



Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Situation Analysis Report



Fairfax County

2018

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Introduction

Over the last several decades, Fairfax County has evolved from a rural area, to a suburb of Washington, D.C., and now to a vibrant, densely populated area with urban centers of its own. Fifteen miles west of Washington, D.C., the county covers 395 square land miles within the Shenandoah/Chesapeake Bay Watershed and along the Potomac River shoreline. Fairfax County and the independent cities and towns of Falls Church, Reston, Fairfax City, Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna are home to nearly 1.2 million residents. Overall, the population is diverse, highly educated, and wealthy, though disparities exist by race/ethnicity, age, and geography.

Unit Profile

Since 1970, Fairfax County's population has more than doubled in size; Fairfax's population reached 1,148,433 in the 2017 U.S. Census. As the most populous jurisdiction in Virginia, Fairfax County's population exceeds that of eight states and the District of Columbia. One in eight Virginians resides in Fairfax County.

Fairfax County has a rich diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds, and our diversity has continued to grow since our last situation analysis. In 2017, more than one in two (51%) residents reports a race/ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white, which is up from 37% in 2011. In the past 25 years, the Asian population has more than doubled; the Hispanic population has more than tripled. Nearly forty percent of residents speak a language other than English at home, and students in Fairfax County Public Schools speak 180 languages.

Socioeconomic Indicators

Fairfax County's 2017 median household income of \$119,230 is nearly double the state and national medians (\$70,535 and \$60,336, respectively). Yet, with a notably higher cost-of-living in Fairfax, 30.1% of households earn incomes below \$75,000, the amount a family of four needs to cover basic living expenses (<http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/51059>). In Fairfax, 7.6% of households—87,618 residents--earn less than \$25,000. Poverty rates have increased since our last situation analysis in 2013. The poverty rate increased from 5.8% in 2012 to 6.7% in 2018. Fairfax County's Department of Human Services and other emergency assistance providers are under more pressure than ever to find food, rent, utilities, and other support services for our County's most vulnerable residents.

To keep up with the high cost-of-living in Fairfax, two wage-earner households rose to a new high, creating challenges for parents of school-aged children. The need has increased for community-based programming that provides a safe place for children to go. According to 2018 data, 26.1% of the population is under 20 years old. There are 222 public schools and educational centers in Fairfax County, with 187,830 students for the (2018-2019) school year. Fairfax County Public School district is the largest school system in the Commonwealth and the 10th largest school district in the nation. The high school graduation rate has increased by one percent for a rate of (93%) since the last situation analysis; 61% of the county's residents have a four- or six-year college degree.

Since 2018, Fairfax County has shown a slight increase in percentage of residents ages 65 and over, making up 12.2% of the population. County Services are continually challenged to engage and support Fairfax's aging population, particularly those 65 and older.

Fairfax County has over 30,000 acres of parkland. This includes bike trails, athletic fields, golf course and lakes. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's Metrorail train service is 119 miles long (25% increase) and has 91 stations (20% increase); ten stations (50 % increase) serve Fairfax County. Increases in stations Developers are continuing to work with Metrorail to build another branch of train tracks and bus services to the Dulles Airport and other Western areas of Fairfax County.

Health Indicators

Being overweight or obese affects quality of life and puts individuals at risk for developing diseases, especially heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. Being overweight or obese also carries significant economic costs due to increased healthcare spending and lost earnings. More than half (54%) of adults in Fairfax are overweight or obese. Low-income preschool obesity rates in Fairfax County are among the worst in the state and the nation. One in four low-income preschoolers has a high body mass index (BMI), above the 95th percentile for age.

The top five causes of morbidity and mortality in the Fairfax community are heart/cardiovascular disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, and hypertension. Overall cancer incidence in the Fairfax community (390.1 per 100,000) compares favorably to state rates (417.2 per 100,000). While the incidence of most cancers has declined, the rate of breast cancer has been increasing since 2010. Female breast cancer is the only type of cancer for which Fairfax rates (150.7 per 100,000) are higher than Virginia (128.3 per 100,000). Prostate cancer incidence rate is 48% higher in Blacks than the overall value of 94.6 cases per 100,000 males. The

Fairfax community has higher rates of tuberculosis (5.7 per 100,000) and Lyme disease (18.0 per 100,000) compared to Virginia overall.

