



**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

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# Situation Analysis Report

## Prince Edward County

# 2013

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## Introduction

Prince Edward County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2013. The Extension Leadership Council (ELC) partnered with Extension Staff to plan the process, gather information, prioritize issues, and report data.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from numerous sources to compile the comprehensive report. Statistical information was gathered and trends analyzed to develop the unit profile. Feedback from the community survey was used to identify issues currently facing Prince Edward County and opportunities for growth and positive change. Statistics gathered from the survey were used, along with feedback from ELC members, to prioritize issues and formulate plans for addressing these issues. Some of the issues that were identified may be addressed within the context of VCE while some were found to be outside the scope of Extension. These findings will be used in the development of VCE programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Prince Edward County residents.

## Unit Profile

Prince Edward County is largely a rural county centrally located within the state, approximately an hour's drive from the metropolitan areas of Richmond, Charlottesville, and Lynchburg. The county has a land area of 353 square miles and is often referred to as the "Heart of Virginia." The county seat, Farmville, serves as the economic hub of Planning District 14. Prince Edward County is home to both Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College.

## POPULATION DATA

According to the United States Census Bureau, the population of Prince Edward County in the year 2010 was 23,368. This reflects an 18.5% increase from 2000.

As the population of the county grew, the distribution of the population in each age bracket remained steady. Residents ages 65 and older make up 14% of Prince Edward's population. This is slightly higher than the state average of 13%.

The racial makeup of Prince Edward County is 63.5% white and 33.5% African American. One percent (1%) of the population reports 2 or more races. The Hispanic population is 2.4% and the Asian population is 0.9%.

## **HOUSING**

In 2000, there were 7, 527 housing units in the county. By 2012, that number increased to 9, 266. The home ownership rate fell, however, from 68.7% of the population to 65.7%. The median value of owner occupied housing rose from \$93,000 in 2000 to \$147, 400 in 2011. This is compared to the state average of \$254, 600.

## **INCOME & POVERTY DATA**

In 2011, the median income per household in Prince Edward County was \$50, 896 compared to the state average of \$84, 353 and a U.S. average of \$70, 909. Per capita income was \$17, 534. Average per capita income across the state was \$33, 040.

Of the overall population of Prince Edward, 19.1% live below the poverty level (\$11,490 for one person; \$23, 550 for a family of 4). CountyHealthRankings.org reported that 27% of Prince Edward County children live in poverty in 2013. This is an increase from 24% in 2010. Across Virginia, 16% of children live in poverty. The United States average is 14%. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 69.5% of Prince Edward County youth were approved for free and reduced lunch for the 2012-1013 school year. In 2013, 34% of Prince Edward youth live in single parent households, compared to a 30% statewide average and a 20% U.S. average.

## **EDUCATION**

Data show that Prince Edward County residents have an educational attainment rate similar to the state averages. High school graduates make up 39.5% of the adult population; 15% report having some college; 4% have an associate's degree, 11% have a bachelor's degree (compared to a 20% average statewide), and 9% report earning a graduate or professional degree.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

The five largest employers in Prince Edward County are Longwood University, Centra Health, Prince Edward County Public Schools, Hampden-Sydney College, and Wal-Mart. In 2010, Prince Edward had an unemployment rate of 10.3%, up from 5.8% in 2008. The Virginia average for 2010 was 7.1% unemployment. In 2012, the Prince Edward average had improved to 8.7%, but was still significantly higher than the state average of 5.9%.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH

According to CountyHealthRankings.org, Prince Edward County has an adult obesity rate of 32%. This is compared to a state average of 28% and a national average of 25%. In 2013, 29% of Prince Edward residents were classified as physically inactive as compared to 24% of Virginians and 21% of Americans. Eighteen percent of county residents were uninsured.

Prince Edward County is a part of the Piedmont Health District. According to the Virginia Department of Health, residents of the Piedmont Health District averaged 199.2 cancer-related deaths (per 100,000) compared to Virginians as a whole at 180.9. In 2006, the Piedmont Health District was in the top five districts in Virginia with the highest rate of diabetes (12.1%). The diabetes mortality rate was 28.5 per 100,000 in 2006.

## AGRICULTURE

Known as a largely agrarian community, there were 395 farms in Prince Edward County in 2002. By 2007, this number had increased to 446. Data from AgCensus.USDA.gov indicated that the total farm acreage increased from 78,851 acres in 2002 to 82,329 in 2007. Indicating a trend toward smaller farms, the median farm size in 2007 was 100 acres, down from 122 acres in 2002. The number of farms between 10 and 49 acres increased from 68 in 2002 to 93 in 2007.

