

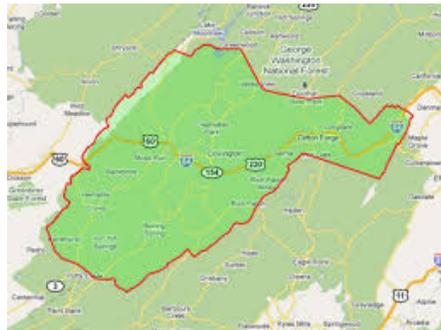


Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu

Situation Analysis Report



Alleghany/Covington

2019

Alleghany Extension Staff

Christine Hodges, 4-H Youth Extension Agent
Sandy Byer, Support Staff

Alleghany Extension Leadership Council

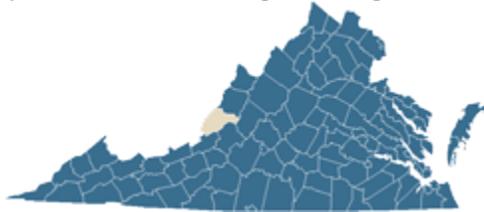
Currently restructuring

Introduction

Alleghany County and Covington City conducted a comprehensive analysis of the issues facing its citizens during 2018/2019. Using the 2013 VCE Situation Analysis as a baseline, the process for updating this report involved many potential stakeholders including Master Gardeners; Master Naturalists; Alleghany School Board Members and Department Heads; Covington City School Board Members and Superintendent; Alleghany Board of Supervisors and County Administrator; Covington City Council Members, Mayor and City Manager; Alleghany and Covington School Teachers; 4-H Volunteers and Youth Members; Alleghany Foundation; Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce; Farm Bureau Representatives; YMCA; and Local Business Owners and non-profit organizations. An on-line survey was completed and results were compiled.

Unit Profile

The Alleghany Highlands, including the county of Alleghany and city of Covington is located in the western portion of Virginia and has a land area of 445.66 square miles. Adjoining the state of West Virginia, the area is 60 miles north of Roanoke, 176 miles west of Richmond, and 227 miles southwest of Washington, DC. on the I-64 corridor. The Alleghany Highlands is called “Virginia’s Western Gateway” and named after the great chain of mountains on its western border. The area was first settled in 1746, and on January 5, 1822, Alleghany County was formed from parts of Bath, Botetourt, and Monroe Counties by an act of the Virginia Legislature.



The 2017 U.S. Census Bureau reported that Alleghany County had an estimated population of 15,122 and Covington City had an estimated population of 5,531. 24% of residents are below the age of 19 years old; 52% of residents are between 19 and 64 years of age, and 24% of the population are 65 years and older. The racial composition of Alleghany County is 93% White, 5% Black or African American, 2% two or more races. In Alleghany County, the population age 25+ that have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher is 16%. The median household income is \$46,020 in Alleghany County compared to \$57,652 in Virginia. The percentage of Alleghany County households (family of 4) living below the poverty level as defined by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the 2015 Poverty Guidelines of \$24, 250 was 27%. 22% of children are living in poverty and there is a 5% unemployment rate.

The following data is being summarized from the 2012 Agricultural Census:

Year	Total Farms	Acres of Farmland	Average Size in Acres	Average Farm Gross Receipts
2007	209	\$28, 866	138	\$10,092
2012	207	\$36,963	179	\$53,285
Difference	1% decrease	28% increase	30% increase	427% increase

Cattle Inventory	Alleghany
2007	3162
2012	3065
Difference	3% decrease

Swine Inventory	Alleghany
2007	66
2012	28
Difference	58% decrease

Community and Resident Perspectives

A Qualtrics survey was created by Virginia Cooperative Extension to be used as a template for units to capture valuable data associated with their service areas. This survey was reformatted and distributed to citizens that well-represent the Alleghany County and Covington City through an on-line survey. Once the data was collected, Extension Staff analyzed the key findings based on mean figures and rated issues by priority. Areas that need to be addressed include career development and readiness, career opportunities, parenting education, positive youth development, water quality, health and nutrition, agriculture and natural resources, and aging population.

