



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## City of Lynchburg 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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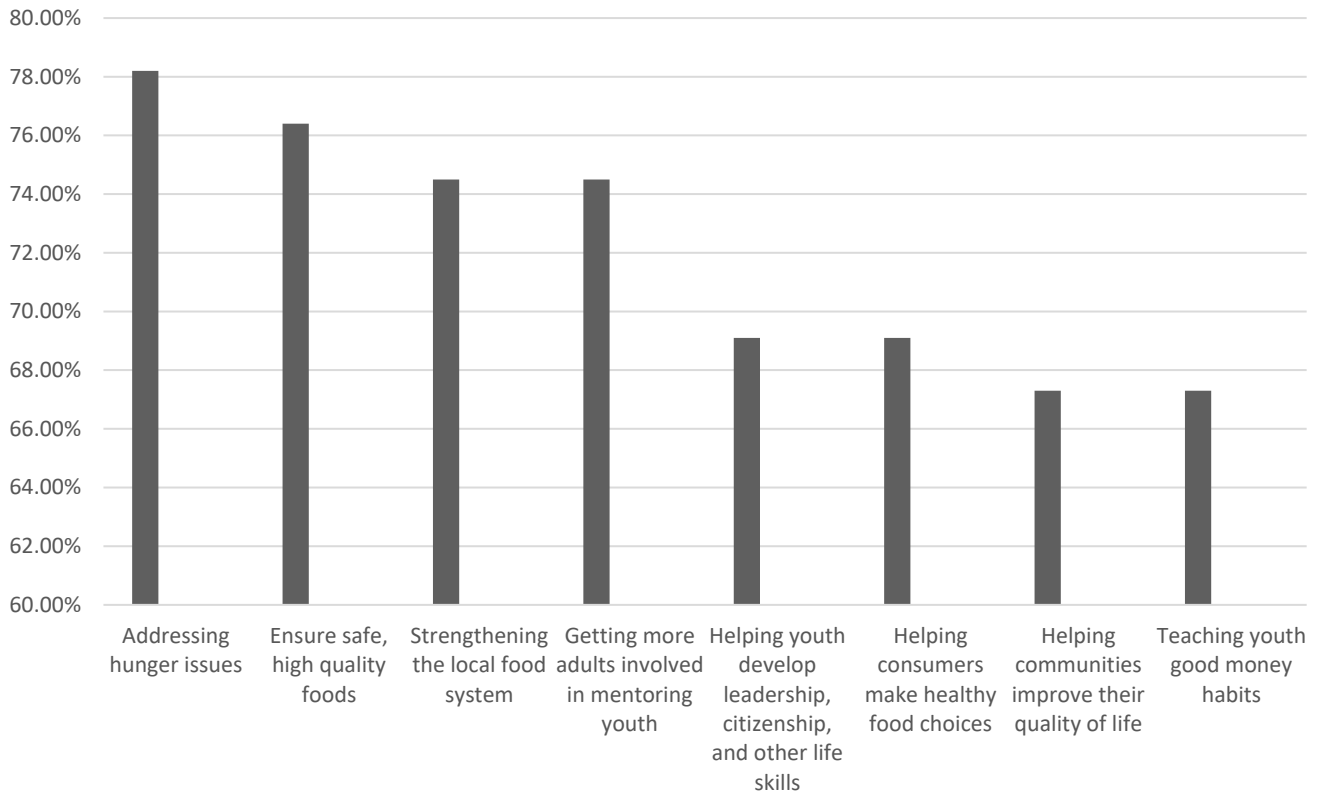
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Figure 1. Monument Terus. (City of Lynchburg Office of Economic Development & Tourism)

### Top Eight Issues for Lynchburg City in 2023 According to Percent of Respondents indicating it was a high priority need



# Introduction

During the calendar year of 2023, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Lynchburg City Unit conducted a comprehensive situation analysis. Unit staff utilized the community survey VCE provided to identify priority issues in the Lynchburg Community. Once the community completed the surveys, the data was analyzed, and the priorities were identified.

Unit staff discussed the progress of the situation analysis at monthly staff meetings throughout the year. Staff took surveys to events and had signs with QR codes for the community to scan and complete the survey. iPads were available to take to events or use in the office to assist in the gathering of information. Links were shared on Facebook and our website and emailed out to community members. Our Extension Leadership Council was also encouraged to share and complete the survey themselves.

