



# Situation Analysis Report

## Charles City County

### 2013

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## Introduction

Charles City conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the fall of 2013. The Charles City Extension Leadership Council along with the office staff developed a Qualtrics Survey to gather information from the residents. Groups were specifically targeted to receive the survey link. Beside the Extension Leadership Council other groups invited to participate were: farmers, agency heads, Committee on the Aging, and the Charles City County's Outreach Council. The survey link was placed on the Charles City County website and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Charles City County webpage. This report came out of that survey, along with key informant interviews.

## Unit Profile

Charles City County is a small rural bedroom community of 184 square miles of land, 20 square miles of surface water and a population of 7,223 according to the 2010 Census Data. Since 1990 the population has only grown by 7 persons per year. Charles City County is located in the east-central portion of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Situated halfway between Richmond and Williamsburg, the county is bounded to the north by New Kent County; to the east by James City County; to the south by Surry County, Prince George County, and the City of Hopewell; and to the west by Henrico County.

The 2010 Census Data shows Charles City is 59% non-white and 41% white. There is a potential 4-H youth population of 1,303 youth ages 5-19 years. Currently 704 students are enrolled in the Charles City County Public Schools. Forty-six percent of the school aged youth are either home-schooled or leave the county for their education. There is a significant Native American population in Charles City of 6%. The median age for the County is 46 years. A third of the population is over the age of 55. Forty-eight percent are over 50 years of age. Activities and services for the elderly have improved since the last report but are still limited.

The median household income dropped from \$49,747 in 2007 to \$47,093 in 2011. This is well below the Virginia's median household income of \$62,391. Fifty-two percent of households make less than \$49,999. For the 2010-2011 school year 63% of school children were eligible for free and reduced price lunches. Thirty-one percent of children are being raised in a single-parent household.

The main industry in the county is agriculture in nature with cash receipts of \$23,680,000. Average age of the farmers in this County is 56 years. The 2012 Census of Agriculture shows 79 farms with the majority being less than 395 acres. There are 13 farms larger than 500 acres. The major crops include soybeans, corn, and small grains. Charles City farmers are leading the nation in grain production management with the "never-til" cropping system being used by 95% of the farmers. Seventy-four percent of the County is in forested land which ranks second to agriculture in contributions to the county's economy.

Employment and shopping opportunities are limited in Charles City County. There are four country stores, one bank, and three restaurants in the county. The County is the largest employer along with the school system. The County has the Roxbury Industrial Park which

houses over 40 small businesses. Seventy-eight percent of the residents leave the county daily for work. Twenty-six percent of the county's revenue comes from businesses in the county. A major source of County revenue comes from the Waste-Management-operated regional landfill (20%). The landfill has generated annual tipping fees from a high of \$5.8 million to a low of \$1 million. This revenue source is slowing drying up which will only leave 6% of revenue coming from the small businesses in the county. Unemployment rate in the County in 2011 was 8.1%.

Portions of the County are presently served by high speed internet but large sections are not. Cell phone coverage is spotty as well. Bay Transit is the only public transportation available and that is limited. Public water and sewage is limited to a few scattered housing areas. Housing opportunities are limited primarily to owner-occupied, single family houses on lots of 1-5 acres in size. Multi-family housing is not available due the lack of public utilities coupled with poor soil conditions which prohibits conventional septic systems.

Tourism is an important part of the region's economy. Charles City is often the area tourist pass through on their way to Colonial Williamsburg from the metro Richmond area. Several historic plantations and one tavern are open to the public and contribute to the local economy.

Health Issues are a major concern for the citizens. According to Health District statistics, 47% of residents have high blood pressure; 45% have been diagnosed with high cholesterol; 13% with non-gestational diabetes; and 42% asthma sufferers are not receiving treatment. Thirty-four percent of adults suffer from obesity and 14% from diabetes. As far as preventive medical procedures, records indicate that 33% have not had a mammogram in the past two years; 33% have not had a Pap test in the past year; 58% have not been tested for colon cancer in the past year and 34% have not been tested for prostate cancer in the past year. There is only one medical facility in the county.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

The Charles City County Extension Leadership Council was an informal focus group which helped to develop the survey. They identified the following as key issues: aging population, healthy behaviors, emergency preparedness, and water quality.

Vision 2030: A Strategic Plan Charles City County document listed three goals – Public Safety; Economic Development and Infrastructure; and Health, Education, and Welfare. We conducted some informal few key informants' interviews.