Priority Issues

A survey was conducted in Alleghany/Covington and the majority of residents ranked the following as very important priority issues with the most important rankings listed below, in rank order:

- Highest Career Development/Readiness and Career Opportunities
- Water Quality/Quantity
- Youth Activities
- Parenting Education
- Child Development
- Life Skills and Leadership Development in youth
- Teen Community Involvement
- Teen Leadership and Community Services

Youth Volunteers
Before/After School Activities
Youth Nutrition
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Aging Population
Health and Nutrition

Career Development and Opportunities

This issue had the highest rating out of all questions asked on the survey. With unemployment rates high in our area we need to continue working with career development programs for county and city high school students. Schools should provide educational options to students to accomplish college level classes in high school. There needs to be collaboration with professionals and businesses to share with students what is required to have a job and the definition of working and what businesses look for when hiring employees. Students need exposure to different career paths and the schooling that may be required at an early age. There is also a lack of students entering into trade programs, so we must promote and teach trade skills such as welding, electrician, and plumbing work. The efforts of small and large businesses must continue to grow to increase career opportunities and help support the younger population in remaining in our communities. Instruction is needed in the schools on how to topics such as managing money, paying bills, saving for retirement, banking, and budgeting.

Extension will continue to serve on the Alleghany Highlands Career Council, which provides Reality Store (a simulation of the real world and managing money) and Career Tweets (an event where students get face-to-face interaction with professionals from the different Virginia Career Clusters). Many of the issues above will be discussed and addressed in the Career Council. Donation programs should require families that receive their services to complete financial management classes.

Drinking Water Quality

Many Alleghany County residents are on well systems and do not have the financial means to afford drinking water tests. Our mountainous area is heavily industrialized with the potential to impair these waters through daily operations and lifestyles. There should be more efforts on educating homeowners on the potential risks of toxins in their water systems and provide information on where they can receive these services.

Extension can address this issue by partnering with the county Agriculture Extension Agents to provide a drinking water quality clinic to citizens. To promote and make the class more affordable Extension should partner with local businesses, such as The Farm Bureau.

Positive Youth Development

Survey participants suggest there needs to be greater focus on positive youth development, which includes providing more youth activities afterschool and in school; community involvement opportunities for youth; life skills and decision-making building; mentoring programs; and leadership 4

experiences. Youth who become engaged in the community and involved in activities are less likely to make bad life decisions. It will allow them to feel a sense of community and purpose.

Extension can respond to this issue by offering 4-H afterschool programs; providing 4-H in school programs that correlate to the Standards of Learning; maintaining a focus and commitment on community and project clubs; making Junior 4-H Camp accessible to all youth in the area; and creating mentorship programs with teen counselors and young adults whom are attending Dabney S. Lancaster Community College.

Parenting Education

Many parents lack the skills needed for “good parenting” and families are driven by the children rather than the adults. There is a lack of structure at home, a greater need for schedules, and more focus on school work. Too many grandparents are raising the children of the Allegheny Highlands. We need to encourage parents to be parents and provide programs that support teaching parents how to be parents. There needs to be a greater emphasis at home for developing good qualities such as respect for others, honesty, and pride in yourself. Many students entering middle and high school have little regard for education or a work ethic. Due to this lack of parenting there has been an increase in youth violence and mental instability.

Currently the Allegheny Office does not have an FCS agent that serves the area. Allegheny will reach out to other FCS agents in neighboring counties in an attempt to address this issue. Extension would like to offer free classes and resources to parents by partnering with community organizations that work closely with parents in need. Through 4-H programs, youth will have the opportunity to learn the meaning of respect and being responsible for themselves and others.

Agriculture/Natural Resources

Survey respondents indicate there is a need for more agriculture and natural resource programs which can address: pesticide education and certification, invasive species, agriculture profitability and sustainability, agricultural tourism and marketing, eco-tourism, educating youth on the importance of farming and where our food comes from, promoting natural resource conservation,

Extension will address some of these issues by providing workshops, conducting field visits, and working individually with clients on a case-by-case basis.

Aging Population

The aging population in Allegheny County and Covington City continues to increase. With only two long-term extended care facilities in the area there needs to be more housing and resources available for our aging population.

Extension can address this need by offering educational resources related to senior citizens, directing those in need to the appropriate organizations and businesses that provide services based on their need, and helping those individuals in need through community service projects.

Health and Nutrition

Survey respondents identified the need for more education for youth and adults on how to make smart choices and make healthier meals all at affordable prices. This will help reduce our obesity issue and help prevent illness and disease. This area has a high rate of substance abuse, which

affects the individual's health and our economic growth. There needs to be more education on food preservation, private and community gardens.

Extension can address this need by partnering with community organizations and family consumer science agents to provide classes and workshops to youth and adults using various Extension Curriculum to teach food preservation. Offer pressure canning inspections annually.