



Hospital Feasibility Analysis

Public Report

INTRODUCTION

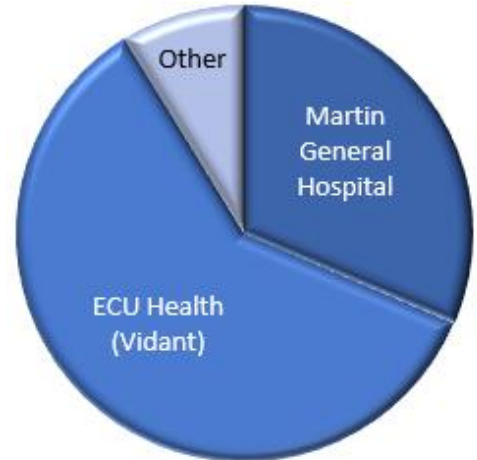
The purpose of this feasibility assessment is to protect the future of healthcare in Martin County by identifying a sustainable model of care beginning in 2028, when the current hospital lease with Quorum is set to expire. The main priority of the County is to ensure that key services, such as emergency care and access to providers, remain in the community.

Portions of the assessment are protected competitive healthcare information pursuant to N.C. General Statute §131E-97.3 and cannot be shared publicly at this point in the process. Until a future operator for Martin General Hospital has been found, no decisions will be made about the ultimate sustainable model for Martin County. The County will continue to share information as it becomes available and as the process toward a sustainable healthcare future progresses.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Martin County stakeholders were engaged in this process through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. In total, more than 20 individuals participated in interviews or focus groups, with another 270 community members completing the online or paper survey. Several key themes emerged:

- Martin General Hospital (MGH) is an integral part of the Williamston community, and there is fear that the hospital will close.
- Most survey respondents (60%) self-reported that they seek care at ECU Health (Vidant) facilities. Just over 30% reported seeking care at MGH (see chart).
 - ECU Health was selected for providing better services or based on provider relationships.
 - MGH was primarily selected for being close to home.
- Rebuilding its image is vital to MGH's ability to regain its former standing, as the current community perception of the organization is unfavorable.
 - Positives: Dedicated local staff, location of hospital.
 - Negatives: Perception of poor quality, reduction of services, lack of adequate staffing, excessive use of contracted physicians, long ED wait times, limited mental health support.
- Survey respondents identified nearly every primary care, specialty, and hospital service as not having sufficient access to meet community need.
- The physical hospital building is a deficit. It is old, extremely outdated, and expensive to maintain.
- The community perception of local staff is positive, while the perception of leadership and Quorum could be improved.

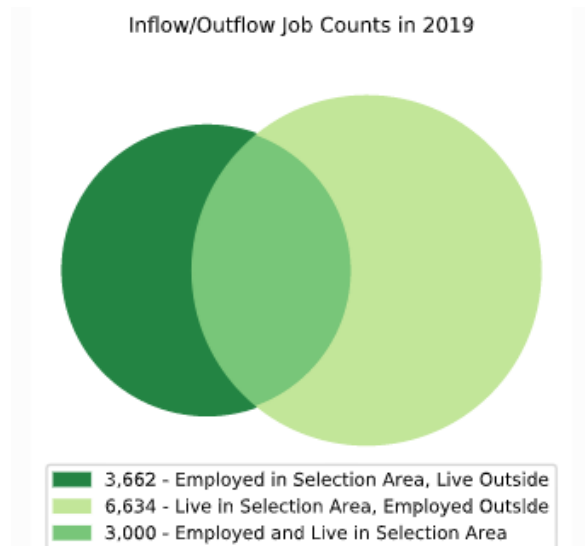


MARKET OVERVIEW

In the United States, healthcare is changing rapidly. Many rural hospitals are struggling financially and are at risk of closure. Maintaining an adequate supply of providers and healthcare services is a growing concern, but particularly challenging in rural areas.

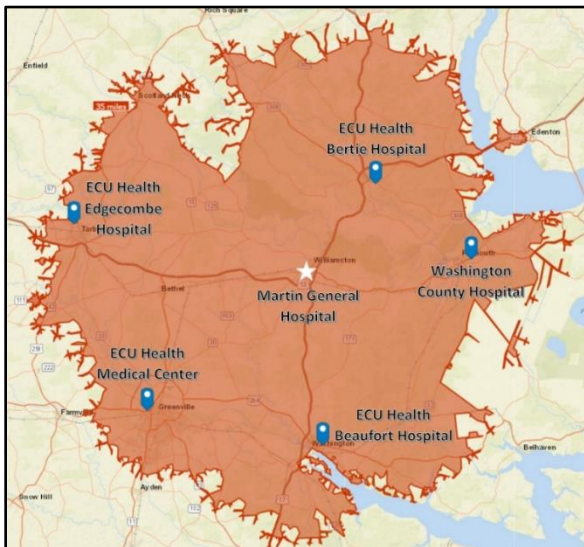
Protecting healthcare services in Martin County is made even more difficult because of local challenges. First, the County's population is declining. Second, more than 6,500 county residents travel to another county for work. Many residents work in counties with significant healthcare resources (Pitt, Wake, and Nash). In addition, Martin County residents are seeking less care. Fewer residents were admitted to the hospital or went to the emergency department in 2021 than in 2018. They also had fewer surgeries.

Each day, 50 Martin County residents are patients in a hospital somewhere. Only 11 of them receive care at MGH. Similarly, more and more residents are having surgery at other facilities. MGH continues to have a busy emergency department. However, nearly 40 percent of the emergency patients could be treated in a primary care or urgent care setting if access was available when needed. When patients leave Martin County to receive care, most go to ECU Health in Greenville, a large medical center with a wide array of specialists.



EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL SUSTAINABLE MODEL(S)

Care models ranging from primary care to a full-scale inpatient hospital were analyzed. There were several key findings for Martin County:



- As shown in the map to the left, MGH is within a 35-mile drive distance to five hospitals. This prevents MGH from qualifying for special status that would offer higher Medicare payments.
- Two inpatient hospital designations previously used by MGH and providing higher payments have expired and are no longer available.
- Models that have been successful in other rural communities would have limited impact in Martin County because they are not sufficient to overcome challenges here or similar services already exist.
- Despite these challenges, there are models that are likely sustainable in Martin County.

EXISTING FACILITY ASSESSMENT

Criterion Healthcare completed a facility assessment of Martin General Hospital. The team reviewed the building envelope, the engineering infrastructure, and existing documentation. The 52-year-old facility has been well maintained and is in good condition. However, the delivery of care has changed significantly over the past 50 years. A hospital built for care delivery in the 1970s would require massive renovations before a future operator would sign a lease. These renovations would cause a “domino” effect of corrections and would come at a substantial cost.

NEXT STEPS

The County’s next step is to continue exploring options for a long-term, sustainable healthcare solution that will allow residents to receive the appropriate care they need close to home. The County, with continued outside assistance, will lead the effort to find a future operator. The search will be based on the work completed to date regarding a sustainable model for Martin County and plans for a new facility.