

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

Towns like Atkinson are subject to growth because of inherent employment opportunities in the nearby employment centers. In the determination of influences on the economic base, population growth, and Atkinson's particular natural resources, local employment opportunities (or the lack thereof) and commuting patterns are most significant.

Based on the 1978 survey, Atkinson's residents are relying on employment opportunities available in nearby Massachusetts. They also are commuting to nearby communities which gives the town a population characteristic that reflects a suburban demographic picture, (see Population Report). This suburban community pattern for Atkinson indicates that there are limited employment opportunities available within the community. However, it does render a natural and sociological environment that the community prefers. (Were Atkinson combined with Haverhill and Andover, the result would reflect a central city community structure providing employment opportunities and would reflect a larger percentage in the employable age group rather than in the younger school age population.)

With the lack of employment opportunities available and the lack of shopping and other services, the town has a limited economic base, if one considers that the economic base describes employment opportunities and services rendered within the town.

For purposes of town planning, this situation is one that is significant. It would indicate that only limited areas must be set aside for employment opportunities. On the other hand, the Plan must reflect the quality of life that the citizens are seeking and enjoying, namely a suitable environment for residential endeavors. In fact, the creation of major industrial developments and major service industries could possibly be in conflict with the quality of life that Atkinson is providing to date. With a regional setting that does provide employment opportunities within commuting distance, this is an acceptable community pattern and should be evaluated in the determination of a Land Use Plan and comprehensive development for the town.

Employment Characteristics

Based on the census conducted by the Strafford Rockingham Regional Council in 1973, the distribution of employment by occupations reveals some interesting tangible data. 872 people or 22.1% were either in professional or managerial positions. There were 316 clerical and sales people. (As stated, this is based on 63% return of the questionnaires.) A surprisingly large number of retired people, 225 or 5.70% were counted, surprisingly so because of the suburban characteristics of the community. Table VII shows the Distribution of Employment by occupations and reflects the total population as calculated on the 1978 survey.

Places of Employment

Based on 1,052 responses, the same survey reflected a commuting pattern of suburban characteristics. As Table VIII shows, only 15.5% of those reporting were working in the Town of Atkinson, meaning that 84.5% of the population were leaving the community to go to work.

Of these, 707 or 67.1% were actually commuting to Massachusetts, 54 were employed in Salem, 40 in Milton, 18 in Sandown and 46 in other communities. With the ever increasing cost of travel, the long range impact of this large percentage of commuters must be of consideration. There are two possibilities: either people will seek residences closer to their place of employment or they will move their place of employment closer to Atkinson. Experience has shown that, in most instances, people will seek employment closer to their primary residence because of the educational or social connections in the community. On the other hand, commuting patterns are generally maintained, considering the cost of moving and relocation.

It is anticipated that for Atkinson, particularly with the relatively high income per household, commuting will continue to be a preferred way of getting to work rather than relocation.

Income Distribution

Table IX shows the distribution of income and puts Atkinson well in the upper average income bracket. This is in spite of the fact that in Atkinson, 6.2% have an income that is below the poverty level. In contrast, Salem only has 3.2% of families with an income that is below the poverty level. On the other hand, Epping has 8.1%. Atkinson does have a median family income of \$19,374 or the third highest median family income in Rockingham County. Only Windham and New Castle reported a higher family income than Atkinson.

What is probably significant is the observation that from 1969 - 1977, Atkinson's rank increased from 192 to 203 and at present is 214. This means that not only has Atkinson's median family income increased, but it has increased at a greater rate than communities throughout the state.

The implications of this are that Atkinson is a desirable community in which to reside and does provide for 6.2% of its families who have an income that is below the poverty level.

(Source: New Hampshire Office of State Planning, February 1980).

DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION

Occupation	Number	Percent of Total
Professional, Technical, Managerial	872	22.1
Clerical, Sales	316	8.0
Service Occupations	123	3.1
Farm, Fish, Forestry	12	.3
Processing Occupations	8	.2
Machine Trades	40	1.0
Bench Work Occupations	99	2.5
Structural Work	111	2.8
Miscellaneous	95	2.4

Retired	225	5.7
Military	12	.3
Homemaker	462	11.7
Student	822	20.8
Not Employed	755	19.1
TOTAL	3,952	100.0

Source: Strafford Rockingham Regional Council, 1978 Census

PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT

Place	Number	Percent of Total
Massachusetts	707	67.1
Atkinson	163	15.5
Salem	54	5.1
Hampstead	18	1.7
Milton	40	3.7
Sandown	18	1.9
Exeter	6	0.6
Other Towns	46	4.4
TOTAL	1,052	100.0

Source: Strafford Rockingham Regional Council, 1978 Census
Economic Considerations (Continued)

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Income Level	1970	Percent	1978	Percent	% Change
0-5,000	76	12.4	59	4.5	-7.9
5,001-10,000	157	25.7	139	10.6	-15.1
10,001-15,000	163	26.6	212	16.1	-10.5
15,001-25,000	195	31.9	508	38.7	6.8
25,001-50,000	16	2.6	352	26.8	24.2
50,000 +	5	.8	43	3.3	2.5
TOTAL	612	100.0	1,313	100.0	

Source: Strafford Rockingham Regional Council, 1978 Census

Observations

1. The household income for Atkinson is above the state and national average, attributable to the quality the residents have created for themselves. In spite of this, Atkinson accommodates 6.2% of its families having an income that is below the poverty level.
2. The Town of Atkinson is a community that relies predominantly on its employment opportunities and services in nearby communities both in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. It is a typical residential community, and the Master Plan must reflect a continued desire to avoid conflict between its residential pattern and commercial/industrial areas.
3. The Master Plan must consider the "quality of life" sought by its residents.
4. With the ever-increasing cost of commuting, the possibility of creating local employment opportunities may become more realistic and desirable and should be reflected in the Land Use Plan.
5. Above all, the Plan must continue to provide an attractive community setting and residential environment and to balance this with an economic growth rate not in conflict with this environment.