Life expectancy in Fairfax County for both males and females is higher than the state and the nation, at 82.3 and 85.1 years, respectively. Nationally, Fairfax County ranks 11th for male life expectancy and 15th for female life expectancy as of 2014. Though high overall, life expectancy varies by as much as 11 years across the county, from 78 years in parts of Centreville, Annandale, and the Route 1 corridor to 89 years in neighborhoods near Reston Town Center and Tysons Corner.

Community and Resident Perspectives

Two hundred and thirty six community residents completed the online community survey, which asked respondents to rate the importance of 30 issues. Agents analyzed the community survey results and identified 7 themes from the issue rankings and comments. Agents presented these preliminary findings to representatives from each of the three major volunteer groups (4-H Volunteers, Master Gardeners, and Master Food Volunteers). The findings were endorsed by the ELC and volunteer group representatives. Community and resident perspectives are included with each priority issue description.

Priority Issues

The 2018 Fairfax County Situation Analysis consists of 25 key issues, which were identified by evaluating shifts in demographic surveillance data, surveying community stakeholders (e.g., VCE volunteers, program partners, program participants, and local elected officials), and consulting boards and committees (i.e., the ELC, Northern Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, Master Gardeners, Master Food Volunteers, and 4-H Clubs). Surveillance data included the Fairfax Unit Profile prepared by VCE, along with county government reports on diversity, economic stability, education, and community planning (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/government/about/data/). The online community survey asked respondents to rate the importance of issues. Agents analyzed the community survey results, and identified 7 themes from the issue rankings and comments. Agents presented these preliminary issues, which were endorsed by the ELC and representatives from each of the three major volunteer groups present at the forum.

Issue #1: Environment/Water Quality/Pesticides Seventy-three percent of community survey respondents reported these topics as important. The last ten years development has steadily increased in housing units. This has led to several priority issues, of which VCE is responsible for some role in each: Loss of Tree Canopy/Replacement of Trees. As development increases larger trees are removed and replaced with smaller trees after construction, these trees are left to struggle in harsh conditions. Research has shown that trees that are planted in urban survive approximately 7-10 years. Other pressing environmental issues are Storm Water Management/Water Quality/ Wetland Preservation/Turf Reduction/Use of Fertilizers and Pesticides. As development increases storm water management and water quality become issues since more and more impervious surfaces are developed. Water quality and algae growth problems are important since the Chesapeake Bay is impacted by urban sprawl. Flora and Fauna Management (wildlife, invasives/exotics, “right plant right place”): Due to development issues and lack of education, residents and professionals often have conflicts with wildlife and invasive plants. Often citizens do not realize that some plants sold at the nursery can become invasive. Pesticide use and misuse entails many issues. Residents and professionals often just want the “silver bullet” effect. Major issues include overuse of pesticides, professionals with lack of pesticide certification, lack of knowledge of product, and lack of use of proper personal protective equipment (PPE). Fairfax County has thousands of certified pesticide applicators but has many that are still not certified.

VCE's Role: VCE Master Gardeners have 27 plant clinics across the county in which plant problem diagnosis and insect identification can be obtained. Programs for Nutrient Management such as “Home Turf” help the homeowner learn more about their lawn and fertilizers and being more sensitive toward the Chesapeake Bay. VCE also plays an active role in presentations at Green Industry professional workshops, local civic associations and citizen groups. This is a large issue in which many other partnership agencies contribute they include the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District NVSWCD (VCE Horticulture Extension Agent is a member of the Board), Fairfax County Department of Public Works, Environmental Services (DPWES), Fairfax County Tree Commission, Fairfax ReLeaf, Virginia Department of Forestry and Earth Sangha. VCE addresses pesticide education (certification and re-certification programs) through workshops and classes that they partner with Green Industry Professional organizations and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) who investigates and regulates pesticide problems.

Issue #2: Resources for an Aging Population: Fairfax County's aging population has increased steadily over the last several years. Individuals have decided to retire locally, with an increased need for programs and resources. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Committee on Aging identifies health promotion among people of retired age to be a priority in this population. The strategic plan for the county identifies Virginia Cooperative Extension as a key partner agency for providing nutrition education classes and support. The ELC is in agreement with these assessments, and continues to support County efforts to prevent chronic disease. VCE's Role: VCE collaborates with Senior Services in offering programs and activities. Intergenerational programs are a key component in many of our VCE Programs. Master Gardener and Master Food Volunteer education programs are popular with those who are retiring or near retirement age. 4-H program lend themselves to opportunities for

intergenerational programs. 96% of participants in a 2018 Neighborhood and Community Services customer satisfaction survey claimed they feel more involved and connected to their community by being involved in or volunteering for VCE's programs.