Of the principal operators of the 446 farms in Prince Edward County, 268 reported a primary occupation other than farming.

In 2007, 232 Prince Edward farms had less than \$2,500 in sales. Thirteen farms had between \$50,000 and \$99,999 in sales and 23 reported \$100,000 or more in sales (up from 20 in 2002).

The median value of farmland per acre increased from \$1,718 in 2002 to \$3,078 in 2007. This is compared to a \$4,213 Virginia average and a \$1,892 U.S. average.

In terms of livestock and poultry inventory, 223 farms reported cattle and calves (7 milk), 9 reported hogs and pigs, 9 reported sheep and lambs, 28 reported layers, and 6 reported broilers and other meat-type chickens.

The 2007 Census for Agriculture reported 732 acres in Prince Edward planted in corn for grain, 808 in corn for silage, 143 in wheat for grain, and 144 in barley for grain. There were 246 acres planted for forage, 185 acres in soybeans and 156 in tobacco. There were 19 acres of land in orchards.

## Community and Resident Perspectives

Extension Staff and ELC members utilized several methods to gather information, assess needs in our county, and to prioritize issues.

An online survey was developed by staff with input from the ELC members. This survey asked a number of questions organized into four program areas: agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, community viability, and youth development. Participants were asked to rank the importance of each issue using a Likert scale. Participants also had the opportunity to add issues in each section that were not covered. The survey also included open-ended questions asking participants to discuss what they saw as the priority issues facing county residents. The survey was sent via email to all families on the staff's distribution lists. Participants were asked to forward the survey link to other county residents. The list was also sent to residents participating in programs through the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District. The survey link was made available via Facebook on the local extension page and on the agents' personal pages. The survey was publicized in the local newspaper, the Farmville Herald, and on local radio station, WFLO. Forty-nine residents completed the online survey. The results of this survey were presented to ELC members who provided feedback on areas needing further investigation. The issues in each program area receiving the highest ranking of importance are as follows:

### ANR

1. Agriculture production and profitability
2. Environment
3. Youth agricultural education
4. Agricultural sustainability/preservation

### FCS

1. Childhood obesity
2. Increasing consumption of local food
3. Aging population

### CV

1. Farmers markets
2. Community planning
3. Farm-to-school
4. Local food system development

### Youth Development

1. Teen community involvement
2. STEM education
3. Availability of quality before/after school programs

Extension Agents also took part in community meetings to assess local needs. The Piedmont Community Health Coalition held a meeting in November in order to develop a more focused plan of work. The group discussed at length the health-related issues facing residents of

Prince Edward County. They identified obesity as an issue of great concern. The unit profile also indicated that Prince Edward has an adult obesity rate higher than both the state and national averages.

An Extension staff member also participated in board meetings of Piedmont Senior Resources. This organization identified the need for nutrition education and the availability of nutritious meals for seniors as priorities.

Key informant interviews were conducted to discuss issues facing youth in Prince Edward County. Among the recurring issues were poverty (nearly 70% of Prince Edward students receive free or reduced lunch), lack of parental involvement, and life skills and vocational education for non-college bound students.

Key informant interviews were also held regarding issues that affect forest land owners in the county. The key issue identified by this group was the lack of a forest land use taxation system that would lower property tax rates.

In addition to these information gathering methods, Agents conducted a thorough review of meeting minutes from the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors and the Farmville Town Council. Particular attention was paid to the public comments made at these meetings. In addition to these comments, review of board members' discussions and administrative reports revealed the following issues:

- Need for well-managed, accessible community services for citizens, particularly those Extension would identify as underserved
- Expanding opportunities for agricultural producers as evidenced by support for organizations like the aquafarmers' network and the VSU edamame project
- Management of water resources
- Community planning and managing growth
- Commitment to the development of a local food system as evidenced by the county's investment in the cannery and discussions regarding the development of commercial facilities and the town's investment in the Farmville Area Farmers Market
- Tourism and marketing as they relate to economic development
- Perceptions of the local school system and the effect of this perception on economic development
- Commitment to affordable family recreation opportunities as evidenced by the county's funding of the YMCA, support of the High Bridge Trail State Park, and PEFYA, and the town's investment in the Field of Dreams, the community golf course, and the town pool as well as its own recreation department
- The role of the Downtown Farmville group in building a sense of community in addition to promoting economic development as evidenced by an increase in downtown events including a 5K/Half-Marathon, an outdoor film series, and summer concert series

## Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives previously discussed, the following issues were identified as top priorities for Prince Edward County.