## Unit Profile

The City of Lynchburg is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains' foothills along the James River's banks. As Lynchburg is geographically in the center of Virginia, it is sometimes known as the "Heart of Virginia." It is also called the "City of Seven Hills" or "The Hill City" because of the original seven hills: College Hill, Garland Hill, Daniel's Hill, Federal Hill, Diamond Hill, White Rock Hill, and Franklin Hill.

Lynchburg was founded by John Lynch, who started a ferry service across the James River in 1757. The Virginia General Assembly granted John Lynch a charter for a town in 1786, and in 1805, Lynchburg was incorporated as a town and then a city in 1852.

The Lynchburg area was also home to the Monacan Indian tribe until well into the 17th century, when they were driven westward or killed. Today, descendants of the Monacan tribe now live in the Bear Mountain area of Amherst County.

According to the 2022 census data, Lynchburg has a population of 79,287 people; 47% of the population identifies as male, while 53% identify as female. Lynchburg Parks and Recreation's master plan recognized Lynchburg as Virginia's youngest major city; 30% of the population is 15-24 years old. The population of Lynchburg, VA, is 60% White, 29% Black or African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% Two or More Races, and 3% Asian.

Lynchburg is 49 square miles with 1,613 people per square mile. There are 28,346 households and 34,156 housing units, of which 5,810 are vacant. The average household size is 2.4, and the median household income is \$56,110. 19.6% of the population falls at or below the poverty line. According to County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, in 2022, 21% of Lynchburg children lived in poverty, and 74% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Lynchburg was ranked 73 out of 133 counties in Virginia regarding their health outcomes. However, when looking at health factors, the things we can modify to improve the length and quality of life, Lynchburg ranks in the higher to middle range. In 2022, 21% of residents were in poor to fair health. With 19% of adults smoking and 35% of adults defined as obese. 13% of residents experience food insecurity, and 8% have limited access to healthy foods.

In 2021, 20.46% of Lynchburg residents had graduated from high school, 7.33% had an associate's degree, while 26.56% had a bachelor's degree, and 18.13% had a graduate degree. Lynchburg City Schools consists of 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools, and seven specialty schools. Additionally, Lynchburg is home to five post-secondary schools; University of Lynchburg, Liberty University, Virginia University-Lynchburg, Randolph College, and Central Virginia Community College.

The unemployment rate had been falling since the last situation analysis in 2018; however, in 2020, it spiked to 7.5%. In 2021, it fell to 5.1%, and in 2022, it dipped to 3.9%. The top five employers in Lynchburg are Centra Health, Lynchburg City Schools, City of Lynchburg, Areva NP Inc., and Lynchburg University. The top three places residents commute to for work are Bedford, Campbell, and Amherst County. At the same time, those three counties have residents commuting to Lynchburg for work.

## Community and Resident Perspectives

Our unit utilized several strategies to assess resident perspectives. We utilized a community survey provided by VCE, we reviewed other area needs assessments, and we continue regular communication with our partners, participants, and stakeholders throughout the year.

1. Community survey. The survey was made available to the community on our Facebook page and on the local VCE Lynchburg website and emailed to community members. While faculty and staff were at events, they had signs with QR codes that would link participants to the survey. iPads were also available to be used for the survey.
2. Review of recent area needs assessments included Lynchburg Parks and Recreations Master Plan 2022-2032, Centra Hospital 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment, and Community Access Network Needs Assessment 2023.

The survey results indicated that Lynchburg City residents had priority issues similar to our state results, emphasizing the following areas: building healthy communities, environmental health and safety, and health promotion. Specifically identified issues include addressing hunger issues, ensuring safe, high-quality foods, strengthening the local food system, getting more adults involved in mentoring youth, helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills, assisting communities to improve their quality of life, and teaching youth good money habits.

## Community Issues

Unit faculty and staff met regularly to discuss the progress of the community survey and evaluate the results. Surveys and recent needs assessments were reviewed and it was determined that the top issues were related and could be grouped into three priority issues.