Issue # 3: Chronic Disease and Obesity Healthy lifestyles was the #1 priority issue in Fairfax's last situation analysis in 2013, and improving lifestyle persists as the most important issue today. One community survey responder wrote for chronic disease and obesity: "... both lead to decreased quality of life and increased healthcare expenses. Involvement by the business and non-profit community is crucial." Although the Northern region's obesity and chronic disease rates are generally lower than state and national averages, Fairfax County community health status assessments report dramatic and increasing health disparities among ethnic and racial minorities, particular age groups, income groups, as well as certain geographical areas. In Fairfax County, three of the five leading causes of death are mediated by lifestyle choice: cancer, cardiovascular disease, and cerebrovascular disease. A community behavioral assessment by the Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax identified the top contributors to premature death and chronic disease, by percentage of population: no exercise (14.6%), few fruits and vegetables eaten daily (71.5%), overweight and obesity (51.8%), and high blood pressure (19.6%). Further, chronic conditions such as diabetes (4.6%) and high cholesterol (40.1%) are prevalent among Fairfax adults. Mental health and Opioids was also mentioned as an issue, we add it here to indicate VCE is working on this in other parts of the commonwealth and would partner with NCS and CSB to combat the problem.

VCE's Role: Though lead by FCS nutrition programming, chronic disease and obesity is addressed by all faculty and staff at the Fairfax Unit, including Horticulture, 4-H, and general office activities. Since the last situation analysis in 2013, the Fairfax office met its goal of expanding FCS faculty and staff. Our FCS agent is now full time here in Fairfax as we used to share the position with Arlington. Nutrition programs empower residents to make healthy choices by teaching basic nutrition and cooking skills, and the Master Food Volunteer program helps FCS reach even more people. While all community members benefit from improved lifestyle, the Fairfax Unit pays special attention to low-income communities. Our two Family Nutrition Program Assistants and Nutrition Outreach Instructor provide nutrition classes for low income individuals and families receiving or eligible to receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Issue #4: Youth Life Skills/Decision Making/Development/Activities The UNESCO institute for Education recommends that youth development organizations "ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs." In a survey of Fairfax County Virginia Cooperative Extension clientele, 75.52% responded that life skills, leadership skills, and citizenship skills are major issues confronting youth of Fairfax County that can be addressed through educational programming. 4-H affords the community with a variety of programming to provide ample access to positive youth activities including leadership, citizenship, and life-skills development programs.

Social Forces has reported that adolescents, who are involved in community service have been found more likely to have a strong work ethic as adults and are more likely to volunteer in the future. Volunteering in adolescence is also related to overall positive academic, psychological, and occupational outcomes. Regarding workplace readiness as youth transition, the following skill development and educational opportunities are suggested: having a sense of purpose so youth can navigate labor market fluctuations, healthy behaviors, avoiding risky behaviors, positive mental health, resilience, strong work ethic, social competence and creativity. Additionally, 74.13% of Fairfax County residents surveyed ranked leadership and personal development as one of the most important programming areas for youth in the county.

VCE's Role: Extension addresses these issues through its 4-H youth development program. Here in Fairfax County, we provide positive youth development programming through a variety of methods. We currently have 14 active 4-H clubs & 2 military partnered 4-H clubs that meet on a monthly basis. Every club serves as a safe places for youth to meet and learn about a certain area of focus. Our clubs meet at different times. Each club is led by and adult volunteer and the schedule meetings time are based on the availability of the members and the volunteers. Some clubs have the ability to meet in the evenings, after school, weekends, and in the past our home-school groups have met during the day. Each club is unique in its own fashion and study a wide variety of topics throughout the year. We have clubs that focus on specific projects, such as beekeeping, K-9 training, and robotics to name a few. Also, we have community clubs which select several projects to work on throughout the year. For example one of our community clubs in the past has completed home food preservation, sewing, computer hardware, and community service projects. No matter what project a youth participates in, they will learn valuable life skills that develop them into outstanding individuals. Effectively, every club provides an outlet for youth to foster positive development including leadership and citizenship skills. The county provides additional experiences outside of the volunteer led clubs, like after school programs and mentorship.

