



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu

Situation Analysis Report

Danville

2018

UNIT Extension Staff

Stuart Sutphin, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent

Daniel Hale, 4-H Youth Extension Agent

Alani Adkins, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

Morgan Farmer, Family Nutrition Program Assistant, Family and Consumer Sciences

Introduction

In 2018 the faculty and staff of the Danville Unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) conducted a comprehensive situation analysis of the Unit. Input was solicited and obtained from various leaders from the communities that make up Danville, volunteers who work on behalf of VCE, and clients and cooperators we work with on a regular basis. This input represents an effective cross-section of Danville residents and generated reliable information to base our conclusions on.

Information was collected through surveys delivered electronically through surveys and informal interviews with selected individuals and groups. Unit profile data came primarily from U. S. Census data and other information found on the Situation Analysis web page under Unit Profile headings. Further clarification and historical data was taken from the web pages listed on the site and from other sources such as City Data, County Health Rankings, Kids Count, and City-Data. When results are published for the next U. S. Census to take place in 2020 more representative data will be available. The population demographics used here are based on the most recent reliable data and should closely represent the data that will emerge in the next census.

Unit Profile

The City of Danville was established near the Virginia-North Carolina border in 1793. It was initially a crossroads for transportation and agricultural production. By 1900 it was established as a textile center producing various cloth products from cotton and as a tobacco market for the bright leaf type of tobacco.

There are a few notable historical events that Danville is known for. The City served as the capitol of the Confederate States of America for a very short time following the fall of Richmond in 1864. The method that was used to auction tobacco through the 1990's was developed in Danville. The first recorded song to sell over 1 million copies, "The Wreck of the Old 97", related the story of a train wreck that happened here in 1911. And Lady Astor, the first woman to serve in the British House of Commons, was born here in 1879.

Population: The population of Danville has been steadily declining since around 1980. Between 1990 and 2010 the population decreased by approximately 10,000 residents and is now estimated to be around 43,000 residents. This is in contrast to the population of the Commonwealth of Virginia which grew by nearly 1,000,000 between 2000 and 2010. The majority of the population is almost evenly divided between Caucasians, African Americans and Hispanics (approximately 1,000) being the third largest demographic group. People who are of two or more races total only about 700, the Asian population is slightly less than 500, and other races account for less than 500 residents. Approximately 24% of the population is 19 years old and younger, approximately 19% is aged 65 years and older.

The reasons for the decline in population may be somewhat complex. Some former residents have moved into the surrounding counties in Virginia and North Carolina and commute to their jobs in the City. Others relocated to different areas after Dan River Mills closed down its manufacturing facilities and offices. Many young people go away to college and never return as permanent residents, choosing to start their careers elsewhere.

Employment: The majority of employment opportunities are in retail sales, health care, and education with manufacturing, construction, and communications at the next level. Unemployment (~11%) is

consistently well above the state average (~7%) and household incomes are consistently below (approximately ½ the state for both median and mean household incomes).

Education: The percentage of residents with high school diplomas is only slightly less than the state as a whole at 77% but the percentage of those with at least a 4-year college degree is 17% which is about half the percentage for Virginia as a whole. Of the population aged 25 years or older, 22% did not earn a high school diploma, 30% has at least a diploma, 22% attended college but did not earn a degree, and 26% has a 2-year degree or higher.

Primary school enrollment for grades K – 12 was 6,958 in 2011 and there were 3,111 students enrolled in college or graduate school. In addition to public and private schools, there are 2 colleges and one university in the City and at least 9 colleges or universities within a 90 minute drive of Danville.

Children/Youth: Approximately 41% of children live in homes where income is at or below the poverty level. Just over half of Danville children live in single parent households, mostly with a female head-of-household. Approximately 11% of children born in Danville are considered to be “low birth weight.” The teen birth rate (per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19 years) is nearly twice that rate for the state.

Housing: According to the 2010 U. S. Census slightly less than half of Danville residents reside in rented homes or multi-family dwellings. There are a total of 23,252 housing units in Danville, both owned and rented, and approximately 14 % of these are vacant. Most housing in the City is considered to be of advanced age. Much of the vacant housing is owned by absentee owners and has not been occupied for several years and has declined in condition to where it is un-livable. The City has started a program to demolish these “orphaned” structures as part of an improvement program to reduce drug use, improve public safety. And improve neighborhood appearances.

