



# Situation Analysis Report



## Culpeper County

# 2013

## **Culpeper County Extension Staff**

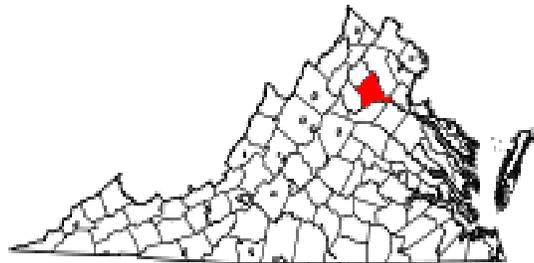
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## Introduction

The Culpeper County Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and Culpeper County VCE staff, conducted a comprehensive Situation Analysis during October and November, 2013. The ELC assisted staff in creating an online survey aimed to gather information related to the needs of citizens in Culpeper County. This survey was distributed via email links to a wide variety of user groups including Human Services, the Culpeper Chamber of Commerce, Culpeper County public schools, Culpeper County employees, Culpeper Town employees, the Hospital Axillary, local Master Gardeners, 4-H parents and volunteers, agricultural user groups, etc. The survey was posted online on the Culpeper County Virginia Cooperative Extension website, the Culpeper 4-H Facebook page, on staff and ELC personal Facebook pages, and on the Culpeper Chamber of Commerce Facebook page. The results of the survey are reflected in this report as priority issues.



## Unit Profile

### County History

The first settlers came into area that would become Culpeper County in the early 1700's. Spotsylvania County, created in 1721, encompassed all lands west to the Blue Ridge Mountains and was eventually divided into what is now called Orange, Culpeper, Madison and Rappahannock Counties. Culpeper County was established in 1749.

The first elected County Board of Supervisors first met on August 1, 1870 representing five districts, and addressed two items of business: to order the sheriff to collect taxes and to order the commonwealth attorney to protect and preserve the records of the County.

Today Culpeper County supports a thriving community of both agricultural and commercial interests. According to a 2011 estimate from the U.S. census, 46,851 people live in Culpeper County, a marked increase from an estimated 35,000 residents in 2002.

## **Form of Government**

Culpeper County is a political subdivision that executes the policies of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia General Assembly grants certain powers to County government. There are two restrictions of power: (1) a County cannot take action that is contrary to State Law and to the State Constitution; (2) The authority for any County action must be specifically authorized by the General Assembly. The latter is called the Dillon Rule which dates from Iowa Judge John F. Dillon in 1865.

Culpeper County has a traditional form of government with a Board of Supervisors and a County Administrator. The Board of Supervisors, elected by the people, serves as the governing body, and represents the seven magisterial districts within County.

## **Vision and Mission**

### **Vision**

Culpeper County will strive to achieve the highest quality of life possible for our community through comprehensive, innovative, responsive, and meaningful services effectively delivered by motivated and skilled employees guided by visionary leadership.

### **Mission**

Culpeper County Government will strive to provide an environment which promotes a prosperous community dedicated to the health and safety of its citizens while providing educational opportunities and data driven, citizen centered, performance based management.

## **Strategic Goals**

### **Administration of Government**

1. Responsible management of County resources
2. Provide effective programs, efficiently managed and professionally delivered
3. Carry out the vision & mission of the Board of Supervisors.

### **Inclusive Community**

1. Encourage a community that welcomes diversity and inclusion
2. Develop a culture that promotes innovation
3. Keep citizens informed about County operations, policies, and programs

### **Infrastructure**

1. Provide the necessary infrastructure to support business development consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
2. Attract a wide spectrum of businesses
3. Recruit businesses that will raise our standard of living
4. Seek businesses that have a strong tradition of corporate stewardship

## **Public Safety**

1. Protect people and property through effective enforcement of laws and delivery of services

## **Natural resources**

1. Maintain and improve our natural environment
2. Increase collaboration with our regional partners to recognize each other's needs to share our natural resources

## **Quality of life**

1. Promote and encourage a safe, prosperous, and healthy environment
2. Create opportunities for a comprehensive education emphasizing efficient use of resources that nurtures and stimulates the maximum potential of our residents.
3. Enhance and protect the rural integrity and atmosphere of our County
4. Promote our history to the fullest extent so as to understand our past and guide us into the future.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

Culpeper County is located in the north-central Piedmont Region of Virginia. Situated in a predominantly rural setting at the junction of several major highways, Culpeper has developed a thriving and diversified economy with strong manufacturing, trade, services, and agricultural sectors. The community offers an attractive residential environment coupled with proximity to Eastern markets via easy access to interstate, rail, and air transportation. Culpeper has been designated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget as a micropolitan statistical area. Smaller than a metropolitan statistical area, this is an area that has at least one urban cluster of 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties. The county is 75 miles southwest of Washington, D.C.; 89 miles northwest of Richmond; and 174 miles northwest of Norfolk. Source: YesVirginia.org A Virginia Economic Development Partnership

The population growth has drastically increased over the past several years. The population increased an average of 2% per year in the '90s. From April 2000 to July 2006 the population of Culpeper County increased a dramatic 30.2%, which calculates to over a 5% increase per year. From 2006 to 2011, there has been a slower, but continued increase in population within the county which has solidified Culpeper's identity as a "bedroom" community. Building permits issued by the County of Culpeper reflect this change. From 2000 to 2012, 4,916 building permits were issued for new housing construction with about half being in the town limits and half being in the county. The median household income in Culpeper is \$64,744 with 2,808 businesses employing 14,962 citizens with the rest of the adult population seeking employment outside of the county.

