



Situation Analysis Report



Amelia County, VA 2018

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None

Introduction

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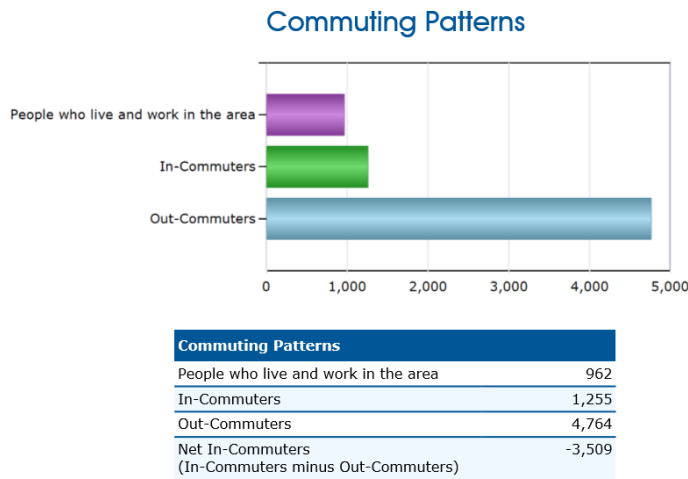
Amelia County is located in the Piedmont Plateau of Virginia and is located situated strategically in the south central portion of Virginia bordered by Chesterfield, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Nottoway, Powhatan, and Prince Edward Counties. The city of Richmond is located 35 miles northeast of Amelia.

The county is bound on the north by the Appomattox River and contains 169,531 acres of woodland and 91,456 acres of farmland. Soils are primarily comprised of clay and gray loam, with red clay most common on the higher plains. The village of Amelia is the county seat and the hub of the county's activities. Since there are no large urban centers in the county, very little of the agricultural production is marketed locally, however, the county is traditionally an agricultural community. The total population in 2017 was reported as 13,020.

Unit Profile

According to the Virginia Employment Commission, the unemployment rate in the county was 4.0% in 2017, which is below the U.S. average of 4.4% and above the Virginia average of 3.8%. The top ten employers in Amelia, respectively, are the Amelia County School Board, Amelia Life Care LLC, County of Amelia, Star Children’s Dress Company, Food Lion, Goodman Truck and Tractor Company, McDonalds, Swift Creek Forest Products, Amelia Academy, and Amelia Lumber Company. The top ten industries in the county, by employment, are government, local government, construction, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade, wholesale, agriculture/forestry/fishing/hunting, accommodation and food service, and state government. Amelia County has 407 farms according to 2012 Ag Census data. Amelia County provides business-friendly tax rates, tax credits, and property tax exemptions as incentives for incoming employers. Amelia’s Industrial Development Authority oversees an Amelia County Industrial Park.

The average weekly wage for all industries is \$713. The median household income reported for Amelia County in 2016 was \$58,269 with the per capita income of approximately \$25,335. 10.4% of residents live in poverty. 36.6% (4,764 people) commute to work outside of the county and 1,200 people commute into the county for work, according to the Virginia Employment Commission. The average adult worker spends 36.7 minutes commuting to work.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2014.

Figure 1. Commuting Patterns Virginia Employment Commission

Demographics

Amelia has a population of 13,020 residents. Among these 19.1% are over age 65. The demographic profile of the county is 75.9% White, 21.1% Black, 3.0% Hispanic or Latino.

Housing

According to Census.gov, data reports of the 5,572 housing units in 2013-2017, 83.6% are owner occupied. The median value of owner occupied housing units is \$185,100 with a medium owner costs of \$1,332. Medium income reported in 2016 for rent in Amelia is \$729.

Sixty nine percent of households in Amelia have a broadband Internet subscription.

