence Robbins' health, several key issues stand out. Robbins is a community that is working to meet the needs of its residents. However, several barriers stand in the way of achieving optimal health and well-being. Infant mortality continues to be a serious concern that needs to be addressed, especially within minority

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populations. Lack of transportation to health care facilities and language barriers make obtaining health care a challenge for certain populations. Although Robbins must overcome these barriers, the community has acknowledged these needs in an effort to ameliorate overall health.

# QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

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“...the quality and the dedication of the people here has really impressed me. The strength of this town is the quality of the people.”

-Resident

Robbins residents are proud of their community, and this sense of pride was illustrated during our interviews with community members and service providers. Residents spoke of their neighbors, community organizations, and community leaders as enhancing the quality of life in Robbins, emphasizing that the people are the greatest strength of the town. Residents also frequently mentioned the beauty and size of Robbins, and the strong importance of family as assets of the community. As one community member explained, “It's a hometown, small-town feeling. There's a strong emphasis on family and family roots; it's a caring community.”

In interviews, residents often expressed that in times of need they could turn to their neighbors for help. Residents described a close-knit, caring community, in which community members worked together to achieve goals and address challenges. Most people considered their neighbors to be more than just the people that live next door. As one woman stated, “the whole town is my neighbor.”

This strong sense of community cohesiveness was demonstrated during the two weeks of severe winter weather Moore County endured at the end of January 2000, in which many residents lost their power and heat. According to one community member, “we could not get out. People went up and down the road making sure that everyone had heat, food... power.... Everyone was sharing cell phones.” This level of community support is evident not only in times of stress, but also when residents focus on a common goal for the town. As one resident articulated, “the strength of Robbins is its people, its ability to come together to reach a common goal, ability to pull together....” Community projects, such as the Robbins library and Milliken Park are examples of community members working together to improve the town. Residents



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formed a Robbins Library Committee to build a library in the town, and residents and school children sent letters to the state, asking for funding for Milliken Park. As a service provider pointed out, “when people have a mindset to get things done, they will do it.”

Residents also spoke highly of the town's organizations that work to meet the needs of the community. Some examples they provided included the Meals on Wheels program, which serves lunch for seniors at Davis Community Center, and delivers lunch to area homebound seniors. In addition, annual health fairs are held by Saint Joseph's of the Pines and the Moore County Health Department that offer screenings and immunizations for children. Residents frequently mentioned the Northern Moore Family Resource Center, which provides services such as transportation, literacy classes, ESL classes, and a youth soccer league, as an important contributor in the community. The Christian Ministries, an ecumenical effort born out of the desire of local churches to pool resources for community outreach, was also described as a unifying force in Robbins. The Christian Ministries established a thrift store in town, and parishioners at participating churches take turns operating the store. Residents expressed pride in the relationships between the churches in town, and several community members spoke of the importance of the faith community in Robbins.

In addition, community members also mentioned the dedication of the town leaders and service providers. Many noted the police force's high level of participation in the community. The police routinely call and check on elderly residents, and participate in the D.A.R.E. and C.A.R.E. programs at the elementary schools. The police force was recognized by the state in 1998 when they received the North Carolina community-policing award. Many residents spoke of the commitment of the town board and the mayor, as well as the local pastors and school

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administrators. Residents often expressed that they were fortunate to have such capable town leaders.

Residents were also proud of two of the town's favorite sons: Astronaut Charles Brady and North Carolina Senator John Edwards. One community member best expressed the town's sentiments: "we have produced some great people, some real hometown heroes." Many residents felt that members of the town share a common bond, and that being from the same town provided a connection among people.

In addition to a shared locality, some residents pointed to the size of Robbins, explaining that the small size of the town enables connections among residents. One community member stated, "you can walk down the streets of Robbins and you'll see somebody to speak to that knows you." Most residents believed the size of the town to be one of its greatest strengths; they explained that they know their children's teachers, they know their neighbors, and they know the history of the families in the town. One resident best articulated why knowing others in the town was important when she stated, "being small, you know the people in the community...that provides a sense of security for everyone."

Community members also spoke of the advantages of raising a family in Robbins, citing the people, the schools, and that there are low levels of crime and substance use. As one resident stated, Robbins should be recommended to anyone who, "wants to see their kids growing in an area not that affected by drugs and alcohol." Other residents mentioned the fact that there is very little crime, and that the town members could, "walk up and down the street at night and feel safe." Most community members cited the quality of the school system as an important factor in their decision to raise a family in the area. The quiet, rural atmosphere was also often mentioned as conducive to raising a family.

