



2018 Situation Analysis Report



Chesterfield County

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Introduction

Chesterfield County unit office conducted the 2018 Situation Analysis with support from Extension Leadership Council (ELC), local agencies, and key partners to gather information from a variety of resources and citizens to create as accurate a reflection of the current needs in the county. The structure of the situation analysis community survey was finalized at the June 6, 2018 ELC meeting. Existing county-wide sources of information were identified to utilize during this process. Together, the data from a variety of resources and the survey responses will be used to strategically plan future Chesterfield VCE programming based on issues and needs that exist at the local and, to some extent, regional levels.

Multiple departments and agencies within Chesterfield County supply resources that were used to compile this document:

Chesterfield County Annual Report, Chesterfield County Demographic and Economic Profile, Chesterfield County Planning Department, Chesterfield County Youth Planning and Development, 2017 Youth and Family Indicators Report, Chesterfield Mental Health Prevention Services, 2017 Chesterfield County Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, Substance Abuse Free Environment (SAFE) Coalition, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) State Health Statistics, the United States Department of Agriculture, Virginia Department of Education, and the Virginia Department of Health.

Unit Profile

Chesterfield County is located in Central Virginia, south and west of the city of Richmond. Adjoining jurisdictions include the cities of Petersburg, Hopewell, and Colonial Heights along with the counties of Goochland, Henrico, Charles City, Prince George, Dinwiddie, Amelia, and Powhatan. Chesterfield is 446 square miles and is the second-largest in the Richmond Metropolitan Region. It is a mixed rural and suburban county with the more densely populated areas adjacent to the City of Richmond. However, population growth and development continue to move into the more rural areas resulting in a smaller number of farms, decreased acreage under cultivation, and an increased number of farm-subdivision conflicts.

Chesterfield is the third most populated county in Virginia with 335,687 citizens, which reflects an 8 percent growth rate since the 2010 census. The 14 and under age group makes up the majority in the county and includes the bulk of all school-aged youth. The aging population, 65 and older, is projected to grow faster than all other age groups which is in line with a national trend referred to as the “age wave”.

Increases in racial and ethnic diversity are evident across all minority racial groups. Since 2000 there has been a 234 percent growth in the Hispanic and those identifying with the racial group “two or more races” rose 152 percent. Increases in the Asian (83 percent) and Black (61 percent) populations were also significant. Figure 1 depicts the demographics of the county using the most current data from the planning department.

The 2015 American Community Survey indicates a well-educated population: 37 percent of Chesterfield citizens 25 years and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher. It is still significant to point out, as seen in Figure 2 below, that 9 percent have less than a high school education.

The median income in Chesterfield County is \$72,609, which exceeds regional, state, and national averages. The unemployment rate has steadily declined since 2010 and Chesterfield rates have nearly mimicked those of the state, and now sits at 3.8 percent. Another indicator of the local economy is the labor force participation rate, individuals 16 years or older currently employed. Chesterfield has a 72 percent labor force participation rate, which is well above the national average of 62.7 percent.

The county's 7.4 percent poverty rate represents 25,000 individuals. While this rate is lower than that of the region, state, and nation, the number of individuals in poverty for Chesterfield has grown 110 percent since 2000. This follows a national trend in increasing suburban poverty: as cities redevelop and achieve stable or declining poverty rates, the neighboring suburban areas experience an upward shift in their poverty rates. It is also worth noting that in the 2017-18 school year, 30 percent of the county's student population was eligible to receive free or reduced lunch which translates to 16,000 students overall. The 9 percent rate of children in poverty for Chesterfield is still lower than the state's 14 percent, but it is a figure that has shown slight increases each year as a result of the increasing suburban poverty Chesterfield County is experiencing.

Student enrollment in Chesterfield County Public schools has remained fairly stable for the past decade. There are currently more than 60,000 students in a system comprised of 38 elementary schools (27,295 students), 13 middle schools (14,323 students), and 13 high schools including 2 technical centers and the regional Maggie Walker Governor's School (19,297 students). A group that has been on the rise is home-schooled youth. According to the Virginia Department of Education Chesterfield has 2,004 home-school students or about 3.4 percent of the total school-aged population. This has steadily increased in recent years and is in line with state and national trends due in part to relaxed state laws and greater online options for print and digital curriculum.

The Virginia Department of Health provides snapshots for each locality across the state. The data for Chesterfield in 2017 revealed a 28 percent obesity rate for adults which is significantly below the national average of nearly 40 percent. However, this still represents a large number of Chesterfield citizens who may also be at greater risk for obesity-related conditions which lead to significantly higher medical costs for individuals effected. The prevalence of tobacco use for Chesterfield adults is 13 percent which is continuing a downward trend for the past decade, yet cigarette smoking is still the leading cause of preventable disease and death.