Table 1. Top Issues Identified on the Community Survey

Issue	Rank
Addressing hunger issues	1
Ensure safe, high quality foods	2
Strengthening the local food system	3
Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth	4
Protecting water quality	5
Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills	6
Helping consumers make healthy food choices	7
Helping communities improve their quality of life	8
Teaching youth good money habits	9
Reducing misuses and overuse of pesticides and fertilizers	10

# Top three priority issues

**Priority Issue #1 Food Insecurity/Nutritional Education**

**Priority Issue #2 Quality of life, mental, emotional, financial**

**Priority Issue #3 Youth mentoring, problem-solving/life skills, mental health**

## Future Programming to Address Community Issues

### Priority Issue #1 Food Insecurity

The City of Lynchburg had two Family Nutrition Program (FNP) Assistance, one for youth and one for adults. However, in 2020, the youth FNP Assistant left, and in 2021, the adult FNP Assistant became the FCS SNAP-Ed agent. There was a small gap in nutrition education; however, by the fall of 2021, we had filled the adult FNP Assistant position, and then, in the summer of 2023, we added a youth FNP Assistant. We address hunger, ensure safe, high-quality foods, and help our community make healthy food choices through educational classes. Youth in Lynchburg have the opportunity to participate in Pick a Better Snack, Choose Health, Teen Cuisine, and Learn, Grow, Eat, and Go. Adult classes include Eating Smart, Being Active, and Healthy Eating Staying Active. In addition to presenting classes, our faculty trains other partners to teach Literacy, Eating and Active Preschoolers, Pick A Better Snack, Summer Foods, Summer Moves, and Just Say Yes! curriculums. Not only do our classes explore nutrition, but they also address saving money. Participants are given low-cost meal ideas, participate in food demonstrations, and are often given produce or ingredient boxes to make meals at home. This year alone, through a partnership with Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, VCE Lynchburg provided over 25,825 lbs of produce to the Lynchburg community. Classes are offered in various settings: at schools, in a variety of community centers, at the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Churches, Life Skills Institute, and at home through virtual learning, in addition to many more.

### Priority Issue #2 Quality of life

The Lynchburg office will continue to help improve the quality of life for Lynchburg residents by continuing to offer affordable educational classes and simulations founded on research and evidence. Thanks to the strong presence of the FNP program in our area, we can offer a variety of nutrition education classes. Our Family and Consumer Science Agents also offer various programming: Balancing Living with Diabetes, Poverty Simulations that create empathy for those facing poverty, Child Care Provider Training, Adult Financial Literacy Workshops, and Parenting Classes. Our partners include Central Virginia Area Agency on Aging, Centra, Parkview Mission, Central Virginia Community College, and Central Virginia Health District. Additionally, FCS agents offer a Serv Safe Certification at no cost to the community through a partnership and grants. This certification is also a part of the Re-Entry Program conducted at Blue Ridge Regional Jail to assist the inmates preparing to re-enter the community. They can also participate in financial literacy workshops and are offered resources to assist with reconnecting with their children.

### Priority Issue #3 Youth mentoring, teaching youth money management, mental health

In the spring of 2020, the 4-H agent for the City of Lynchburg left; however, a part-time person with 4-H responsibilities was hired by the fall of that same year. In 2021, they became full-time. 4-H camp, a staple of the program, did not happen during the summer of 2020; however, in 2021, the camp came back in full force. Camp allows participants to interact with caring adult volunteers while they learn and master new skills as they learn to engage with others away from home. After several conversations with Lynchburg City School (LCS) staff, interactions with the students, and feedback from the survey, 4-H will continue to build the presence of 4-H through our financial programming. Currently, the Real Money, Real World simulation has been done at two of our middle schools. In the future, we also plan to implement the pre and post-classes. We would also like to bring

back Reality Store to our high schools and add Kids Market Place to our elementary schools. All three require volunteer and mentoring opportunities for adults. In addition to our camp and financial programs that address problem-solving/life skills and mentoring opportunities, we also can offer 4-H Yoga, Your Thoughts Matter, Your Feelings Matter, Mindful Me, GEM (Getting Experience with Mindfulness), and Health Rocks! are all curriculums that offer youth an opportunity to explore and express their thoughts and feelings positively. There has been an interest in the Character Counts framework from LCS elementary counselors. Character Counts uses six pillars of character to help improve students' character, social-emotional, and academic skills and improve school culture. VCE can help with the training and implementation of this framework.

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