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Many community members enjoy the physical environment of their town. “I’d say it’s healthier than a real congested city. You’re able to get out and enjoy the sunshine and eat food that’s grown at your house.” Because of the country life, people can also take advantage of being outside. There are places to walk, children can ride bikes, and the park is available for additional outdoor activities. Most residents are very happy with the rural life that residing in Robbins provides. A community member described the rural peace Robbins offers: “I love to sit on my back porch and look at the woods and hear the birds sing.”

The caring community spirit that embodies Robbins can be seen throughout all of the assets of the town. After all, it is the people who make the town what it is. According to many residents, Robbins has the foundation necessary to address its challenges: its people. “It is a caring community. There are a lot of people who care about each other. It tends to show [in] the schools we have, ...we have a library; we have a lot of things that small communities don’t have.”

## HEALTH CARE

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“The loss of a doctor and drugstore has put a burden on the community.”

-Resident

The issue of health care was a concern for many residents in Robbins, and was discussed in detail during interviews and at the forum. Proximity to appropriate and adequate health care emerged as a major issue among the residents. This issue included the need for another doctor and pharmacy in town, as well as a closer elder care facility. Environmental health issues, including clean water, were also touched upon during interviews with community members.

Several community members noted that Robbins is a relatively healthy community. Diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer are the main health concerns in the town of Robbins and in Moore County as a whole. As one community member stated, Robbins' health problems are “just like anywhere else.”

Robbins has several qualified and respected health care professionals within the town limits, including two dentists, an eye doctor, and a family physician. The family physician is the only permanent primary care provider in the immediate area since the previous nurse practitioner is no longer working at the St. Joseph's of the Pines office. Additionally, many residents remarked about how they felt fortunate to live so close to the health care facilities at Moore Regional Hospital. Many residents utilized the state-of-the-art emergency care as well as specialty services at the hospital.

Numerous residents noted that the family physician is simply overworked. Many people in Robbins prefer to receive their care in town, and have been utilizing the local services for years. The quality of care provided by the family physician is not a concern among residents; however, the wait at the doctor's office is an issue that was raised several times. Residents commented that it is frustrating getting appointments at the office, and one individual stated,

## HEALTH CARE

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“there is often a three hour wait to see the doctor.” Despite these frustrations, many people in Robbins are loyal towards the doctor and, as one resident mentioned, feel that, “it is a matter of convenience to get health care in town.” However, other community members go outside of town for health care to areas including Pinehurst, Asheboro, and Carthage.

Another topic that the residents of Robbins have discussed is the need for another pharmacy. Historically, there have been two pharmacies in town and the current pharmacy is operating beyond its capacity. As one community member said at the forum, “[people] sometimes have to wait four days for medication.” A community member interviewed noted that the “town board is working on getting another drugstore, [but] chain drugstores don't want to come to town.” Receiving medication in a timely manner was a common concern for many residents.

At the community forum, another issue that surfaced was the need for an adequate nursing home in the area. There is a growing elderly population in northern Moore County that will require long-term care. Currently the closest facility is a half-hour away, which is frustrating for residents who have to travel to visit relatives residing there.

Several residents discussed how issues like health care, industry, and housing are all linked to the health of Robbins, while attending the community forum. One resident acknowledged the relationship by stating that, “it's all connected,” meaning, “to attract industry, you need enough doctors, good schools, [and an attractive area].”

When community members were asked about their hopes for the future of Robbins, several mentioned the need for another doctor, another pharmacy and clean water. Another community member's wish was for FirstHealth to put money into the Occupational Therapy

## **HEALTH CARE**

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Program. Another community member thought a delivery service at the drugstore would benefit everyone, especially the elderly.

Most residents of Robbins felt that the town was a healthy community to live in. As with any community, health care is a necessity and a primary concern for residents. There are a limited number of providers in Robbins since it is a small town; however, numerous providers and services in the surrounding areas are able meet the needs of the Robbins residents. The hospitals, health department, and various practitioners outside of the town are accessible to Robbins' residents seeking care. Residents inconsistently mentioned the issue of transportation as a barrier to health care, yet there are transportation services available, although limited, through the Moore County Department of Transportation and the Northern Moore Family Resource Center. Overall, Robbins residents felt their health care needs are being met, whether they access care within the town limits or travel outside the immediate area.

## INDUSTRY

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“Jobs will bring other changes.”  
-Resident

Over the past two decades, there has been a national decline in number of textile mills. Unfortunately, Robbins was not immune to this trend. The changing face of industry in Robbins has been a topic of concern for many residents. In the past, the community has relied on the area mills to provide a great number of jobs for Robbins residents. The closing of the Ithaca plant and the Robbins mill has forced the residents to seek ways of marshaling industry, jobs, and revenue back into the community. During the community forum, residents discussed this issue extensively and identified barriers and solutions for recruiting industry to Robbins.