The 2017 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that tobacco use amongst youth is also down, but there is a significant jump in the use of e-cigarettes and vaping devices. Of the 4,000 Chesterfield youth surveyed, e-cigarette (vaping, Juuls) usage rates are higher than any other form of nicotine. In fact, the data from the 2017 Prevention Needs Assessment survey showed

that e-cigarette usage was the only product that showed a growing trend in comparison to all other harmful substances which showed diminished usage over the past three years. Specifically for 12th graders vaping is at a higher rate than the national average (18 percent for Chesterfield versus 12.5 percent U.S. rate). Alcohol continues to be the most commonly abused substance by Chesterfield youth (13%) but has shown significant decreases since 2014 (27%).

Community and Resident Perspectives

Consistent areas of concern were identified in reports from county government agencies and organizations, key informant interviews, and data from a community survey with a wide-ranging focus group helped to determine which issues will receive our time, energy and resources to best address the needs of our county. While many different perspectives and priorities were ranked, in the end three major issues surfaced to the top of Chesterfield citizens we involved in this process. In a historical context, the issues most often identified as urgent are of no surprise for this county as we have seen very similar trends in previous situation analyses and in our continual evaluation of programming needs locally.

The issues of greatest priority cross the VCE programming lines of 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR), and Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS). Likewise, it will require a multi-discipline effort from Chesterfield VCE staff to address these complicated and layered issues. In some areas, VCE may play a major role while in others there is an opportunity to partner with lead agencies in and around the county to support a larger community effort.

Priority Issues

Issue 1: Community Growth/Development and Planning

Population growth - and the impact on local resources – is the highest priority issue for Chesterfield County residents. At the root of this concern is the rate of expansion and the quality of planning and services for the increased growth. This includes schools, roads, sewer, and water infrastructure. Many of the other concerns surrounding the issue of population growth are outside the scope of VCE to address, such as affordable housing and road congestion.

i. Impact on Schools and Services

Specific concerns from the 2018 focus group are focused on the concern of county development outpacing the roads and schools that serve those populations. Within that concern is an underlying struggle to ensure equity of resources across the large county which has pockets of affluence and poverty alike. The western portion of the county is experiencing an explosion of growth and is also home to more wealthy citizens, whereas lower-income populations are concentrated to the north (outside the Richmond city limits) and eastern sections of the county. This disparity played out in a 2013 bond referendum which Chesterfield voters approved for the Board of Supervisors to use \$304 million to renovate or

replace schools in the aging north and east that significantly lag behind their counterparts in the county's western neighborhoods. Many saw (and still argue) that the resources should have been used to build new schools in the western section of the county to sustain the huge rate of growth.

A key informant interview was conducted with Communities in Schools (CIS) site coordinator, Kimberly Reynolds. She has watched her Falling Creek Middle School site stagger under the pressure of overcrowding. The entire 7th grade student body now occupies 25 trailers behind the school for classrooms. Teachers are overwhelmed with class sizes of 31 or more students. The school now offers a lunch schedule that starts earlier every year just to ensure all classes get through, as the cafeteria is not able to accommodate the numbers necessary to keep up. "Yet," said Reynolds "the county still has not designated FCMS as overcrowded and we don't see the situation changing anytime soon." This school has an 81% total free and reduced lunch student population – the highest in the county.

ii. Impact on Environment

The concern about development and growth also centers around the environment. In particular, the protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. How growth contributes to pollution is a huge concern at the county and state level. The water quality issues in Virginia are unique and the impacts far-reaching from development and agriculture. Sustainable agriculture and maintaining the quality of farmland still available also ties into this issue, as locally-sourced food becomes more in demand within the Richmond Metro area.

Status:

While many of the development concerns fall squarely on county leadership and the community planning commission, Chesterfield Cooperative Extension can play a supportive role. Particularly with the concern of burgeoning school populations, the 4-H program provides in-school enrichment and after school partnerships to supplement the teachers. Chesterfield 4-H also has a concentrated effort in many of the schools in the northern and eastern portions of the county that are most limited, by partnering with CIS and 21st Century Learning grants that target youth who lag behind their peers in other parts of Chesterfield.

Some of the environmental concerns are currently being addressed by the extension Environmental Educator, Master Gardener Coordinator, the 4-H Program Technician and Master Gardener volunteers. Grassroots is Chesterfield's signature program and has helped more than 5,000 residents adopt better lawn care practices to protect our watershed from excess fertilizers and pesticides. Our office also offers a Sustainable Landscaping program to promote the use of native plants, soils, and the climate to minimize the impact on local watersheds.

The Environmental Educator is a certified urban nutrient management planner and helps citizens with specialized plans to manage the proper application of fertilizers and biosolids which help address erosion and sediment control. The Chesterfield 4-H Program Technician

developed a strong school gardening program that continues to expand through volunteers and community partnerships. These garden programs expose youth to positive experiences with agriculture, establish a personal connection with the environment, and greater awareness of natural resources.