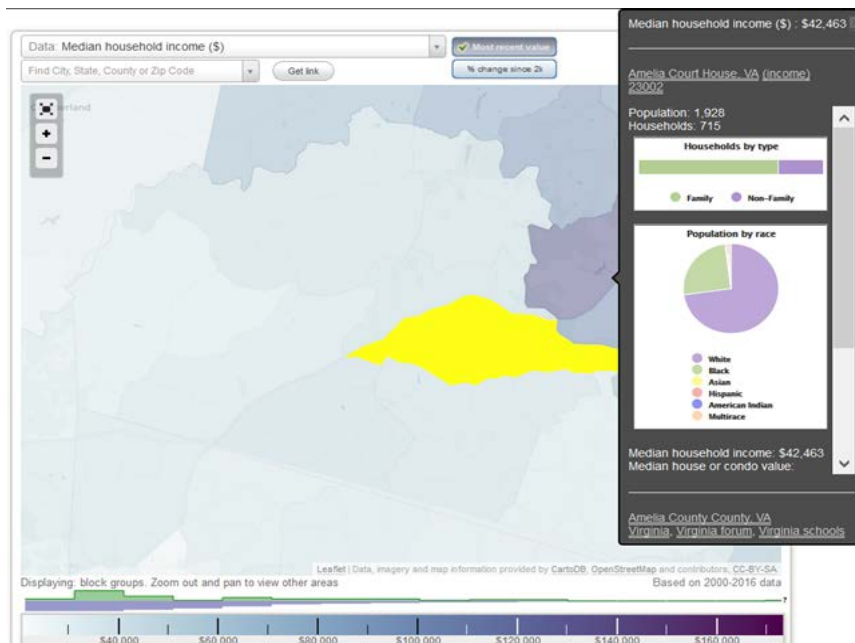


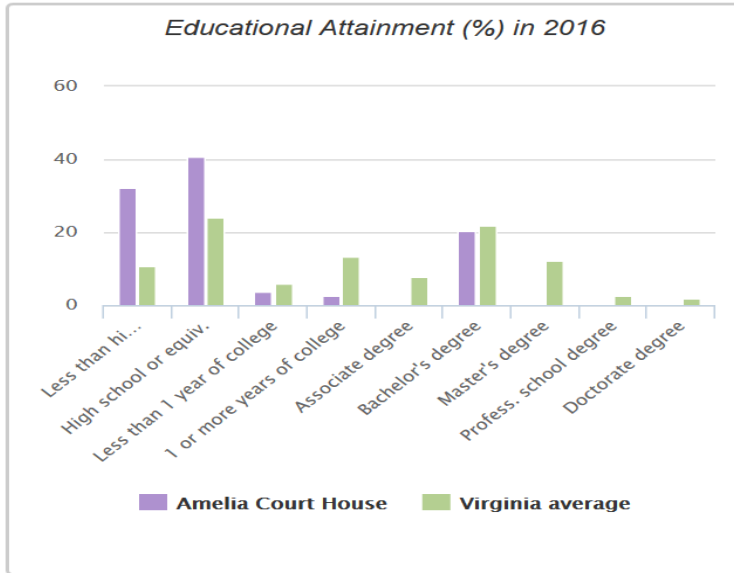
Figure 2. Median Household Income

Employment

Amelia his home to 268 employer establishments. In 2016, Amelia total employment was 1,822. The county has 2 grocery stores, 7 convenience stores, and 5ull service restaurants. As of May 2018, the unemployment rate in Amelia was 3.2%, compared to 2.9% for the state.

Education

Students in Amelia had a 90.3% high school pass rate according to the 2017 kidscount.org data. High school graduates make up 80.8% of the population with 14.5% reported having a Bachelor's degree or higher. Some early child development resources are in place for low income families and are addressed by community services.



Education Gini index (Inequality in education)
 Here: 18.1
 Virginia average: 12.3

Figure 3. Educational Attainment KidsCount.org

Health

Amelia County ranks number 60 in health outcomes according to County Health data. A portion of the population is living without health insurance. According to the 2016 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates it is 12.9%. Twenty six percent of the county is physically inactive and there is limited access to exercise. This may be a contributing factor in the adult obesity rate which is 33% slightly higher than the state at 29%. Recreational needs for seniors in the county are being addressed through faith based senior groups and the Amelia County Department of Parks & Recreation.

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/virginia/2019/rankings/amelia/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

Poverty

Eleven percent (11.4%) of the population lives in poverty with Black children accounting for the highest population in poverty at 52% compared to 9% of white children living in poverty. The number of preschool children living in poverty is 12.8%, which is lower than Virginia at 18.6% <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ameliacountyvirginia>

Community and Resident Perspectives

The Amelia County Extension office assessed community needs through a variety of means, including an online client survey, face-to-face surveys, and key informant interviews.

Extension agents held interview with members of the National Resources Conservation Services, Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Service Agency, farmers, James L. Hamner Public Library, and Amelia County School Board.