In assessing the presence of industry in the Robbins area, residents were very familiar with Perdue, Klaussner, and Candor Hosiery. While these companies were able to help increase the number of jobs in the area, residents expressed a need to recruit technological industries to counteract the dying textile industry in the area. One resident argued that the community, “should try to attract industries that feed and support other industry.” Another resident suggested that the Robbins community, “identify growing industry, and teach the new job skills necessary to do those jobs in the schools and the community college.” The introduction of new high-tech classes in the schools and community college was a suggestion offered in response to the “people” aspect of industry recruitment. Residents believed that assuring the industries of the availability of skilled workers would give them more incentive to move to Robbins.

Robbins residents also viewed an immense need to bring more skilled and/or specialized jobs into the community. It has been mentioned that youth tend to leave Robbins after they graduate from high school, and the lack of available jobs has been suspected as the probable cause. A community member said, “I think...our biggest improvement...would be to bring more technologies [in order] to keep more of our young people.” This community member, as did

## INDUSTRY

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several other residents, thought Robbins would have to find jobs that were able to compete with those of larger cities in order to persuade the younger generations to view returning to settle down in Robbins as an option.

There were several barriers to increasing industry and jobs in Robbins. “Industry looks at water and sewage and people before they decide to locate,” said one community member. The water and sewage issue has been an ongoing debate in Moore County. Residents noted that it would be hard to attract industry without a countywide water and sewage system. In fact, one resident stated, “not having a countywide water and sewage system hurts us.” They also saw good highway access and increasing public transportation throughout the county as ways of overcoming obstacles in recruitment.

The topic of tourism was also mentioned as a barrier. “The tourist industry has hurt other industries in the county.” Some residents thought that it would be a good idea to try to tap into the booming pottery industry in the area. One resident felt that, “bringing pottery to Robbins might help.” An older resident even came up with a new town logo: “Robbins: Gateway to Pottery.” Others suggested that store owners rent space to local potters to display their work.

The community has joined in alliance with the Chamber of Commerce in hopes of addressing these issues. During the community forum, members stated that if such a partnership turns out to be unfruitful, then Robbins would have to start on its own course of action. Some members suggested the formation of a committee to address industry recruitment. One resident responded, “local committees are always a good thing.” There were further suggestions to coordinate the committee through the town council and to identify community members with the initiative to take on such a task.



## **INDUSTRY**

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The industry recruitment issue is so intimately tied to many other community concerns, that a positive change in the current situation would inevitably lead to positive changes in youth retention, skilled job provisions, and town revitalization. It is apparent that residents think that industry is an integral component to the town's livelihood, and the community is ready to initiate change towards strengthening their industrial base.

## **GROWTH OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY**

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“[The greatest need in Robbins is] for people to be understanding and to be able to communicate with each other.”

-Resident

Although 1990 U.S. Census data and Moore County population statistics do not reflect an increase in the Hispanic population of Robbins, Robbins Elementary School enrollment and Moore Regional Hospital’s birth records both point to a dramatic shift in the composition of the population. Nearly 40% of the students enrolled for the 1999-2000 school year are of Hispanic origin. From September 30, 1998 to October 1, 1999, Moore Regional Hospital had 52 Hispanic births on record as Robbins residents.

In the past 5 years a large number of Hispanics, mainly Mexicans and Guatemalans, have moved into the Robbins community. Some residents believe the Hispanics came to Robbins to fill low income agricultural and poultry plant jobs created through nearby industries. As one community member stated, “well, there’s some cheap housing... and there’s work.” This new segment of the Robbins community has introduced a culture that many residents had no exposure to prior to this influx. The characteristics within the Hispanic community, such as cohesion, interdependence, and limited fluent English speakers, have maintained divisions between Hispanics and the larger Robbins community. This community member’s sentiment was reiterated in several interviews: “You will find there is a division. I think geographically, races are located in different areas. I don’t know if that’s by choice or if it just worked out that way, or [if it is] the price [of housing].” Several residents and service providers mentioned housing conditions as a major concern, particularly for the Hispanic community. Many Hispanic families share houses; some are extended families living together, but most are trying to save money. Numerous houses and trailers were not being adequately maintained and were too small for the number of people living in them. Residents and service providers felt landowners are

## **GROWTH OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY**

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responsible for these poor housing conditions and neglected repairs. The assumptions were that landowners are not maintaining these houses because the tenants do not speak English well enough to request maintenance, or complain when there is a problem. Community members also feel the landowners are not concerned about multiple families sharing houses because they are often getting paid per person occupying the house.