The Charles City Qualtrics Survey was our primary source of information. Twenty-three individuals completed the on-line survey with another twenty individuals completing a paper copy which was entered by the UAA.

## Charles City County Qualtrics Survey Summary Closed End Questions

1. Water Quality	28
2. Health	24
3. Emergency Preparedness	24
4. Aging Population	23
5. Community Services	23
6. Community Planning	23
7. Chronic Disease	22
8. Leadership	22
9. Environment	22
10. Nutrition	22
11. Food Safety/Preservation	21
12. Small Business/Entrepreneurs	21
13. Obesity	20
14. Housing/Home	20
15. Parenting	20
16. Pest/Pesticides	20

## Summary List for Opened End Questions Selecting Key Words

1. Health/Obesity/Nutrition	15
2. Agriculture/Alternative Agriculture/Local Foods Systems	9
3. Youth	8
4. Education/ Careers/Workforce Development	8
5. Aging	5
6. Water Quality	4
7. Emergency Preparedness	3

## Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data from above, the following top priority issues were identified for Charles City County. We chose to group some of the issues since they are so interrelated.

### Issue 1: Health/Nutrition/Obesity

Health, nutrition, and obesity were identified as top issues facing Charles City County. The health data recorded in the unit profile and in the surveys highlight the nature of the health problems for the County. There is only one medical facility in the county. Most have to go outside the county for medical care.

Virginia Cooperative Extension in 2013 offered two nutrition and health programs in this area. A canning class was held along with a "Be Fit" class. A retired FCS agent and a specialist at Virginia State University conducted these programs. VCE does not have the resources to currently address this issue. There is not an FCS agent in this unit. Last year we lost our youth Food Nutrition Program position because of numbers.

### Issue 2: Environmental Concerns

Caring for the environment is a forefront issue of Charles City County citizens. Forestry, wildlife, and water quality were mentioned. Of those, water quality rose to the top. Numerous creeks as well as the Chickahominy and James River need surface water quality protection. Most people in the county depend on ground water for personal household use. This is a shared water resource that also needs protection through awareness and education.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) conducted a drinking water clinic in 2013 to increase knowledge about ground water and how to care for private wells. Another clinic will be held in Charles City County in 2014 due to public interest in the program. VCE also conducts pesticide recertification classes each year for those who hold private pesticide application licenses. These classes help protect both surface and ground water quality by teaching license holders how to apply pesticides correctly.

### Issue 3: Emergency Preparedness

After Hurricane Irene in 2010, emergency preparedness has been a concern of residents. Parts of the county were cut off for almost week. Residents are concerned that there is no plan.

Most of this issue rest with the county's emergency services department but VCE can provide some educational publications. There is a need for development of more educational information.

#### **Issue 4: Alternative Agriculture/Local Food Systems/Agriculture**

Production agriculture is big business in Charles City County. Producers grow crops on about 20,000 acres. These farms contribute to the rural setting by creating pastoral scenery that citizens and tourists alike want to preserve. The farmers protect the environment using no-till practices, fertilizing at agronomic rates, and applying pesticides only as needed.

Alternative agriculture producing local food was identified as a need in Charles City County. Some citizens want to produce food in gardens for their family. However, there is growing interest in small farms engaging in commercial alternative agriculture. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) works with Virginia State University to bring small farm income ideas to the county. In addition, VCE will be conducting workshops in raised bed gardening, fruit tree pruning, and grape production in 2014.

#### **Issue 5: Human Resources and services especially the aging and youth populations**

Human Resources were identified as the fifth most pressing issue. This covers both ends of the spectrum, aging and youth. A third of the population is over the age of 55, therefore all of the aging issues are of concern. In this rural setting transportation to medical appointments and other services are very limited. Senior Connections works with seniors to obtain needed resources.

VCE works with the Committee on the Aging to plan monthly educational programs for seniors. If the County had an FCS agent, then programs for seniors could be expanded.

At the other end is youth. Forty-six percent of the school age population is either home schooled or goes outside the county for school. There is very little activity for youth in the County that is not sports related and even that is limited. Thirty-one percent of children are being raised in a single-parent household.

4-H has made a connection to the school system but has not been able to attract and retain community volunteers, partly because most adults work outside the county. 4-H can continue to partner with the schools and the Parks and Recreation Department. The 4-H agent currently works with all 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders at the Elementary School. Also, she works with the Workforce Development Group at the High School. Parenting workshops could provide needed information also.