Within the extension office, we organize several events to ensure that they youth are gaining additional information, life skills, and citizenship that they otherwise would not be provided by doing. Having the youth do more gives them the enthusiasm to be both productive and contributing citizens in the society. One of the many events that we organize is the annual public speaking and presentation competition giving 4-H members the chance to display what they have learned during the 4-H year. 4-H members that place in the competition are afforded the opportunity to take their talents and complete at the district and state level. In addition, Extension also organizes an annual overnight camp, providing youth a week-long fun, safe, educational environment. While at the camp it is our mission to incorporate individual learning outcomes focusing in the areas of social, mental and physical development. 4-H is also involved two school enrichment programs, embryology and Ready, Set, Grow! Within a school enrichment program, extension is involved directly in the classroom with the participants actively engaged in learning the material. Using the school enrichment delivery method, 4-H is able to impact the lives of many more youth in the community. These experiences provide youth opportunities for after school activities, development, leadership opportunities, and community involvement, all while learning skills that they will rely on for the rest of their life.

Issue #5: Edible Food Production/Local Food Initiative With the help of Virginia Cooperative Extension, the local foods movement throughout the commonwealth has gained momentum in support of Virginia agriculture. This movement not only promotes green, sustainable agriculture, but also contributes to Virginia's economy. Even in urban areas such as Fairfax County, residents want to grow their own food, eat more locally grown foods or know how far it traveled. **VCE's Role:** VCE Master Gardeners and Master Food Volunteers promote programs to eat more green and local foods. Master Gardener and Master Food Volunteers facilitate education programs at schools, community gardens and farmers markets. Connections are made with growing your own food and nutritious eating habits as a healthy lifestyle.

Issue #6: Food Safety and Preservation The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 76 million people in the United States become sick with foodborne illnesses annually: 325,000 are hospitalized, and 5,000 die each year. Foodborne illnesses are typically caused by food prepared improperly. People who become sick with such illnesses are prone to be less productive in both their professional and home lives. In Fairfax County, as in the United States as a whole, Salmonella and Campylobacter were the most commonly reported causes of foodborne illness over the last 10 years. The 2009 Fairfax County incidence rates for Campylobacter and Salmonella were comparable to the statewide and national rates (CDC, Preliminary FoodNet, 2010). In the community survey, one responder said that food safety was so important that volunteers across all program areas should be trained.

VCE's Role: Extension addresses this issue through education on the five behaviors identified by the CDC to prevent most foodborne illness outbreaks: purchasing food from safe sources, cooking food correctly, holding food at proper temperatures, using uncontaminated equipment, and practicing good personal hygiene. Food safety is incorporated into every nutrition program, including FNP classes. Extension provides food safety training for professionals and community members serving the public. Trained FCS agents and Master Food Volunteers provide food preservation programs at community centers and other partner groups throughout the county.

Issue #7: Transportation/Land use: Transportation is a critical component of self-sufficiency and impacts youth, family, and senior issues. This is one of the most talked about issues. Everyday transportation is a challenge, program participants may find that geographic and traffic boundaries make it difficult for them to participate. This is especially true for the working poor, elderly, persons with disabilities, or those wishing to access services.

VCE's Role: VCE's role is limited in this issue. We collaborate with FASTRAN, a County transportation service, part of Neighborhood and Community Services. Transportation continues to be an issue that surfaced in our 2013 community needs assessment survey. In the fast paced urban environment of Fairfax County, most residents wish there were more hours in their day. Residents find themselves with challenges such as needing to avoid traffic jams and caring for their children as well as their aging parents.

Issue #8: Parenting and Financial Education Parenting and Financial Education are key components of FCS Programming, and these issues were important to community survey

respondents. Poor family management practices are defined as parents failing to communicate clear expectations for behavior, and parents failing to monitor and supervise their children (knowing where they are and with whom they are occupied). Children exposed to poor family management are at greater risk of substance abuse, violence, delinquency, school drop-out or general failure.

VCE's Role: In Fairfax County, the Department of Family Services, Department of Housing and Department of Adoption and Foster Care focus on programs for these issues. Our FCS agent works in Fairfax County only 60% of her time. Neighborhood and Community Services has asked VCE to focus on Food, Nutrition and Health programs as well as food safety and preservation.