The Planning Commission continues to develop an update to its Comprehensive Plan for Chesterfield County, initially adopted in 2012, the plan is designed to address many of the issues and challenges facing the county as it continues to grow and evolve. Recent public hearings (February and March 2019) have been offered to gain citizen input on the draft of this document. This department and the plan itself outline specifics about economic development, housing, public facilities, transportation and any other issues that we also received feedback on while conducting our assessment.

Issue 2: Aging Population and Long-Term Care

Concern over adequate support for Chesterfield County's aging population is a shared sentiment across Virginia and the nation, as the Baby Boomer generation continues to mature. This "Age Wave" has inspired a major population and culture shift as the focus of consumer activity moves to the needs of these adults aged 60 and over. At the same time, increased pressure on individual families, communities and local governments is expected. Nearly a third (32.4%) of the focus study participants had aging population and long-term care needs in their top three selections.

Specific issues concerning aging include the need for increased and improved services in: health care, nutrition education, transportation, long-term care, senior activities, chronic diseases, senior communities, affordable housing, and support for caregivers.

Status:

Chesterfield ELC member Jana Carter is the director of Citizen Information & Resources. This department oversees Alternative Transportation and Aging & Disability Services. The Office of the Senior Advocate works collaboratively with multiple organizations in the area to serve older residents including the Chesterfield Council on Aging, Senior Connections, Virginia Center on Aging, and a United Way coalition focused on a regional Age Wave plan. Based on the data shared from this department at our October 9th ELC meeting, the growth of the aging population continues to stress the county's resources. They continue to look for ways to expand but rely heavily on other partners to serve this ever-growing population.

Some of these issues were addressed in the past by the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) extension agent, however this position has been vacant since 2016, and no extension programs are currently being offered in this area. In the past, the FCS agent partnered with county agencies and this would be a welcome partnership for the future as well. If the position is filled, there is certainly great need for extension programming to address many of the issues needed within elder care. Even without an FCS agent, the extension office will support county efforts indirectly by sharing information with the community.

Issue 3: Youth Issues

Along with the rising population in Chesterfield, the number of Title 1 schools and students have steadily increased between 2012 and 2018. The total number of high school dropouts rose to its highest percentage (1.59%) in ten years in 2018. Smart Beginnings issued a 2018 report on PALS-K achievement gaps in Chesterfield County and 12% of students entering kindergarten (n=462) did not meet basic literacy skill standards. Survey responses showed significant concerns about education funding and overcrowding that are closely tied to Issue 1 of Community Growth.

A recurring theme seen from county agency reports and community input was the need to keep youth engaged in positive activities to deter risky behaviors. Youth violence, bullying, school safety, stress management, substance abuse, and mental health were common issues identified in our assessment. Key informant interviews with parents also underscored the lack of certain skills not being taught in schools which are needed to succeed in society personally and professionally.

Status:

Several challenges expressed under the youth issues category are currently being addressed by Chesterfield by 4-H programming. The 4-H agent, 4-H Program Technician, Richmond-Area Health Rocks Coordinator, and 4-H Agriculture Educator deliver programs in a variety of in-school enrichment, after school, club, camp, and day camp settings and often in partnership with other county agencies, key stakeholders and a strong core of adult and teen volunteer leaders.

Specifically, certain programs we offer help address some of the issues head-on. For example, the 4-H Health Rocks program is a drug and alcohol prevention to help deter risky behavior and manage stress. Parenting and school readiness issues are being addressed through the 4-H Agent's partnerships with the Positive Parenting Coalition, Families First Advisory Board, and the RVA Basics campaign – each designed to saturate the community with resources to strengthen families. Elements of the Character Counts model are incorporated into many of the programs we offer, which emphasize the importance of respect and caring to further support anti-bullying and anti-violence campaigns with partner schools.

All 4-H camp, club, and school programs offer youth an opportunity for positive engagement and life skills youth may not be receiving in the traditional school structure. School enrichment programs through Chesterfield 4-H engage youth in a multitude of hands-on learning activities in the areas of science, healthy living, gardening, food security, leadership, character development, financial literacy, embryology, stress-management, and much more. Chesterfield 4-H provides a quality social and learning environment for more than 7,000 youth each year but we must continue to expand where possible through stronger collaborations with other organizations. While our program cannot directly address nor solve every layer beneath the complexity of such things as youth violence, mental health, or bullying we can certainly be a significant and contributing agency within our community. Chesterfield 4-H strives to be one of

many county organizations helping engage youth in positive activities with strong adult role models that will help them to avoid or lessen their involvement in risky behaviors.

An area of significant challenge is to adapt our programming in ways to help include an ever-expanding Latino population in the county. While in-school enrichment is connecting to the youth in these households, when you look at the demographics of Chesterfield 4-H programming outside the school there is a very significant lack of representation among this demographic. Moving forward, Chesterfield Extension must ensure increased outreach and specialized efforts so that our programs are in parity. Recruitment of teen and adult volunteers to help drive that effort is a major strategy we have discussed for the future.