Danville Unit Perspective

A survey was developed and distributed electronically to individuals in Danville who represent the various communities within the City. The respondents were asked to rank the importance of several community issues. They were also provided an opportunity to add their own issues that they felt should be included. They were then asked to select the 3 most important issues and comment on why they thought those issues were important.

Health, employment, education, finance, housing, and infrastructure all received high marks. Issues related to youth development and specific children’s health issues were also very near the top. All of these issues are closely related when they are considered in light of the information presented in the Unit Profile earlier in this document. Danville’s leaders are aware of where the City is and why and they are looking for the answers that will help to improve the local social and economic conditions.

A new and/or emerging element of concern is the possibility of establishing a gambling casino in the city. While this may contribute to very healthy economic growth there are concerns related to increased crime and addictive/compulsive behavior associated with this possible event.

The following statements by these leaders reflect their knowledge of the situation and concern for the future:

Community Pride: Danville residents are more positive about the future of the community than they were 5 years ago.

Blight Eradication: (From 2013 Situation Analysis) Much of the old housing infrastructure is in a serious state of decay and needs to be removed. As of 2019, many derelict homes and other abandoned

buildings have been demolished and this has improved the quality of many neighborhoods and helped to reduce locations where drug and gang related crimes can take place.

Poverty: Danville continues to have one of the highest child poverty rates in the state of Virginia.

Parenting: The number of female headed households in the City continues to grow out of proportion. Community wide public conversations need to be held to get this issue out in the open and to discuss how the associated issues of lack of income, education, youth violence, etc. are going to be addressed.

Housing: Much of the active housing in the City is low cost rental. These units are often in need of serious repairs.

Perspective by Program Area

Horticulture

Description: Virginia Cooperative Extension employs one Extension Agent position in the Danville Unit Office for Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) specializing in Home Horticulture.

The mission of this program is to provide research based horticulture education to Danville businesses and residents. To assist with plant pest diagnosis and provide control recommendations. To teach effective gardening methods that provide the best results that are also environmentally sound. To provide training to professionals and unskilled workers in the lawn care, landscape, plant nursery, and retail sales businesses. To provide safety training for pesticide applicators. And to keep the area informed on relevant research results regarding plants and plant pests in the landscape.

These tasks are accomplished through programs offered by the ANR Extension Agent and by a large group of dedicated Master Gardener volunteers. The Master Gardeners work on behalf of Virginia Cooperative Extension providing horticulture education to the community. They are trained by Virginia Cooperative Extension and provide their programs according to the same methods, policies and procedures as Virginia Cooperative Extension Agents.

Current Situation: Each year the Agent and the volunteers serve approximately 10,000 area residents and businesses through various means. The majority of contacts are through organized education programs offered throughout the year. Many of these programs take place in formal settings such as local conferences and workshops for professionals, workshops and symposiums for homeowners and other citizens who have interests in plants, classroom instruction in public and private schools and colleges, and on-site programs focused on specific horticulture topics. Another large group of people served is through individual contacts where people come to us with gardening questions or we make on-site visits to assist with specific plant problems or issues.

The Danville ANR Agent has been working closely with Danville Public Works Department over the past 3 years to identify potentially hazardous trees on City streets. These trees are then scheduled for removal. The tremendous amount of damage to homes and City infrastructure by fallen trees during Hurricane Michael on October 11, 2018 gave a clear demonstration that this task must continue to be performed by qualified people to reduce future damage.

Danville Community Perspective: A survey was developed and sent to many of the regular participants in local VCE Horticulture programs. Both professionals and non-professionals were included. Issues that are routinely dealt with and programs provided by the Danville Unit were listed and respondents rated these as to their perceived level of importance. The respondents were also

provided an opportunity to supply additional comments and suggestions for future programs in Danville. The results were very similar to the surveys done in 2013.

The most important issue identified by the Participants continues to be **Plant Pest Management**. With significant increases in plant losses due to new insect pests such as the Emerald Ash Borer and new pathogens such as Boxwood Blight This area continues to be a major point of focus and concern. Work currently being done in the area needs to be expanded to teach both private and commercial pesticide users to consider the environmental impacts of pesticide use, follow label directions when mixing and applying pesticides, obtain a correct identification of the plant pest prior to treating with pesticides, and to teach available alternatives to the use of pesticides such as maintaining plant health.

