

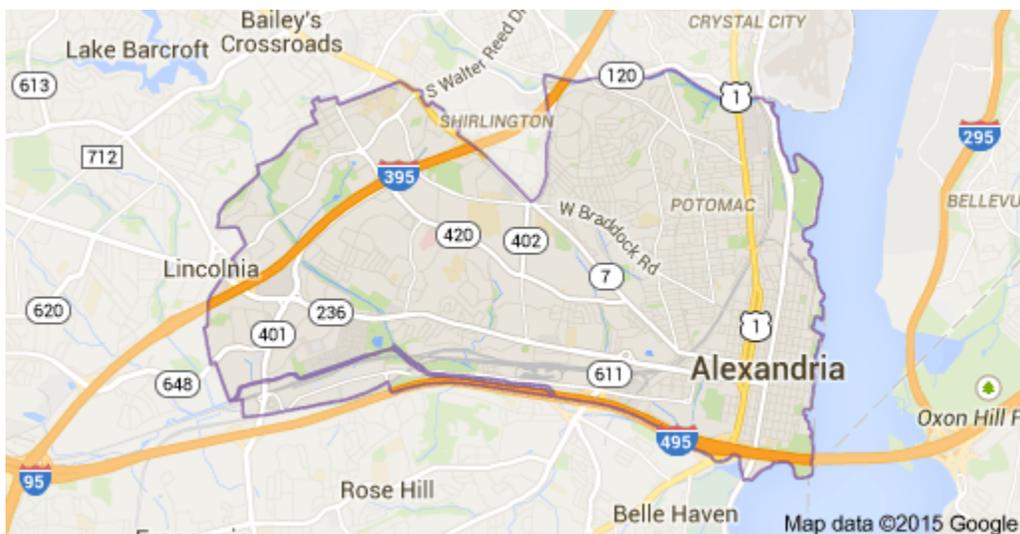


Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

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Situation Analysis Report



City of Alexandria

2018

UNIT Extension Staff

Kirsten Conrad, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent
Van Do, SNAP-Ed Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences Food, Nutrition & Health
Milena Montoya, Family Nutrition Program Assistant
Reginald Morris, Unit Coordinator / 4-H Youth Extension Agent
Octavia Walker, Unit Administrative Assistant

UNIT Extension Leadership Council

Jane King
Margaret Orlando
Edith Lam
Susan Pollack

Introduction

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The Alexandria Unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension conducted its situation analysis by reviewing the unit profile generously prepared for us by VCE staff in Blacksburg and comparing it to the community profile prepared each year by the City of Alexandria. In addition, we utilized data presented by various departments, commissions, and community organizations working within the City of Alexandria that are currently providing like-minded educational, research, and volunteer services. We also conducted a community survey to assess what community members see as the priority issues in our city. Our Extension Leadership Council (ELC), which is routinely active in advocating for Cooperative Extension and helping us to market our programs and accomplishments, took an active role in helping to encourage people to complete the survey. Staff and the ELC analyzed the data from the unit profile and the community survey in order to identify priority issues.

Unit Profile

The city of Alexandria is located in Northern Virginia directly across the Potomac River from Washington DC. Rich in history and diversity, Alexandria is nationally recognized as one of the best places to live and do business on the East coast. Alexandria was established on May 11, 1749, and was later incorporated in 1779. As of the 2016 U.S. Census, the estimated population of Alexandria was 160,035 people, representing a growth of 14.3% compared to information presented in the 2010 U.S. Census. Alexandria's population is an ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse mix representing more than 110 different countries and speaking more than 138 native languages. Foreign-born persons represent 27.8% of Alexandria's total population, a figure that continues to trend upward. This diverse population mix has the potential to create cultural and language barriers that must be overcome when planning and facilitating educational programming to the citizens of Alexandria. VCE in Alexandria continues to take a proactive role in identifying and targeting a diverse audience of learners by recruiting, training, and developing a wide variety of volunteers and partnering with like-minded community partners to meet the needs of its ever-changing population. Alexandria's unemployment rate continues to improve and, as of March 2018, the unemployment rate was listed at 2.5%; a rate lower than the Commonwealth of Virginia's unemployment rate of 3.4%. Alexandria is home to over 12,000 thriving businesses and organizations, including a large representation of technology companies, professional organizations, the United States Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) and a tourism industry that host nearly 3.3 million visitors each year. Alexandria City Public School system is one of the most economically and racially diverse school systems in the country. As of FY 2018, school enrollment was listed at 15,493 students. At \$82,200, the median household income is greater than Virginia's median household income, however, poverty is still an issue facing Alexandria especially in its school-age population. Data indicated that during the 2017-2018 school year 63.20% of the total student enrollment of Alexandria City Public School student was listed as eligible for free or reduced-price meals. These statistics create unique challenges for Alexandria since this percentage is higher than its neighboring jurisdictions of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun. The City of Alexandria has several housing programs to assist low to moderate income households