The changing face of Robbins has brought new challenges. As the number of Hispanics continues to rise, the community is forced to address the growing diversity of Robbins. Hispanics are becoming more visible in the community; there is a small grocery store, a restaurant, and several video stores owned and operated by Hispanics. Many Latin American cooking ingredients are prominent in the larger grocery stores as well. From the rise in these industries, it is obvious the Hispanic community is growing, though it remains separate from the rest of the community of Robbins. It is apparent this separation is mostly due to communication difficulties between the groups.

As the community of Robbins changes, residents attempt to understand and appreciate differences between races and cultures. It is particularly hard to do this when it is a new group moving into a historically defined community. Many community members expressed concerns about how these new cultures are integrating into the small-town atmosphere of Robbins. One community member said, “it’s just like anywhere, if you don’t know about a person, or if they look different than you, [or] eat different things, there’s always suspicion.” This questioning continues when groups do not interact and people only recognize other ethnic groups without getting to know the people that comprise these groups.

The Robbins area schools have made a tremendous effort to help new students quickly adjust and learn the English language. A service provider explained, “[Robbins Elementary has]

## **GROWTH OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY**

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three ESL teachers, an ESL tutor and an ESL teacher's assistant." The schools also attempt to address cultural differences through celebrations of cultural diversity. These great efforts have caused the community to depend on the schools to integrate the cultures, as well as interpret for many people in the community. One resident stated:

In the town, people pretty much do their own things. The school is the only place where there is a mingling of people. The feeling for the Hispanic community is not that welcoming. The only thing that brings people together is school.

Many businesses and services do not have any bilingual staff. In order to receive needed services, Hispanics often must bring their own interpreters; frequently, that person is a child taken out of school to interpret legal or medical situations for their parents. Community members and service providers all encounter communication problems. Some community members are comfortable with the current situation. Others feel more should be done: "I think it is difficult [when service providers do not speak their language] and I think, even though a great effort is being made, ... the bilingual issue is still a problem." Several community members and service providers felt there were options not yet considered. "We try to teach English to the Hispanics but we don't have any classes to teach Spanish to the English speakers."

The topics of growth of the Hispanic population and cultural diversity were both discussed extensively at the community forum. Many of the same concerns and ideas community members expressed in interviews were also addressed at the forum.

One discussion at the forum centered on housing conditions in Robbins. Ideas on how to improve housing conditions for many Hispanics were brought up, such as: a need for more low-rent housing made available for everyone in the community, enforcement of housing codes, and the responsibility of landowners to keep rental properties up to code.

## **GROWTH OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY**

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Many people expressed a need for more understanding of the cultures in Robbins. People felt Hispanic issues would be addressed more appropriately if there were a leader to give those community members a voice. In addition, it was mentioned that town officials should reach out to the Hispanic community to learn more about their needs and concerns. Other suggestions were to learn more about Hispanic celebrations and increase the communication between different cultures. Most community members involved in the forum discussions believed more of an effort should be made for English speakers to learn Spanish, as well as Spanish speakers learning English. Many people thought adults did not have enough convenient opportunities to enroll in a language class. Community members present showed an interest in Sandhills Community College's potential plan for creating a satellite program to teach Spanish in addition to other classes for adults.

The issues discussed at the forum centered on improving communication skills within the community. Several of these issues would be addressed through language skills allowing all community members to communicate effectively and integrating the diverse cultures of Robbins.

[In the future] I think that we will see a more dramatic change, in that people will begin to know each other, and we are in the process of beginning to understand each other rather than fight each other. We will see three times more accuracy in the communication of the ethnic groups, regardless of the color of the skin.

-Resident

## HOUSING

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“Housing seems to be a big issue”

- Resident

Housing in Robbins and the surrounding areas was a concern for many people we interviewed, and was a topic discussed at length at the community forum. The two main themes that emerged were the lack of upscale housing, and the overcrowding and safety issues in lower-income housing.

The need to increase upscale housing was closely tied to the desire to attract more professionals, and to draw more industry to the area. As one service provider noted, “if we had some nicer developments, maybe we could attract some higher income people.” The people of Robbins are hoping to attract new industry to the area, but without adequate housing options for employees, this will be difficult. There was a general consensus at the forum that unless there is an increase in the housing options, it will be difficult to convince new professionals to move to the town. One community member stated, “people are looking for better opportunities, better jobs, and better housing.”

A larger and more immediate concern for most people was the improvement of the five trailer parks and lower-income housing developments in the area. Safety and aesthetics were the top priorities expressed. Currently, there is a large problem with overcrowding. One woman commented, “you can have three to four families living together, two families with six children each, and it’s a two bedroom trailer.” Another community member mentioned that there are homes with two families sharing limited living space, working opposite shifts. This problem is difficult to ameliorate because there is a lack of low rent housing in the area and a growing number of individuals seeking a place to live.

