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# Situation Analysis Report

## Albemarle County / City of Charlottesville

# 2018

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## Introduction

The Albemarle County / City of Charlottesville office of Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) conducted a comprehensive situational analysis during 2018. The situational analysis process involved unit staff, the local Extension Leadership Council (ELC), and key stakeholders. A detailed unit profile was developed and additional data was gathered through a community needs survey. Data and information were analyzed, and priority issues were identified.

## Unit Profile

Albemarle County is located in the Northern Piedmont, at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, 100 miles southwest of Washington, D.C. and 70 miles northwest of Richmond, Virginia. It is the fifth largest county in Virginia, by geographic area, encompassing approximately 726 square miles. The City of Charlottesville is located within Albemarle County, and serves as the county seat. Both locations are rich in historic and natural beauty. The population is around 107,000 for the county and 48,000 for the city.

The percentage of the population that falls below the poverty line, is 8.5% for the county and 25.9% for the city. The national average is 12.7%. According to a 2015 local study, 18% of Charlottesville and Albemarle families “make less than what it costs to survive in our area” (<https://www.pvcc.edu/sites/www.pvcc.edu/files/media/17-orange-dot-report.pdf>). The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 25% of the families in Charlottesville (1,800) do not earn a wage that allows them to be self-sufficient. Over 630 families (in the City of Charlottesville) make less than \$15,000/year. The median household income in Albemarle is higher than the state (\$70,342 vs. \$66,149) and lower in Charlottesville (\$50,727).

Our area has a percentage of adults, age 65 and over, similar to the national average (15.2% vs. 15.6%). Incidence of adult obesity in Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville is lower than the national average (23% and 27% vs 28%).

Agricultural census data indicates that the number of farms and the number of acres that are farmed within the county increased from 2007 to 2012 (6% increase in the number of farms and 7% increase in the number of acres that are farmed). The majority of farmers are part-time and have off-farm employment. Albemarle County is home to a diverse agriculture community including livestock producers (beef cattle, horses, sheep, goats, chickens and swine), orchards (mostly peach and apple), vineyards, greenhouses, hayland, vegetable and field crops. In addition, Albemarle County is home to the third largest population of horses in the state.

## Community and Resident Perspectives

A community needs survey was developed to help further identify issues and concerns of local citizens. Extension Agents and ELC members distributed the survey to the public and to key stakeholders and focus groups within our community. Results were analyzed and key priority issues were identified.

### Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data from above, the following top priority issues were identified for Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville

#### **Issue 1: Agriculture Business**

Agriculture Business topics were identified as the most important issue facing Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville. Specifically, farm business profitability, farm transition planning, land use and rural economic development were top concerns. VCE supports local farm businesses by

#### **Issue 2: Environment**

Environmental issues were identified as the second most pressing issue facing Albemarle and the City of Charlottesville. Specific environmental issues identified include topics related to regulations, biosolids, pests and pesticides, invasive species and water quality. VCE addresses this issue through our agricultural education programs which highlight best management practices as well as organic/environmentally friendly techniques. We provide annual trainings for certified private and commercial pesticide applicators, helping to ensure that pesticides are applied only when needed, and in the safest manner possible. Our Master Gardener and Master Naturalists volunteer programs provide trained volunteers and advice to the public on home gardening, landscaping, conservation, invasive species control and wildlife conflicts. Our 4-H program offers naturalist and school gardening clubs, educational projects, and statewide knowledge and public speaking competitions on these topics, and we collaborate with other local agencies to provide Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences for every 4<sup>th</sup> grader in both the County and City). Our ANR Agent serves on the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District Board, and we regularly collaborate with other government and non-government agencies (NRCS, DCR, DOF, PEC, VOF, etc.) to offer educational programming.

#### **Issue 3: Agriculture Production & Marketing**

Agriculture production knowledge and marketing of livestock, pasture, crops and timber were the topics of next greatest concern. VCE addresses the educational needs of our diverse local farming community through a variety of Agriculture and Natural Resource programs, including: Pesticide Applicator Certification, weed/insect identification and pest management

recommendations, soil analysis and fertilizer recommendations, research-based and commodity specific educational programs, individual consultations and advice, as well as on-line publications and access to university specialists.

#### **Issue 4: Local Food Systems & Food Safety**

Local Food Systems was identified as the third most pressing issue for Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville. This issue encompasses production, food handling & safety, farmers markets, home and community gardening. VCE addresses this issue through GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) Training, researched-based educational programs for both beginning and experienced local farmers, Master Gardener volunteers (who provide advice and problem solving for the home gardener), food safety classes (ServSafe and Cooking for Crowds), and home canning and food preservation education.

#### **Issue 5: Youth Education**

Education of youth from early childhood through high school was also identified as a top priority. Our 4-H program offers educational opportunities via in-school programming, such as Public Speaking, Embryology and Nutrition Education. 4-H also has clubs scattered throughout our community offering Leadership Development, Livestock Projects, Citizenship, and other life skills. Our Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers partner with other groups (such as Schoolyard Gardens, Soil and Water Conservation District, etc.) to offer learning experiences for area youth of all ages.

#### **Other top issues**

Other top issues for our area included: Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Aging (aging in place, elder care and long term care) and New and Beginning Farmer Education. VCE is in the process of hiring a position based in the Northern District that will focus on opioid abuse. Our FCS Agent regularly works with seniors in our community, teaching nutrition and healthy living topics, and of course all of our programming focuses on life-long learning and volunteer opportunities. We also offer courses for new and beginning farmers, collaborating with other organizations to identify new members of our ag community and their needs.