Consequences to such a rapidly growing community include inadequate services in areas of affordable housing, transportation, services for the elderly, and schools. In addition, law enforcement agencies including the courts and service agencies from driver's license, voter registration, permits, taxation, parks and recreation, and health care, are overburdened with the increased demands that come with a rapidly growing population.

Culpeper County has long been known for its rural, small town nature, but has seen some change due to increased population and commercial business. Between 1992 and 2002, the number of county farms increased by 45 % growing from 471 to 669. This can be explained by the division of larger tracts of farmland into smaller ones decreasing farm acreage from 245 to 187. From 2002 to 2007, the number of farms only slightly changed from 669 to 667, respectively. The Ag Census will be officially updated in 2014, so further description of the more recent changes will be forthcoming. An issue that is expected to retain its current trend is a shift towards land uses found in the greens industry. Greens industry segment of local agriculture involves greenhouse production, nursery stock, cut flowers, turf, and Christmas trees. These farms produce “intensive” operations on small acreage, but with big economic benefits, generating approximately half of all local agricultural income. Emerging opportunities in our agricultural economy include a focus on high quality horse hay, local food, agritourism associated with our rural setting as a destination that includes wineries, fall farm tours, on farm sales and equine events.

According to the 2006 Census Culpeper County Public Schools reported a graduation rate of 73.7% which is lower than the Virginia average of 81.5%. In 2013, the graduation rate had increased to 92% which is slightly higher than the Virginia average of 88%. This is a marked improvement. The teen birth rate still remains higher than the Virginia and national average with 40 females age 15-19 per 1,000 reporting a pregnancy. The average for Virginia is 32 and nationally the average is nearly half at just 21. Culpeper mirrors the Virginia average for youth in poverty at 16% in 2013, which is up from 11% in 2010. Of the 6 elementary schools in the county, there are 3 that report 50% or more of their students receive free and reduced lunches based on financial need. The major difference in racial/ethnic composition in Culpeper County between the years of 2000 and 2011 is the significant increase in the Hispanic population with the percentage rising from 2.5% to 7.2% respectively.

## **Priority Issues**

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives, the following broad issues were identified.

### **Issue 1: Youth**

Youth issues continue to be high priority for Culpeper VCE. Providing positive youth activities during the out of school hours, promoting positive life skills and educating youth on the importance of future planning have all been identified as priority issues.

### **Issue 2: Families**

The issues of household financial management (including credit & budgeting), parenting, food safety, and nutrition & health, all ranked high on the Community Needs Survey

### **Issue 3: Agriculture**

Agricultural Profitability continues to be a high priority to VCE clientele. The Community Needs survey ranked agriculture needs very high in all areas including home horticulture, locally

grown food-farmers markets, water quality, crop & soil management, livestock management, farm transition etc.

### **What we are doing to address these needs:**

1. *Agriculture and Natural Resources Water Quality Issues* is a topic of concern for both our urban and rural audiences. An increasing population places demands on a finite water supply and raises the public scrutiny of all water users. The Culpeper Unit of VCE is actively involved in educating the public about solutions to water issues such as nutrient management and soil erosion prevention. VCE also participates in programming such as the Household Well Water Testing Program that addresses individual concerns regarding water quality.

2. There is a significant need for *Before and After School Programming* in Culpeper County. Youth focus groups overwhelmingly reported "not enough to do". There is a need for more positive, constructive activities with supervision by caring adults for youth during out of school time. While some recreational and community activities are available during these hours, there is neither enough to meet the demands nor enough variety to satisfy the interests of all youth. Other issues with existing activities include cost and transportation to and from activities.

3. All 4-H programming is designed to enhance the *Life Skills and Decision Making* ability of youth. The need for this effort is seen in the alarming youth statistics related to school dropout rates, teen pregnancies, foster care cases, use of drugs and alcohol, suicide rates, nutrition & health etc. 4-H curriculums are research based to enhance positive youth development possibilities.

4. *Profitable Agriculture and Natural Resources Production* is an issue identified as high priority in Culpeper County. Educational programs offered by VCE provide information for residents regarding lower cost methods of production for the county's extensive crop, livestock, and greens industries. Home and commercial horticulture, including farmers markets, are supported by a horticulture specialist.

5. *Stability of Home & Family* includes issues such as credit, food safety, parenting, child development, and nutrition & health. VCE aims to address these issues with food service workers, childcare providers, parents, and the public at large.

6. *Reaching Limited Resource and Diverse Audiences* is a goal set by VCE Culpeper County due to the need to equally serve all residents in the county. Culpeper houses a youth and an adult Food Nutrition Program Assistant who work with income eligible residents under a grant funded program focused on health through education on nutrition and exercise. With the changing demographics of the county, notably the population increase, there is a need for all VCE staff to adapt current programming to meet the needs of the community. For example, offering a wider assortment of 4-H curriculums that are not focused primarily on rural livestock projects. Also, there has been significant increase in the Hispanic population in Culpeper which identifies a need to extend programming to adequately serve this segment of the county's population.