



Situation Analysis Report



Amelia County 2013

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Introduction

The Amelia County Extension office updated the unit's Situation Analysis in 2013. The Amelia County Extension staff and key Extension Leadership Council members participated in the collection and analysis of current community data through a series of community forums, and surveys to gauge emerging issues. The print form was included in the Amelia County personal property tax bills, distributed at local events, mailed, and published in the local newspaper. The data was compiled and analyzed. The results were used to identify key issues facing the community and can be used as a tool to address these issues with relevant Extension programming to meet the needs of the public.

Unit Profile

The village of Amelia is the county seat and the hub of the county's activities. Since there are no large urban centers in the county, very little of the agricultural production is marketed locally, however, the county is traditionally an agricultural community.

The county is bound on the north by the Appomattox River and contains 169,531 acres of woodland. Amelia County has 455 farms with 91,456 acres of farmland. Soils are primarily comprised of clay and gray loam, with red clay most common on the higher plains. Amelia County is located in the Piedmont Plateau of Virginia and is located situated strategically in the south central portion of Virginia bordered by Chesterfield, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Nottoway, Powhatan, and Prince Edward Counties. The city of Richmond is located 35 miles northeast of Amelia.

Demographics

The total population in 2011 was reported as 12,970. According to the Census data for July 2010, the demographic profile of the county is 72.8% White, 23.1% Black, 2.3% Hispanic and a small population indication Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander.

Employment

Roughly 33.5% of the residents live and work in the county and approximately one-fourth commute to work outside of the county. This may be a contributing factor for the 2011 unemployment rate in the county which is slightly higher than that of the state at 6.9%. Information from the county comprehensive plan showed that there is a lack of support for small business growth and resources in the courthouse village, a lack of low to moderate affordable housing, and a need for improvement in the educational system. Low industry and the commuter lifestyle of the county may be cause for the unemployment rate in the county being slightly higher than that of the state. Amelia County community development plans conflict between creating industry and maintaining a rural environment.

Housing

The median household income reported for Amelia County in 2007 was \$51,540 with the per capita income of approximately \$24,664. Of the 5,338 housing units 93.7% (5,001) are occupied. The Census reported from 2007-2011 home ownership was 81%. Water is provided by both municipal and drilled wells. Water quality is an issue and can be addressed within the Amelia Extension office with Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) water quality testing program and resources.

Children and Youth

In 2013, single parent households accounted for 28 percent of the population. The child well-being data indicates that the population under age 18 living below poverty has increased from 13% in 2010 to 18% in 2013. Although the teen birth rate in the county for females ages 15-19 has shown a decrease since 2010, the teen birth rate of Amelia County was reported at 44% in 2011 which is higher than that of the state which is 32%. The senior population 65 and older increased slightly by 10 percent over a 7-year period. A small percentage of grandparents are responsible for grandchildren, 20 percent. Some child development resources are in place for low income families and are addressed by community services.

Aging Population

Amelia is home to 17.5% of persons over the age of 65. The data suggests that resources in financial literacy education, youth development and leadership programs, and aging resources are priority issues that can be addressed by Extension programs. Recreational needs for seniors in the county are being addressed through faith based senior groups and the Department of Parks & Recreation. The Amelia VCE office provides resources to supplement current programs being offered throughout the county.

<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/AGE775213/51007,00>

Education

Amelia County is home to 3 public schools, 1 private school, and 1 Mennonite school. Educational attainment in the county of high school or some college for the population ages 25 years and over is reported at 78.8% with the percent of high school graduates slightly higher than that of the state. There has been a slight increase in the percentage of students currently graduating from high school. Thirteen percent of the population in the county is reported to have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Continued involvement of Amelia Extension in the schools and community may be a factor in increasing high school graduation rates. Seventy-five home-schooled student and 18 religious student exemptions were recorded by Virginia Department of Education in a 2011-12 report.

Health and Wellness

Adult health behaviors indicated that approximately one-fourth of the county is physically inactive. Diabetes rates are slightly higher than the state average and the adult obesity rate has increased from 30% in 2010 to 33% in 2013, which is marginally higher than the state average of 28%. The Amelia VCE office can address the health behaviors in the county with current programming resources and with the additional support of local community resources.

Community and Resident Perspectives

The Amelia County Extension office assessed community needs through a variety of means, including client surveys, face-to-face surveys, and focus group discussions.

Needs within the agriculture and landowner community identified that agricultural profitability is a primary concern and affects nearly all operations. Crop producers seek means for increasing yields, reducing input costs, and increasing efficiency. Frequent drought in past years has challenged crop producers, who are seeking drought-tolerant varieties. Insect, weed, and disease resistance to pesticides poses an ongoing threat and producers are interested in resistance prevention and mitigation measures. Livestock producers wish to increase efficiency, improve animal health, improve marketing efforts through value-added programs, and reduce input costs related to feed, fuel, and fertilizer.