with the home ownership, home rehabilitation, and accessibility improvements. The number of housing units in Alexandria is 76,593 (2017 U.S. Census Data).

Community and Resident Perspectives

As stated in the introduction we worked with our ELC to craft and distribute a community survey. The survey was sent to current volunteers, program participants, partner organizations, city government contracts, and elected officials. All of these people were asked to send the survey to their friends who live or work in Alexandria so that we could gain the perspective of people less familiar with Extension's programs. Among respondents 14% said they were not familiar at all with Extension's programs, 23% were somewhat familiar, 29% were familiar, and 32% were very familiar. 41% have never participated in an Extension program before while 58% have done so. Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents were female and 7% were male. The largest age group of respondents were those between the ages of 18-65, with 60% of respondents in that category.

Priority Issues

Issue 1: Healthy Living

Healthy living was identified as priority issues facing the City of Alexandria. This issue includes addressing food security, providing nutrition education for youth and adult audiences, and improving access to healthy food options. VCE is addressing these issues by providing nutrition-based education to youth and adults through the Family Nutrition Program, working in partnership with local farmers markets and groceries store to promote healthier food choices, establishing healthy living based 4-H project clubs, and support the recruitment, training, and continual development of the Master Food Volunteer Program that supports the facilitation of healthy living educational outreach.

Issue 2: Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development was identified as a priority issue facing the City of Alexandria. This issue includes areas such as: before and after-school care, life skill development, decision-making skills, and anti-bullying education. All program area within Virginia Cooperative Extension addresses positive youth development through collaborative programming with 4-H youth development. An ongoing partnership with Alexandria Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities - Out of School Time Program has created several avenues for Virginia Cooperative Extension to positively enhance after-school care in Alexandria through programming, training, and evaluation.

Issue 3: Natural Resources

Natural Resources were identified as a pressing issue facing the City of Alexandria. Areas including recycling, energy conservation, and environmental education, were cited as areas of need. In an effort to address these issues, VCE has worked in partnership with the City of Alexandria and other community stakeholders. The City of Alexandria has developed, is developing, or is currently updating several documents that address environmental issues and initiatives. These include:

- Eco-City Charter (2008)
- Environmental Action Plan (2009) - currently being updated
- Landscape Guidelines (2007) - currently being updated
- Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Strategic Plan: 2018-2023 - one of its four focus areas is Invest in Our Natural Environment
- Open Space Master Plan (2003) - 2017 updated the implementation strategy
- Environmental and Sustainability Management System (ESMS) (2014)
- Urban Forestry Master Plan (2009) - currently being updated
- Natural Resource Management Plan (2018)

The need to work closely to monitor and manage Alexandria's natural resources and provide opportunities for environmental education also have health implications for city residents. One community survey respondent stated: "The growing number of invasive plants on community properties. Please educate the owners of these properties concerning the problems with these plants and the illnesses it can cause."

Issue 4: Financial Education

Financial Education was identified as a priority issue facing the City of Alexandria. Areas such as, home ownership (affordable housing) and avoiding financial fraud/scams were specifically identified. One survey respondent stated "Lack of affordable housing for lower to moderate-income families. This lack forces families to move out of Alexandria, contributes to homelessness." VCE provides direct educational services related to acquiring the skills necessary to obtain (homeownership) and maintain a home, through volunteer programs such as Energy Masters and Master Financial Volunteers. These programs provide research-based resources related to budgeting, energy efficiency, and credit counseling. Programs teaching budgeting, such as Kids Marketplace and Reality Store, are also offered to youth to reinforce the value of strong personal finance.

Issue 5: Adults and Aging

Adults and Aging is another priority issue facing the City of Alexandria. In particular, caregiving & caregiver resources were specifically identified. Currently, VCE does not provide specific resources to address aging and caregiving. This represents an opportunity to meet and reach a new underserved audience in Alexandria.