The second most important issue is **Horticultural Skills Training** for people who either are already working in horticultural type operations or who plan to seek employment in one of these fields. The respondents expressed that we need to work toward providing more formal training programs to grounds care workers who are employed by institutions, lawn care, and landscape businesses. Several respondents also mentioned that we should work with local schools and other educational facilities to provide the basic horticulture education for students who want to study this subject at a college or university.

Training for Tree Care Workers was another issue identified as important for this area. Utility line clearing was identified in particular as an area that needs improvement. Tree pruning and pest management were specifically identified as practices where additional training should be offered. Hazard tree evaluation is a new concern this year. This may be due to increases in tree failures during storm events because much of the Urban Forest in Danville has “aged out” and needs to be replaced with younger trees appropriately matched to the growing conditions where they are to be planted.

The **Master Gardener Volunteer Educator Program** received a lot of high ratings and positive comments. This program is capable of reaching thousands of Danville residents and businesses above what a single Extension Agent can accomplish. This program was established as a way to extend VCE horticulture programs deeper into the community to reach people on a much more regular basis. The total annual volunteer time reported by this program in Danville usually amounts to more than a single Extension Agent would work in the same time frame so they are, in effect, providing the results of having a second ANR Extension Agent at relatively little expense.

Organic Gardening/Landscaping and Community Gardening Are both showing up as areas of interest for Danville residents. There are concerns relating to excessive pesticide use. Many residents seem to be interested in consuming freshly grown produce but they either have no available space to garden or they want to start gardening in a location where they can learn from others as they progress through the growing season. Educational programming and on-site teaching have increased significantly in both of these topics over the past 5 years.

4-H Youth Development

(**Head, Heart, Health, Hands)**

Description: In 2007, VCE placed a full-time 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent in the Danville Unit. Since that time the 4-H Agent has strengthened relationships with local organizations and

architected new partnerships with other key organizations in the Danville community. In 2016, a new 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent was hired to fill the vacant position created at the end of 2015. The current 4-H Agent has continued to build upon the success of the former, strengthening partnerships with the Boys & Girls Club and Parks and Recreation, as well as forging new partnerships with O. Trent Bonner Middle School, Westwood Middle School, Park Avenue Elementary School, and Pittsylvania County 4-H. Further efforts have been made to address the subjects of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math), as well as leadership, communication, and teambuilding.

Current Situation: Opportunities for youth in the city have grown in the past few years, with increased awareness of youth violence and the development of the Youth Services Task Force, the City has made a concerted effort to make youth engagement a priority. The YMCA is centrally located, and now offers transportation to the YMCA for their after-school programs. The Boys & Girls Club similarly offers transportation from schools to their facility, easing the burden of parent transportation requirements. Similarly, the Parks and Recreation After-School programs now offer transportation services.

After the current 4-H Agent was appointed in 2016 in-school enrichment programming was initiated. This is 4-H programming that is delivered in the classroom, during school hours, targeting SOLs, Life Skills, and any other needs identified by the faculty and staff at the schools served. Currently the 4-H Agent serves O. Trent Bonner Middle School with STEM Enrichment & Science Fair facilitation as well as Communication and Teambuilding. Park Avenue receives similar programming, tailored for the learning level of the students involved. In addition, botany education programs are being presented at Gibson Elementary School in their Green House in partnership with the Extension Master Gardeners.

There is a strong partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of the Danville Area, with the 4-H Agent leading weekly activities with the members of the club, as well as serving as the advisor for both the Keystone and Torch Clubs (the governing bodies of the Boys & Girls Club membership). The 4-H Agent works closely with the club to identify key issues, and designs programming based on those needs. The 4-H Agent has also offered professional development opportunities for the staff of the club.

The Danville 4-H Teen Leadership Club has grown to nearly 25 members, many of which are first time 4-H participants, demonstrating the success and appeal of the program to the youth. The primary goals of the club are volunteerism and civic engagement, as well as training to be 4-H Camp Counselors. In total, the teens of the club contributed over 2,500 hours of volunteer service to the community in 2018 alone.