## HOUSING

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In addition to overcrowding, much of the housing was considered to be substandard and hazardous. The majority of those interviewed and numerous people at the forum, had witnessed, or heard of, dangerous housing conditions in the town. Details of the reported situations included: houses with “the roof... falling down,” residences where, “there was water pouring in the ceiling like a waterfall,” and, homes which, “...had a live wire inside the house, with children running around.” These problems were attributed to the minimal housing codes in the area, and to the lack of adequate maintenance of rental properties.

Current efforts are being made to improve the quality of housing in Robbins. Recently, a community development block grant was obtained to make improvements to some of the houses on Virginia Avenue. The water and sewer lines were upgraded and a beautification project was implemented. This is an issue that is beginning to be addressed by the local government in small steps. As one resident expressed, “we have a lot of housing problems right now -- the [town board of commissioners] is working on new ordinances such as keeping... property clean.” All community residents felt that for the future, more efforts are obviously needed to improve the quantity and quality of housing. As one resident stated, “we need to invest a little to get some reasonable and safe houses, maybe some high rises or apartment complexes.” Suggested solutions included finding non-compliant landowners and convincing them to get their properties up to code, involving the local industries in the hopes that they will be willing to provide some housing for their employees, and increasing the number of low rent options as well as the number of upscale houses. New housing developments will, in turn, create the need to address the issue of access to water and sewer. As Robbins continues to grow, all of these housing concerns will need to be addressed.

## EDUCATION

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“I’m really pretty proud of the school system.”

– Resident

The northern Moore school system was an issue of importance for many Robbins residents. The majority of community members expressed pride in the schools and felt that the children were receiving a good education. Many spoke of the challenges that the schools have faced in coping with an influx of non-English speaking children. Others discussed the controversy in the community surrounding the proposal for a consolidated middle school. Residents also spoke of the differences in funding and resource allocation between northern and southern Moore. Although residents varied in their opinions of the school system, all spoke of the importance of a quality education for the town’s children.

Many people interviewed expressed a great deal of pride about their schools and the quality of education their children receive. The school system is currently structured so that Robbins Elementary and Elise Middle School serve the residents within the town of Robbins. Westmoore Elementary and High Falls Elementary, both of which house kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8), serve the surrounding areas of northern Moore County. All three schools then feed into North Moore High School. Residents regarded the quality of the teaching to be a great asset to the community, as one community member stated, “there are some of the hardest working teachers in this area and they genuinely care about the children.” Community members frequently cited the small school size and relationship between the teachers, parents, and children as strengths of the school system. As one resident said, “for the most part, teachers really care. Kids get to know their teachers. Teachers know the kids by name.” Robbins Elementary was seen by many as an institution that brings people together and, as one community member said, “plays a key role; it’s an integral part of the entire community.”



## EDUCATION

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Robbins Elementary was also one of ten schools in the state last year to get a UTOTES grant (Using The Outdoors to Teach Experiential Science). Areas outside the campus will be developed as teaching areas for students and community members. For example, a butterfly garden is a possible benefit of the grant. This grant will utilize people from the community in the development of multiple projects to enhance students' learning experiences.

The recent influx of the Hispanic population to the Robbins area has presented a new challenge to the northern Moore school system. Currently, 37% of the students at Robbins Elementary School are of Hispanic origin. The elementary school employs three ESL teachers and a number of teaching aides who are bilingual. Many community members commented that these teachers have been instrumental in helping to integrate the classrooms. However, others expressed concern that with a growing number of non-English speaking children, there are not enough resources to meet the need. One resident spoke of the continuing frustration felt by the schools as they struggle to meet the needs of the students:

We are experiencing some sort of difficulties for the new immigrants, especially for the little kids, second and first graders up - there is very little bilingual help. We see families emigrating from other countries and the schools are facing a tough task of making kids understand.

Many people interviewed expressed concern that the quality of education is declining because of the non-English speaking students. One stated, "when you have children in a classroom that don't speak English, you've got teachers that are going to spend more time with those children, and they have in the past. That's partly why I took my kids out." Despite these negative sentiments, most residents were proud of the ability of the teachers and school administrators to integrate the non-English speaking students, and felt that a more diverse school was beneficial to the children and the town.

## EDUCATION

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Another recent issue mentioned by many in the community was the debate over the consolidation of the middle schools. The proposed change was to move the sixth through eighth grades from Westmoore and High Falls schools to Elise Middle School. Many residents supported the change because an increase in the number of students means an increase in county funds, resulting in greater resources available. As one resident explained:

Two or three years ago we were fighting very hard to get one middle school in this area—so we could have more available for our children. For example, schools get more money depending on how many kids are there. They get a certain number of teachers because of that. They have more availability of courses.

