

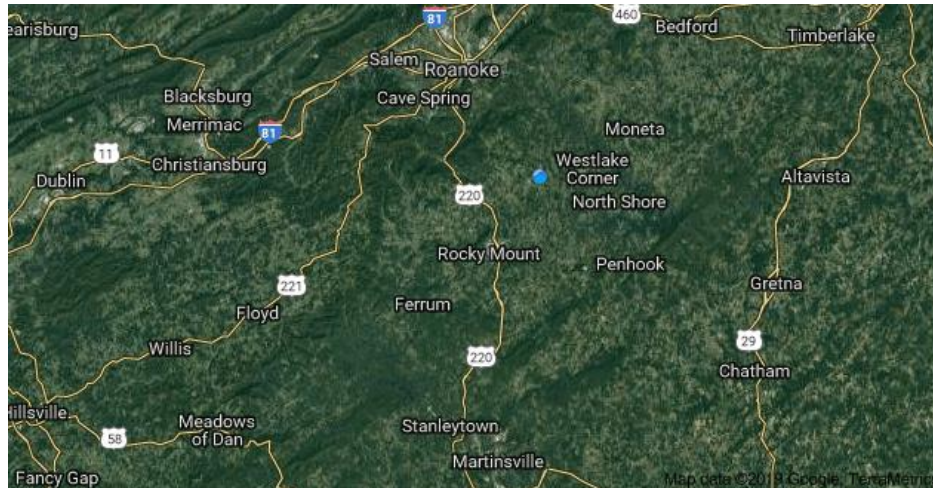


Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Situation Analysis Report



Franklin County

2018

UNIT Extension Staff

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Introduction

Through the calendar year of 2018, the Franklin County Virginia Cooperative Extension Unit conducted a comprehensive Situation Analysis utilizing Unit Staff, community stakeholders, and citizen surveys. The process began by reviewing the 2013 Situation Analysis Report and identifying the methodology used for data gathering. While public forums were used in the last situation analysis, the unit chose similar opportunities to seek input such as invited speaking engagements and routine department head meetings throughout the year. In addition, Franklin County Extension Office has nearly 700 followers on social media. In response, agents created a social media survey of community needs. There were a total of two face-to-face meetings and 41 online survey responses. After data collection, agents convened to analyze and prioritize the data to compile the final report.

Unit Profile

Demographic Summary

The County of Franklin is located in the westernmost area of Southside, Virginia at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is bordered by the counties of Floyd to the west, Roanoke to the north, Bedford to the north-east, Pittsylvania to the east, Henry/Martinsville to the south, and Patrick to the southeast. Franklin has been given the name of “Land between the Lakes” due to the formation of Philpot Lake and Smith Mountain Lake (SML) for hydro-electrical and tourism uses.

Franklin County’s population in 2017 was an estimated 56,445 people, representing a 0.5% increase from 2010 and almost a 19% increase from 2000. Trends in the population for Franklin County have increased overall, with the largest population growth occurring within the last 20 years. Since 1960, the population has increased by 54 percent and is anticipated to continue rising over the next 10 to 20 years; the population is estimated to be over 62,000 by 2020.

The age range of the population within the county is varied, but the age group with the highest population is the 45 to 54 years group, which had near 9,000 people. This follows trend with the state of Virginia as well as national demographics. The 35 to 44 years age group is the second largest for the county, with over 7,000 people. Franklin County’s smallest age group includes residents 85 years or older. This age group contains about 830 people for the county and is also the smallest for Virginia and the United States.

The gender distribution of Franklin County has remained consistent over the course of the last decade with males accounting for 49.35% and females 50.65%. This trend correlates equally with trends seen at the state and national level.

Household data shows the majority of household income rates remaining the same and following state trends. Mean household income is \$58,858 (up 8% from 2007) although this is lower than the state and national average (30% and 17% respectively).

Overall, the basic demographics from Franklin County continue to remain consistent over the years with the exception of the aforementioned factors.