Danville Community Perspective: Survey forms were distributed to youth and adults who work with youth. These surveys were simple, asking participants to rank their Top 5 Priority Items that youth in the City of Danville need education on or experience with. The surveys were separated into 4-H age categories. Informal interviews were conducted with youth who are currently in the program. The following is a break-down of each age's identified priority areas:

Ages 5-8:

1. Reading/Literacy
2. Writing
3. Leadership
4. Life Skills
5. Practical Skills

Ages 9-13:

1. Animal/Ag
2. Creative Arts
3. STEM
4. Environmental Education
5. Diversity/Inclusion

Ages 14-18:

1. STEM
2. Life Skills
3. Creative Arts
4. Youth Violence
5. Diversity/Inclusion

Informal interviews yielded much of the same information. Several youth indicated that there was a need for **life skill development** targeting issues such as **money management, finding a job, identifying other paths besides college, and how to pay for college**. Diversity and Inclusion was another common theme, indicative of a new generational approach to the subjects. Youth are now more than ever invested in creating wholesome communities that are not held back by prejudice or bias.

The overall theme of needs identified by youth have to do with bettering themselves, and bettering the community at large.

Family Nutrition Program (FNP)/SNAP-ED

Description: There are currently a Family and Consumer Sciences SNAP-Ed Extension Agent and one FNP/SNAP-ED program assistant assigned to the Danville Unit. The mission of these two positions is to bring educational programs in nutrition and health to low-income and other special needs populations. To qualify for the FNP/SNAP programs a community must meet certain levels of families receiving SNAP assistance and a minimum number of students receiving free or reduced price lunch in the public schools.

Everyone needs to eat. Food is the cornerstone for survival. We also know that what you eat and drink and how much effects your health. Everyone can afford to eat better and everyone needs to be active, especially with skyrocketing health care costs. Food, nutrition, and health are important for each and every person. Nationwide estimates indicate that almost one in five children are considered overweight, foodborne illnesses account for 76 million illnesses each year, and that seven of every ten Americans die from preventable chronic diseases like heart disease.

Danville Community Perspective: These positions offer educational programs to teach the basics of healthy eating, active living, food safety, and menu planning on a budget. The mission of the programs is to teach limited-resource families and youth how to make healthier food choices and become better managers of available food resources for optimal health and growth. Our programs focus on basic nutrition, physical activity, safe food handling, and thrifty food shopping.

The Family Nutrition Program makes a difference in the lives of their participants. After graduating from the programs, families choose more healthful foods, are more physically active and are less at risk for food borne illnesses and chronic diseases. For every \$1 spent on nutrition education, \$10.64 is saved in future health care costs.

Participants of the Family Nutrition Program are better able to manage their food budget, which improves their ability to feed their family all month long and increases food security. Improving food security (having access to enough nutritious food at all times to fuel a healthy life) leads to benefits such as better school performance, decreased health care costs, and a bridge out of poverty.

The Family and Consumer Science SNAP-Ed Agent recruits and trains volunteers to provide nutrition education to youth. Volunteers follow curriculums that have been proven to show changes in attitude and behavior as it relates to eating healthy foods. The agent also partners with larger organizations such as Hospitals, Parks and Rec, School Divisions, and Health Collaborative in order to create healthy communities through policy, systems, and environmental changes.

The FNP Program Assistant has partnered with God's Storehouse. The position is housed in that facility and offers regular educational programs there. The FNP Program Assistant also presents programs on site in low income communities within the city. Funding for this program comes from the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to offer the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and from the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to offer Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) in Virginia.

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives data, the following top priority issues were identified for the Danville Unit. The issues are classified accordingly and are listed in order of importance.

Issue 1: Dealing with poverty. The responses from across the community placed this as the top issue to be concerned with. Personal finance and budgeting, children in homes below the poverty level, food safety, proper nutrition on a budget, work skills training, finding employment, and housing that is both safe and affordable all received responses. The comparatively high unemployment rate and lack of professional level careers are closely related to this issue.

There has been significant improvement in this issue since the last Situation Analysis was completed in 2013. The current 4-H Extension Agent has focused a portion of educational programs toward addressing these issues in the youth programs. A FCS Snap-Ed Agent is currently housed in the Danville Unit, the majority of funds of the position are from the Federal Grant program for SNAP but a portion is funded through the local match/VCE funding formula. Programming is being expanded by the FCS SNAP-Ed Agent but is limited due to funding.