One parent felt that this consolidation would be beneficial because it would increase opportunities for the children. She said, “they try very hard, but my children were at Elise and they never had drama. They had to choose between art and music; they couldn’t do really both of them. There are a lot of things that they can’t do because they don’t have it available on their campus.” However, other residents were opposed to the consolidation of the schools because they felt that smaller schools are more beneficial to the children. One parent remarked, “my kids are at Westmoore Elementary and there is a stability there. I wouldn’t want them to lose that.” Another resident expressed the sentiments of many people by stating, “people didn’t want change. I just think little is better.”

The final decision was to keep the schools separated, and High Falls and Westmoore remain grades K-8. One resident stated, “I’m certain that the Board of Education was okay with it, but they felt that the three communities couldn’t accept it.” Many community members still felt strongly about this issue and hoped that the middle schools will be merged in the future.

Another issue of great concern for the people in Robbins was school funding and perceptions of resource allocations within Moore County. Many people felt that the northern

## EDUCATION

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Moore schools often do not get an equal share of county school funding or recognition. One resident felt that, “schools don’t get a lot of help from the county so they do it themselves.”

Community members spoke proudly of the active parent and teacher associations and strong fund-raisers held for the schools. Another resident was upset about the county’s handling of the monetary allocations for the consolidated middle school after the proposed merger fell through, and complained:

What they did was give the monies [that were allocated to merge the school] to Southern Pines, so they could build a new school. ... They have more voters down there, and I was very angry because as a member of the Board of Education, you are supposed to do what’s best for a community, and not listen to all the political mumbo-jumbo. But that’s not what they did. They listened to the voters and they did what was best for their seats.

Yet another community member expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation, stating:

We vote for the school bonds and we don’t get that money; it’s not a fair distribution—more money is given to the southern part of the county. There are some bad feelings between upper Moore and lower Moore. Upper Moore does not get its fair share of resources.

Although many Robbins residents were divided in their feelings about the current situation and the future direction of the schools, all residents felt very strongly about the importance of a quality school system. Many community members expressed satisfaction with the school administration and teachers, and felt that the schools were coping well with the challenges they face. Residents hoped that discussions about these issues will continue, and that workable solutions will be developed that the entire community will support.

## RECREATION AND SERVICES

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“You’d like to be able to do things on the weekend without traveling an hour.”

-Resident

Robbins residents frequently mentioned the issue of availability of recreation and services, such as restaurants and shopping. During our interviews, we asked community members to talk about what they like to do for entertainment and recreation, and where they go to shop for food, dine out, and buy clothes. Community members varied in their responses. Most residents spoke of a need for more restaurants and shopping in town. Some residents recalled a time when there was more recreation and entertainment available in Robbins. Many community members spoke proudly of Milliken Park, the Robbins library, and the northern Moore athletic teams. The majority of the residents agreed that the town would benefit from some additional services and recreation.

When discussing recreation opportunities available for town residents, community members were quick to mention the recent additions of Milliken Park and the Robbins library. Milliken Park opened in the spring of 1999, and is a place where residents can exercise, hold organized team sports, and enjoy the outdoors. One community member emphasized the role of the community in building the park, citing the many letters written and the lobbying for funding done by Robbins residents. He stated, “the park has filled a great need. Before there was not much recreation in town.” The library is another product of community initiative; town members sought funding to bring the library to the town. The library offers a variety of activities for children and adults, such as reading groups, internet access, and guest lecturers. Residents were also proud of the Northern Moore High School athletic teams. Another activity frequently mentioned as recreation for children and adults were the various youth athletic teams that are

## **RECREATION AND SERVICES**

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sponsored by the Moore County Parks and Recreation and the Northern Moore Family Resource Center. As one community member said, "...sports are... fun for the children, and also a time for the parents to socialize with each other." Churches were also frequently mentioned as places for recreation. One resident stated that, "the whole town centers around churches." Other residents spoke of efforts of churches in the community to sponsor ecumenical social events, such as dinner and entertainment evenings.

While most residents were pleased with the recreation available in Robbins, there was a sense among community members that there should be more things available to do in the town. Residents spoke with frustration about driving to Greensboro, Southern Pines, and Asheboro to see a movie or go bowling. As one resident simply stated, "you just have to get used to traveling when you live here to do anything." Another community member stressed the need for more cultural activities in the town. Several community members mentioned the lack of recreational activities for youth, citing the need for a YMCA, a boys and girls club, and other entertainment activities, such as a skating rink. Others expressed concern about the lack of recreation for youth in the summer. Residents lamented about the lack of activities for teenagers, saying, "teenagers don't have a place to go." Many older residents recalled a time when Robbins had two movie theatres and a bowling alley, and stated that they would like to see activities, such as those, return to the town. As one community member said, "I think the town has reached a place where they could bring entertainment places back and they would succeed."