The local cattleman's association is especially interested in working with VCE to enhance its marketing and cattle development efforts, and the eight local dairies have few opportunities for education outside of VCE events coordinated by faculty. These events offer crucial information to help dairies remain on the cutting edge of the industry.

Many large producers have participated in state and federal farm conservation programs and are dependent on these programs to help solve ongoing farm issues affecting natural resources. Amelia also has a growing population of new and beginning farmers and small direct market operations, and these operations are particularly interested in sustainable agriculture, organic production, and market development. These producers are also in search of information on new and nontraditional crops and farm products. Approximately 100 residents remain certified to apply restricted-use pesticides each year, and in order to remain certified, these individuals must seek recertification credit bi-annually through Virginia Cooperative Extension. Other needs in the county include services such as pest and disease identification and soil testing support. Finally, producers in the county have noted that the non-farming population would benefit from increased agricultural awareness, which would foster support for the industry and would reduce misinformation and misrepresentation of agricultural practices.

Family and community needs assessments identified business entrepreneurship resources, facilitation skills for leadership, and nutrition and obesity education concerns. VCE works closely with the Small Business Development Center and Longwood Business Development to

provide small business resources in growing small business, social media and business certifications for working with state contracts.

Amelia County public schools is continuing its partnership with Virginia Cooperative Extension to enhance existing and establish new after school programs to address nutrition, physical activity, and educational programs that involve the family. In addition, Amelia Parks and Recreation, J.L. Hamner Public Library, a local financial institution, credit union and faith based groups continue to work with VCE to address the needs of the community to include health and wellness and financial literacy issues.

VCE and the Extension Leadership Council began the conversation on community development within the county. Potential partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce and the Amelia County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) may offer some additional options on entrepreneurial opportunities.

Youth leadership and educational development priorities identified were the need to provide In-school enrichment programs to area schools promoting and improving Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education within Amelia County public, private and homes-schools. The needs were recognized by teachers, parents, and school administrators. Math and science S.O.L. scores have showed a decline from the 3rd grade to 8th grade in over a three year period from 2011 to 2013. For the 3rd to 4th grade, the decline was 88% to 58% in Mathematics and in 90% to 82% in Science. For the 5th to 8th grade, the scores declined from 78% to 54% in Mathematics and 90% to 53% in Science.

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data from above, the following top priority issues were identified for Amelia County.

Issue 1: Agricultural Profitability

Agricultural profitability was identified as the top issue facing Amelia County and affects nearly all operations. VCE will continue to work with crop, livestock, and specialty producers and industry groups such as the local cattleman's association to improve practices that impact profitability through programming, research projects, and technical support. Furthermore, developing community partnerships will serve to foster support for the industry and will reduce misinformation and misrepresentation of agricultural practices.

Extension provides continuing agricultural education for small farm operators and agricultural producers especially in the area of farmland retention. Additional resources are needed to successfully market farming programs.

Issue 2: Small Business Resources

Small business resources were identified as the second most pressing issue in Amelia County. The county needs to develop a plan to attract businesses. A more concerted collaboration with the Community Development and Planning Office and the Amelia Chamber of Commerce will improve technical support resources available toward local business maintenance and development.

The VCE unit currently provides resources in entrepreneurship and community leadership development utilizing Small Business Development entrepreneurship resources. Additional support is being developed to reach rural participants using the Virginia State Mobile Technology Lab.

Issue 3: Youth Leadership and In-school Education

Youth leadership and quality education was identified as the third most pressing issue in Amelia County. This issue is currently being addressed by VCE in Amelia County public and private schools with in-school and afterschool science, technology and math curriculum and other enrichment programs. The home-school population is included in STEM education and curriculum resources currently be addressed.

New partnerships have been formed with PITSCO Education to create new opportunities and resources for related school enrichment exercises that are provided monthly as well as several other 4-H S.O.L. related activities to include Forensic Science, Anti-bullying and Self-esteem, Robotics and Aerospace, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and Electricity.

Issue 4: Nutrition and Obesity

Nutrition and Obesity was identified as the fourth most pressing issue in Amelia County. Inactivity and Diabetes contribute to the overall poor health assessment. Residents living in rural communities such as ours have limited resources and often find it difficult to access services. Senior adults have expressed concern with having to travel long distances at night to attend diabetes programs offered in another county.

This issue can be addressed by VCE through utilizing available community resources identified to address obesity, diabetes, and physical inactivity. VCE will continue to foster relationships with the public and private educational institutions and the faith based community to address the needs within the community. The local Food and Nutrition Program Assistant, and the Area Food Safety Agent will serve to cultivate partnerships between VCE and local agencies.