### **Issue 1: Agricultural Production/Profitability**

Prince Edward County is known as an agrarian community. It is also a growing community. There is a need to balance growth with maintenance and support of family farms and agricultural enterprises.

This issue is currently being addressed by Virginia Cooperative Extension. Based on the situation analysis, VCE should continue its efforts to support and educate the agricultural community. Coordination of resources from Virginia Tech, Virginia State, and possibly Longwood University would be necessary to expand efforts, particularly in the areas of farm business management and marketing. This issue will be more adequately addressed with the addition of an ANR agent in to the unit's staff.

### **Issue 2: Conservation of Natural Resources/Environment**

Land use planning, forest management, maintaining open spaces and agricultural land is becoming increasingly important to residents of Prince Edward County.

This issue is currently being addressed with current VCE unit resources. Based on the situation analysis, VCE should support the efforts of NRCS, Soil and Water Conservation District, and the County Administration with education programs when needed, but not take the lead in addressing these issues.

### **Issue 3: Obesity**

Residents of Prince Edward County have a higher rate of obesity than those found statewide. This issue was identified by the Piedmont Community Health Coalition as critical. It was also identified as a concern in the community survey. The citizens of Prince Edward County need to be provided with education on obesity, prevention of diseases such as heart disease, cancer, etc., healthy food choices, and food preparation.

This issue is currently being address with current VCE/FNP unit resources. The development of a demonstration garden and the implementation of youth and adult cooking, nutrition, and food preservation programs are designed to increase knowledge, skills, and abilities in this area. VCE /FNP will work with other agencies and organizations, including the Piedmont Community Health Coalition, to promote community wellness programs.

### **Issue 4: Local Food System Development**

The development of a sustainable local food system was identified as a need in the community survey. Both the County and Town have made significant investments in this area including

the renovation of both the cannery and the farmers market facilities. The need exists to connect local producers with commercial buyers.

This issue is currently being addressed by VCE. The addition of an FCS agent with a background in community-based food systems will help us to continue progress in this area. The FCS agent continues to facilitate connections between producers and consumers and assist producers with marketing through various efforts including the establishment of a farm-to-school program and a Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapter. In partnership with the local YMCA, a community garden is being developed which is open to the public. The FCS agent regularly engages with organizations and residents to promote the benefits of a eating locally grown food.

### **Issue 5: Teen Community Involvement**

Teen community involvement was identified as a priority issue in the community survey. In key informant interviews, stakeholders also discussed the need for programs for teens that will help them to develop leadership skills and promote citizenship and life skill development. The need is especially present for teens who may not be college-bound.

This issue is addressed by VCE through the 4-H youth development program. Teens participating in the camping program are provided with extensive leadership training. This program will be expanded through the joint Prince Edward/Buckingham 4-H Teen Club. This delivery mode will give teens the opportunity for sustained involvement through service learning. Grant funds have been obtained for this group that will provide for both citizenship and STEM education.

### **Issue 6: Youth Agriculture Education**

The need to education youth topics relating to agriculture and natural resources was identified in the community survey. As the average age of the American farmer increases, the need to educate youth who can become agricultural producers becomes more pressing. Despite significant population growth and development, Prince Edward County remains an agrarian community.

This issue is currently being addressed by VCE through both the 4-H and ANR programs. Local youth participate in Agriculture Awareness Day at school and NRE programs at Holiday Lake 4-H Center. Prince Edward 4-H also offers a Livestock Club for youth interested in raising and showing beef, swine, sheep, and goats. There is a strong Junior Master Gardener program in the County. The recent addition of an ANR agent to the unit staff will help expand agriculture education offerings for youth and families. The addition of a demonstration garden will also provide resources for educating youth.

### **Issue 7: STEM Education**

The need for science, technology, engineering, and math education was identified as a priority issue in the community survey. Workforce development as also identified as important. STEM

education is needed to help youth develop the necessary skills to be successful in a changing workplace.

4-H provides STEM education through both in-school and after-school science enrichment programs. VCE will also plan and implement a STEM Careers Conference annually for the next 3-4 years in partnership with the RMEP grant.

### **Issue 8: Agriculture Sustainability / Preservation**

The number of farms in Prince Edward County has increased over the last decade but the average farm size has decreased. The population of Prince Edward has increased as has development.

VCE will continue to provide programs for both large scale production operations and small farms. A broad variety of educational programs will be offered and will include niche farming, value-added production, marketing, and connecting local producers with local buyers.