In addition to more recreation available in Robbins, residents also expressed the need for more services such as restaurants and shopping. One community member spoke of her continued frustration about the lack of restaurants available, explaining that often

## **RECREATION AND SERVICES**

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her children will come home straight from school with little time before their evening activities. She stated that since there is no time to cook, even a fast food chain restaurant would help because it would at least provide more options for the residents. In addition, some residents complained that among the restaurants they have to choose from, many are not healthy. One resident stated, “there’s still a lot of country cooking around here.” Another resident remarked that there are a limited number of “nice restaurants” available. For their home cooking needs, most residents grocery shop in town, and many were pleased with the addition of a new grocery store. Residents do travel outside of Robbins to Asheboro or Southern Pines for other shopping needs, such as clothing and household items. Many community members remarked that they would like to have a shopping center or mall closer.

The availability of recreation and services is an issue of importance to community members. Even though the recent additions of Milliken park and the Robbins library have been welcomed and celebrated by the town, the majority of residents expressed that they would like to see more recreation and services in the area. Residents acknowledged that bringing in new services would change the town; as one resident said, “if you encourage growth, you lose that small town feeling.” However, overall community members felt very positive about creating change. The future challenge for Robbins is deciding what types of services and recreation will benefit the community, and how the community can work together to bring in the services and recreation that are needed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

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This section of the community diagnosis document will discuss many of the factors that emerged during the collection of qualitative data and how these factors can be used to bring about needed changes within the Robbins community. This discussion will also examine where a sense of community exists, and provide suggestions for how it can be strengthened.

There are many different ways to define the community of Robbins. First, there is the traditional, geographic definition of community in which people felt a sense of belonging to a specific locality: certain areas of northern Moore County, such as High Falls, Westmoore, or within the town limits of Robbins. There was also a sense of identity with a particular neighborhood, such as Hemp Street. Finally, community members identified with being a part of northern Moore County.

Residents also felt a sense of community based around a common history, culture, or shared experiences. Many individuals strongly identify with the particular church they attend. There was also a strong cohesion among the historical Robbins community. A great number of the residents were from families that have a long and extended history in the area. This aspect of the community fosters a sense of ownership and pride in the town. Additionally, many people expressed a sense of community with people from a similar cultural background. Finally, others discussed how they were a part of a "school community," such as Westmoore or the North Moore High School.

Many people also explained how communities came together around particular issues. Community members joined together, mobilized, and made Milliken Park and the new library a reality. Other residents united on either side of the issue concerning the consolidation of the middle schools. In addition, concerned residents on the

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

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Beautification Committee will be advocating for new town ordinances regarding the appearance of the town.

Understanding the different aspects of community in Robbins helps us determine how to best address the challenges that community members face. Using the social ecological model, we will provide recommendations of how to approach community issues. The social ecological model rests on the premise that social change can occur on multiple levels. These levels include: policy, community, organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Changes in town ordinances would be exemplary of policy level change. An example of community level change is when coalitions are formed to organize community members around a certain issue. Changes at the organizational level include, but are not limited to, any type of change made by churches, schools, businesses or health care facilities. Interpersonal change involves change that occurs between people, while intrapersonal change happens on a strictly individual level, such as changing one's diet. The social ecological model suggests targeting multiple levels to enhance the strengths and address the challenges of the community. The Robbins community is endowed with many strengths that increase its capacity for effective strategies to combat challenges.

In examining the different themes which emerged from the interviews and community forum, we identified several topics which can be addressed on these multiple levels of the social ecological framework. Selected issues are discussed below, and possible solutions are shown in table 6.

Cultural diversity and the growth of the Hispanic community was an issue discussed by many community members and service providers. Hispanic growth is an



## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

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extensive topic, which includes several smaller themes. Because a large number of Hispanic residents are new both to the Robbins area and to the United States, there were concerns regarding the language barriers preventing effective communication between the new Hispanic population and the larger Robbins community. A lack of communication between the groups hinders the exchange of cultural values and ideas that may aid in the town's efforts towards improvement. This is a problem, in part, because currently there are few non-Hispanic residents that can speak Spanish fluently. Several residents recommended providing Spanish classes in addition to increasing the number of English as a second language (ESL) currently being offered. This idea was suggested as an effort to have both communities meet on common ground, with everyone making an effort to improve communication. Other solutions community members proposed at the forum included the provision of more bilingual service providers and town sponsored cultural appreciation events. Sandhills Community College expressed interest in bringing a satellite campus to Robbins which could include offerings of Spanish/ESL classes for adults.

