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Situation Analysis Report

Prince George County

2013

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Introduction

Virginia Cooperative Extension Prince George County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2013. The work involved the development of a Prince George County Unit Profile as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues and problems in the county. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed and priority issues identified.

The ELC met two times during the situation analysis process. At the first meeting, an overview of the situation analysis process was covered. At a second meeting of the ELC, data from prepared unit profile was reviewed and a community survey instrument was implemented. A number of issues were identified from this look at the county. VCE Staff reviewed the community survey and organized the responses.

Unit Profile

Prince George County is located in the central part of Virginia. It is approximately 25 miles Southeast of Richmond nestled into a geographic area southeast of Hopewell, east of Petersburg and the large military installation, Ft. Lee, and bordered by the James River on the north.

Population, Age, Gender, and Ethnicity:

The data indicated that from 1981 – 1991 the population of Prince George County remained relatively stable between 25,000 and 26,000 residents. As of the 2002 census, population stood at 34,135 residents, a 31% increase over the base period. In 2007 the population was estimated at 36,080 residents, a 5% increase over 2002. The 2011 population estimate was 35,520 residents, a 2% decrease over the 4 year period.

The 10-44 year old age ranges had the most population decrease. The 0-9 and 54-85+ age ranges increased in population between 2007 and 2011. Approximately 54% of the total population of Prince George County is male while 46% is female.

Caucasian population (62.2%) increased by 2.2% while the African American (32.6%) population decreased by 3.6%. Asian and Hispanic populations represent 1.71% and 6.79% respectively of the total population. Native American and other groups have remained relatively stable and constitute 3.4% of the entire population.

Housing & Health:

The data showed that from 2007 to 2011, the total number of housing units remained nearly constant with 12,031 to 12,015, respectively. Total occupied housing units were also stable with 89.3% in 2011.

Household health data showed that the teenage birth rate changed little, 22 per 1000 teens and 24 per 100 teens, from 2010 to 2013 respectively. Adult obesity increased 7% over 2010 with 35% obesity among adults in 2013 rankings. Reported sexually transmitted diseases increased 202% from 2010 to 2013, with 672 and 1358 reported cases in 2010 and 2013, respectively.

Education:

Educational data from 2010 to 2013 showed that high school graduation rates have remained steady around 82 to 83%. Persons pursuing some level of college education increased from 16% to 46% over the same time period.

Agriculture:

Agricultural data indicate that the number of farms in Prince George County has fallen 10% from 2007 to 2012. Total crop land in acres has decreased 14.5% from 22,275 acres to 19,030 acres. The numbers of farms from 1 acre to 9 acres have remained relatively stable at 13 compared to 11 in 2007. A trend has emerged with large farms getting bigger while smaller acreage farms have increased. Farms with 10 to 49 acres and 50 to 179 acres increased by 30% and 6% respectively. Moderate size farms with 180 to 499 acres (12% reduction) and 500 to 999 acres (no change) make up 40 out of 167 county farms. However, there was a substantial increase in farms with 1000 or more acres at 66% (6 in 2007 vs. 10 in 2012).

For the period, 2007 to 2012, market value of agricultural products sold increased 96% from \$5.488 million to \$10.763 million and market value of products sold per farm increased 118% from \$29,504 per farm to \$64,447 per farm. Crop and vegetable production accounted for 92% of farm gross sales with the remainder from livestock production which is primarily beef cattle. The data showed that farm operators listing farming as their principle occupation as 99 of the 167 operations.

Community and Resident Perspectives

A community survey was developed to capture citizen input. The survey was developed with the VT Qualtrics survey program for online use and paper copies were made available when requested. The survey instrument included questions asking the participants to rate the importance of particular issues in agriculture, 4-H youth, environmental & land use, and family & community areas. Respondents were also given the opportunity to write additional comments in each of these areas. Respondents were also asked to list their top three issues separately at the beginning of the survey. The survey was distributed through email contact lists of VCE including the ELC. ELC members further distributed the survey link through their contacts. A newspaper article was written about VCE services and history that also directed citizens to the VCE Prince George website to the survey link.

A total of 34 responses were received through the Qualtrics survey system. Agriculture programs in farm production, profitability, and local food production were considered very important or important at 95%. Written comments included more youth education in and out of

schools, farm succession/preservation, and potential pollution issues. Youth programs in activities, leadership training, life skills & decision making, and teen involvement were rated 100% important or very important. Written responses included trade/vocational training, extended 4-H camps, and teen related field trips. Environmental/Land use issues of environmental quality, land use planning, and wildlife problems were rated 96% very important or important. Additional comments included recycling expansion, controlling nuisance animals (coyote, bobcat, feral cats), and less emphasis on open space with more emphasis on working lands. Family & community issues for aging adults, financial management, housing, health & nutrition, and parenting skills were rated 94% important or very important. Additional comments about community events, county wide public transportation, parenting classes, and child care were received.

The three most important issues given by respondents were grouped into the following categories with the major themes summarized:

- County government
 - Planned economic development with increased businesses and job opportunities
 - Less residential development
 - Recreation/sports opportunities with enhanced access to natural resources such as rivers
 - Low cost public transportation
 - Public safety and enhanced fire & EMS coverage
- School system
 - Technology advancement for teachers and students
 - Vocational and technical training in mechanics, plumbing, electricity, agriculture
 - Funding for afterschool programs
 - Behavior – disobedience and bullying
- Agriculture
 - Preservation of working farms
 - Public education/awareness of agriculture importance
 - Training for public in horticulture practices
- Youth
 - Additional activities for youth to participate in
 - Career awareness and business opportunities to develop skills
 - Camp and teen activities related to 4-H

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data from above, the following priority issues were identified for Prince George County. These issues are not ranked in any specific order.

Issue 1: Preservation of working farms

Preservation of working farms is slightly different than farmland preservation. Preserving farmland from housing development does not necessarily keep the farm in a productive working state. Working farms contribute to the local economy by buying and selling goods and may offer employment opportunities.

Preservation of working farms is partially addressed with VCE resources. Current agriculture programs focus on production and profitability to sustain farm operations. Additional resources geared toward beginning or new farmers, farm succession to the next generation, and agriculture awareness could be developed to broaden the programs offered to the community.

Issue 2: Increase opportunities for youth to become productive citizens

Numerous comments were received that youth have limited opportunities for “things” to do. There were no specific suggestions for youth activities other than 4-H related camp and teen programs. An issue that did emerge was to reinforce vocational/technical training along with advanced technology such as computers.

Youth opportunities are partially addressed with VCE resources. Current youth programs in camping, teen leadership, digital media production, and agriculture are fulfilling some of these needs. VCE cannot meet needs such as part-time employment, business internships, or formal courses in technical fields. Partnerships with local businesses, Prince George schools, and VCE may be able to enhance these opportunities.

Issue 3: Economic development of businesses to supply good paying jobs

Numerous responses called for additional business opportunity and good jobs which increases the county tax base. This issue is outside the scope to VCE resources to address.

Issue 4: Increasing recreation and community wide event opportunities to citizens

General recreation and community wide events were listed numerous times. Again no specific recommendations were given as to the type of events or recreation needed other than more river access. This issue is outside the scope of VCE resources to address.

Issue 5: Safety in communities and schools

This issue is mostly outside the scope of VCE to address with the exception of some VCE programs that focus on bullying, leadership, and character for youth. Most comments focused on core services provided by local government.