Community and Resident Perspectives

In addition to the online survey on the county website, two public forums conducted for information gathering were held at the following locations:

- The Franklin Center
 - Franklin County Government Center
- Approximate total respondents: 100

In addition to county citizens, the following community groups and local government departments were represented in face-to-face meetings:

Aging Services
Parks and Recreation
Department of Social Services
Economic Development
Public Safety
Franklin County Sherriff's Department
Virginia Department of Health
United Way of Roanoke and Franklin County
Rocky Mount Rotary Club
Public School System
Planning & Zoning
County Administration
Commerce & Leisure
Tax & Revenue

The following issues were identified during the two Situation Analysis public forums in order from most important to less important:

1. Drug addiction/abuse prevention/education
2. Public transportation
3. Access to fresh food/healthy food
4. Education/technical job training
5. Infrastructure/road improvements
6. Affordable health care
7. Economic development

Our survey asked 5 generalized questions and the results below are the top 5 responses based on each question.

Question#1: How familiar are you with Virginia Cooperative Extension?

- #1 Slightly familiar
- #2 Very Familiar
- #3 Moderately Familiar
- #4 Not Familiar at all
- #5 Extremely Familiar

Question #2: In which Extension Educational Program have you or your children participated?

- #1 None (44.7%)
- #2 4-H (39.5%)
- #3 Family Consumer Science (5.3%) & Other (5.3%)
- #4 Agriculture and Natural Resources (2.6%)
- #5 Master Gardener Programs (2.6%)

Question #3: What is the most critical issue, challenge, or obstacles facing Franklin County community at large now?

- #1 Drug use and mental health concerns
- #2 Trained workforce and new jobs
- #3 Loss of farms and farmland to development
- #4 Public Transportation
- #5 Health/Nutrition

Question #4 What is the most critical issue, challenge, or obstacle facing businesses in Franklin County now?

- #1 Trained, skilled, motivated employees
- #2 County Leadership
- #3 Dependable Internet
- #4 Transportation
- #5 Small Businesses vs Large Corporate Business can't compete

Question # 5 What is the most critical issue, challenge, or obstacle facing you/your household in Franklin County now?

- #1 Low wages and high insurance/lack of adequate health care coverage
- #2 High Taxes
- #3 Making living from self-owned business or small farm
- #4 Lack of dependable internet
- #5 Affordable housing

Program Area Questions

Our survey asked additional questions based on program area to help determine program area needs. The top 7 responses are given.

Question #6 Please rate the importance of the following Agriculture issues in Franklin County. - Agriculture Extension Programming Needs

- #1. Environmental Regulations
- #2. Ag Economics
- #3. Farm Business Management and Profitability; Crop Production; Dairy Farming Stability
- #4. Farm Labor
- #5. Consumer Education/Ag Awareness; Value Added Livestock Marketing; Greenhouse Production
- #6. Agri-Tourism
- #7. Niche/Direct Marketing; Estate/Farm Transition Planning

Question #7 Please rate the importance of the following Family and Consumer Science Extension needs in Franklin County - Family and Consumer Science Extension Programming Needs

- #1. Parenting (parent/child relations, discipline)
- #2. Job Skills Training
- #3. Financial Management (debt, changing income, retirement planning, budgeting)
- #4. Adolescence (life skills)
- #5. Aging (Elder care, caregiving)
- #6. Nutrition (obesity, healthy choices)
- #7. Food Safety (home food safety, preservation, commercial restaurants)

Question #8 Please rate the importance of the following 4-H Youth Development issues or needs in Franklin County - 4-H Extension Programming Needs

- #1. Youth Life Skills Development
- #2. Substance Abuse
- #3. Community Involvement and Community Service
- #4. Leadership Skills/Personal Development; Higher Education/Career Prep; Social Media (Cyberbullying, Mental Health, Anxiety)
- #5. Positive Role Models/Mentoring; Self Confidence; Financial Literacy
- #6. Hands-on Learning out of school
- #7. Independent Living; Adolescence

Priority Issues

Based upon the unit profile and community & resident perspectives the following are the top ten priorities identified for the County of Franklin. Initially, the first sections of priority issues are able to be addressed utilizing Virginia Cooperative Extension resources or already are being addressed but require additional attention. The final section of priority issues are outside the scope of Virginia Cooperative Extension resources and should be referred to the appropriate agency for attention.

1. Drug Addiction/Abuse/Prevention/Education
2. Lack of Public Transportation
3. Fresh Food/Healthy Food Access
4. Affordable/Accessible Health Care
5. Higher Education/Career and Technical Job Training Opportunities
6. Skilled/Higher Paying Jobs
7. Extracurricular Activities for Youth
8. Recreational Opportunities
9. Safe and Affordable Housing
10. Willing and Competent Workforce

Status: The following priority issues are currently being addressed through Virginia Cooperative Extension resources and continued efforts need to be made to better these issues.