A need for adequate housing in the area was another issue discussed at the forum. This problem can be attributed to inattentive landowners, overcrowding, and a shortage of rental properties. Some forum attendees advocated for the enforcement of stricter landowner guidelines in maintenance and occupancy restrictions. Addressing this issue would require a change at the policy level through implementation of new housing codes by the town Board of Commissioners. An additional suggestion by residents for improving housing in Robbins was the creation of new affordable housing. To generate

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

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possible solutions at the community level, a community coalition of residents and business owners could be formed to explore new housing options.

The changes in industry in Robbins proved to be an issue of concern to residents. Local industry has changed in the past decade due to the closing of the mill and the declining textile industry. The presence of a booming tourist industry in the southern half of the county and the absence of large sewer and water systems have been challenges in industry recruitment efforts. Residents are also concerned about the number of youth choosing to leave the town for better job opportunities. The town board of Robbins is currently partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to recruit industry to the area. Several residents thought that a local committee of community members could aid in recruitment efforts as well. Further efforts should include the town board, community members, and the Chamber of Commerce, or other organizational and community coalitions to bring more industry to Robbins.

The final major theme that surfaced during the interviews was the need for more health providers in Robbins. Currently, there is one doctor and one pharmacy located in the town, and both are operating beyond their capacity. This particular issue must be addressed on both the organizational and community levels of the social ecological model. One effort already made by the community was a petition to the town board, requesting the recruitment of an additional provider. Other possible solutions include organizational changes by the current health care providers in town.

There are many sources of strength within the community that can be utilized to provide solutions to the previously discussed issues. One of the greatest assets of Robbins that we identified was the sense of small-town cohesion. Many community members said

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that Robbins is a community of caring and hard working individuals; this is a natural resource that can and should be tapped into. There are also many organizations in the community which can be used to effect change. The schools have been identified as one of the strongest vehicles to bring various factions of the community together. The town's enthusiasm and dedication to the schools can foster coalition building in addressing community issues. Additionally, there is an active network of churches that can be strengthened to bring about greater change. Finally, the Northern Moore Family Resource Center is another example of an organization working to bring solutions to community issues identified by residents.

Overall, the Robbins community shows aspects of competence, which is defined as the ability to collaborate effectively in identifying and addressing needs of the community. Residents are committed to positive change by active participation in their community. Capacity, which is the potential for competence, was evident in the Hispanic community and other smaller communities within Robbins.

Examples of community competence in Robbins are marked by the active participation and genuine involvement by residents. The creation of Milliken Park and the Robbins library illustrates the commitment residents have to causes they feel have an impact on their lives and values. This commitment drives their desire to play significant roles in the improvements of the town. The Robbins Area Christian Ministry provides opportunities for community members to be active and engaged in the town. Three major congregations in town support the Ministry, and the residents from these churches assist with the operation of the food bank and thrift store in town. The current Mayor of Robbins believes that active participation is key to a thriving community. During his

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mayoral campaign, he went door-to-door and intentionally engaged community members in conversations about their lives in Robbins, facilitating discussion about the issues the Robbins community faces.

Community capacity was evident in Robbins, especially in the Hispanic community. Several leaders within the Hispanic community have displayed the skills necessary to help mobilize their community, but significant action has not been taken. However, a service provider speculated that, considering the current growth of this population, there will be a Hispanic member on the town board within the next few years. While some parts of the Robbins community displayed more competence than others, it is apparent from the interviews and the community forum that Robbins as a whole is brimming with potential for achieving competence in the future.

In conclusion, Robbins is a town with the potential for community growth and organization. Previous community projects have proven successful, and it is apparent, from the qualitative data, that community members take pride in their efforts to pull together as a town in order to achieve a greater good for all. Profound accomplishments for the community can be achieved as the determinants discussed above are addressed and collaborated on effectively by residents. Once this occurs, Robbins will have all the tools necessary for it to flourish as an effective, competent community.

Table 6. Suggestions for interventions according to the Social Ecological Framework

	Health Care	Industry	Hispanic Community	Housing	Education
Policy		A new water and sewage system		The new town ordinances	
Community	Recruitment efforts for new providers	Coalition for recruitment of new businesses	Incorporation of new cultural events into Farmer's Day celebration	Coalition to explore housing options	More discussion about middle school issues
Organization	Restructuring of current health care providers		Sandhills English/Spanish classes  More ESL teachers at the schools  More Bilingual service providers		More Spanish-speaking teachers
Individual			Explore opportunities to learn a new language		Take advantage of classes available

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