FNP/SNAP-ED are currently addressing with many areas of this topic. This program targets an adult audience and instructs how to make healthy eating choices and provide healthy diets for a family on a low-income budget. The FCS SNAP-Ed Agent and Program Assistant address topics related to nutrition and health for low-income families, including feeding a family on a small budget.

Issue 2: Youth activities/development. There were a number of youth related issues identified in the current situation analysis of the Danville Unit. Some of these were also identified in the previous two situation analyses.

Many of these are being addressed through the 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent who started working in 2016. Programs are currently in place, or under development, to address education in STEAM topics (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math), career development, job searching, personal finance, seeking quality employment, and leadership.

Issue 3: Job Skills Training. Several issues were raised concerning training for the local work force. Horticulture survey respondents identified the need for training for grounds care and for tree care workers. Adult and youth surveys also identified the need for general career and job skill training.

The ANR Horticulture Extension Agent has been providing a training program for juvenile and adult detainees housed in the Danville facilities in the area of horticulture as a job skill. Additional training is presented as requested by other institutions, lawn care, and landscaping businesses on specific topics they need help with.

The 4-H Youth Development Agent is currently programming in life skills areas that stress the importance of this topic.

Issue 4: Pest Management in the Landscape: A large number of responses identified this as an important issue. Use of pesticides by untrained applicators and by homeowners can lead to environmental and personal safety problems. More programs are needed to help people who use pesticides to apply these products safely and to correctly identify plant pests in order to select the correct product to use. Commercial applicators who manage landscapes need to be trained and certified by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) as required by law. Information regarding new plant pests and possible control methods needs to be disseminated promptly to those who need it. Plant health practices need to be encouraged to prevent the need for plant pest control.

There have been two new plant pests in Danville in the past 5 years that are causing significant economic and aesthetic Damage. The ANR Extension Agent needs to continue to work closely with local businesses and plant service agencies to effectively reduce the impact of these new issues.

The ANR Horticulture Extension Agent and the Master Gardener volunteers offer pest management programs to the public several times every year. Programs are also offered to commercial applicators to help them successfully pass the examinations to obtain their certifications and to maintain their certifications on behalf of VDACS. In addition, other public programs are offered to teach homeowners about organic gardening and landscape strategies to reduce or avoid the use of synthetic pesticides. This effort will be maintained and new opportunities to expand these programs to reach wider audiences.

Issue 5: Horticulture Education. Homeowners, lawn care companies, landscapers, and plant nurseries need up-to-date, research based information to get the most out of their landscape and gardening efforts. Gardening and landscaping can be very expensive so it is important to use proper methods to select and care for the plants to achieve aesthetic quality in the landscape and to grow crops of high quality vegetables in the gardens.

The ANR Horticulture Extension Agent and the Master Gardeners expend the majority of their efforts on this issue. The 4-H Agent has also participated in several gardening programs targeted toward youth such as the program offered through the Gibson Elementary School greenhouse. Between 5 and 15 new Master Gardeners are trained every year to allow us to expand our efforts and reach a larger audience. The ANR Horticulture Agent works with the Horticulture Job Skills program at W. W. Moore Juvenile Detention Home to provide the youth in the Post-Dispositional program with skills they can use to find employment when they are ready to enter the job market.

More effort needs to be made to reach commercial operations in the future to train their workers and provide them with the results of recent research.

Issue 6: VCE Staffing. A full-time VCE Agent position in the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program area is needed in the Danville City area to address several issues and expand educational programs for families in other areas of concern. An FCS Agent could expand programs related to food, food safety, nutrition and health and offer new programs in finance and budgeting for adults. Child care and caring for people with special needs could also be addressed by this position.

The ANR Extension Agent will retire within a few months after the completion of this Situation Analysis. The need for this position in Danville is clearly demonstrated by the results and discussions of the preceding pages. This position needs to be filled promptly to continue serving the needs of the people of the Danville Unit.

Possible Issue 7: If, at some future time, a casino does locate in Danville there may be a need for educational programs in the field of addictive/compulsive behavior. This would be important to help local residents identify such behavior by their family members or friends. It would also be important to be able to find services to help victims cope with this behavior.