- **Drug Addiction/Abuse Prevention/Education.** The top issue recognized by forum and survey respondents was the nationwide opioid epidemic that has unfortunately touched our community. The Family and Consumer Sciences Agent has worked actively with a local non-profit organization known as the FRESH (Focus on Response and Education to Stay Healthy) coalition. The coalition's prime focus is to prevent drug abuse among youth through education. Additionally, the 4-H Agent frequently works with teens to encourage healthy lifestyles and leadership through club activities and service at 4-H camp. While Extension plays some role in this effort, it is recognized that this issue is bigger than one person or agency and must be addressed by the community as a whole. Extension's relationship with fellow agencies allows us to direct citizens seeking help.
- **Fresh Food/Healthy Food Access.** In efforts to assist in making fresh healthy food accessible to the community of Franklin County, the unit started a community-giving garden in partnership with Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach grant program. This serves as the unit's annual Plan of Work project. Beginning in 2016, a local small business allowed Extension to use an acre of land for purposes of planting a giving garden and demonstrating growing practices and food preparation techniques. Since its beginning, two educational programs have been held and over 5,000lbs of produce has been distributed to local food banks and families in need. This project is ongoing and is

part of a concerted effort by United Way consisting of approximately 20 giving gardens across the county.

- **Extracurricular Activities for Youth.** While some localities may be lacking, Franklin County offers quite a few opportunities for youth recreation. The Extension office provides four 4-H clubs to be involved in that cater to a wide variety of interests. Extension also participates with Ferrum College by hosting practicum students in which college students shadow agents for college credit. Lastly, Extension encourages youth involvement in leadership roles through 4-H and in educational associations such as the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association.
- **Higher Education/Career and Technical Job Training Opportunities.** A common theme among respondents was the need for a career and technical expansion of the high school and more training opportunities to develop a skilled workforce. In addition to Extension and Ferrum College's shadowing program, each year, the Extension office hosts a paid student intern. The intern rotates through all program areas and is exposed to day-to-day functions of the job while meeting various stakeholders within the community. This experience has led to employment within Extension and positive references for the intern based on working relationships both within and outside of Extension. The Unit Coordinator represents Extension on a working group that is focused on Career and Technical Expansion of the high school. The county is currently in negotiations with the school board on executing a plan.

Status: The following priority issues are outside the scope of Virginia Cooperative Extension resources and should be referred to the appropriate agency.

- **Lack of Public Transportation.** The second top issue among respondents was the need for public transportation. While transportation currently exists for qualifying seniors, there is a lack of consistent transportation services for the public. This is an issue that would be handled best by another agency or private business.
- **Affordable/Accessible Health Care.** Healthcare is on the forefront as an issue not only locally but nationwide. Although Extension can promote healthy lifestyles and choices, the answer to affordable, accessible healthcare is much more complex. Solutions to this issue should be proposed by the community to elected representatives.
- **Skilled/Higher Paying Jobs.** As in any rural community, higher paying jobs is a necessity for a robust economy and more importantly, a better quality of life. To attract employers, it is critical that a skilled, trained workforce be available for them to hire. A focus on expanding career and technical education at the high school should be a priority.
- **Willing and Skilled Workforce.** A common theme among respondents, especially among small businesses was the need for people that are skilled and willing to work. This issue could partially be addressed by career and technical education however willingness

to work is an issue that is much more complex. Developing a willing workforce should begin with youth and should be a community-wide effort.

- **Recreational Opportunities.** As mentioned under “Extracurricular Activities for Youth”, Franklin County offers a wide variety of recreational activities and at a price that is affordable or free. If additional recreational opportunities are desired, interest should be expressed to Franklin County Parks and Recreation and those interested could volunteer to help lead these efforts.
- **Safe and Affordable Housing.** Housing can be an issue for many families in Franklin County. Not only is cost of living higher in Franklin County than surrounding counties but available and affordable housing is hard to find. This issue was not only recognized by respondents but has been mentioned several times among the Board of Supervisors. County officials have pointed out that this issue presents an opportunity for housing developers.

References:

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