Key informants identified several priorities. Local representatives from state and federal agriculture and natural resource conservation agencies who partner frequently with Extension in Amelia provided their perspectives based upon a broad view of the issues that they continue to monitor and address via their technical work, regulatory efforts, and outreach. The responses of these agencies centered primarily on key land use and agricultural issues, which provides reasonable feedback for a community, which is largely still agricultural in nature. Amelia County identified needs in the areas of financial assistance, septic problems, mitigation of water quality issues, and preservation of future water quality (via analysis and monitoring of groundwater withdrawals for residential, commercial, and agricultural purposes). Improvement of natural resource/agriculture education for grade-school children, reduction of the regulatory burdens on farmers, improved oversight of urban fertilizer and chemical use, improvement of the local farm-to-consumer knowledge gap, improvement of food security both locally and nationally, and improved access to farming careers in a setting where new and young farmers face considerable resource, knowledge, and financial obstacles,

Additionally, a broader set of community stakeholders identified critical issues they or their households face. Summarized responses included long commutes to work, limited availability of transportation, lack of high-speed internet or affordable internet, drinking water quality, lack of available time for recreation and family activities, and lack of resources for recreation and family activities.

This same broader set of community stakeholders identified critical issues facing businesses in the community. Summarized responses included a lack of a trained workforce, lack of interest in local jobs, lack of available local jobs, perceived obstacles and challenges related to job creation and economic development, and internet speed and connectivity problems.

Finally, this same broader set of community stakeholders identified critical issues facing Amelia County as a whole. Respondents expressed a perceived strong need for youth engagement and community involvement activities, enhanced and improved school funding and educational programs, greater attention to the community and environmental impacts of development and industry movement into the county, improvement of diversity in leadership positions, and improvement of communication between leadership and community members.

Meanwhile, Extension faculty have identified key resident, agriculture, youth, and business issues via ongoing work in the community. These issues are similar to those identified in the 2017 Amelia Comprehensive Plan

<http://ameliacova.com/Amelia%20Comp%20Plan%2012%2030%202016.pdf>

Agriculture and Natural Resources: Crop producers continue to seek means for increasing yields, reducing input costs, and increasing efficiency. Though some recent invasive insect, weed, and disease issues have not yet affected Amelia County, they pose possible challenges in upcoming years. Livestock producers continue to strive for long-term financial sustainability, higher efficiency, improved animal health, improved marketing efforts through value-added programs, and reduced input costs related to feed, fuel, and fertilizer. As of 2018, dairy producers in Amelia particularly struggle to remain viable within an extremely challenging economic climate where they have little control over the supply and demand and pricing issues that have led many operations around the state to close. More broadly, many farm producers continue to face added challenges relating to new and enhanced regulations, workforce access, affordable land and capital access, and changes in consumer behavior and preferences. Many established farms have aging primary operators (average primary operator age according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture: 61 years), and these operations will undergo farm transition, dispersal, consolidation, or estate challenges in the coming years. New and beginning farmers face particular challenges with efficiency at the small scale, access to resources, financial constraints, time constraints, and profitability.

Many large producers have participated in state and federal farm conservation programs. They are dependent on these programs to help solve ongoing farm issues affecting natural resources. Amelia also has a growing population of new and beginning farmers and small direct market operations, and these operations are particularly interested in sustainable agriculture, organic production, and market development. These producers are also in search of information on new and nontraditional crops and farm products.

Virginia Cooperative Extension has formed collaborative relationships with agencies to provide small business resources in growing small business. Amelia County Public schools is continuing its partnership with Virginia Cooperative Extension to enhance existing and establish new school programs in youth leadership and educational development priorities, and provide in-school enrichment programs to promote and improve Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education.

Priority Issues

Issue 1: Agricultural profitability. A top issue facing Amelia County and affects nearly all operations, including new and established farms.

VCE will continue to work with crop, livestock, and specialty producers and industry groups to improve practices that impact profitability through programming, research projects, and technical support. Furthermore, developing community partnerships will serve to foster support for the industry and will reduce misinformation and misrepresentation of agricultural practices.

Issue 2: Youth leadership and educational development priorities. Issues identified include the need to provide in-school enrichment programs to area schools promoting and improving Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education within Amelia County public, private and homes-schools. Create new opportunities and resources for school enrichment through collaborations with community agencies. This issue is currently being addressed by VCE in Amelia County public and private schools with in-school and afterschool science, technology and math curriculum and other enrichment programs.

Issue 3: Workforce Development. The county was described as having limited community resources for workforce training, limited diversity of job opportunities, and perceived challenges to job creation. In 2012, VCE and the Extension Leadership Council was instrumental in the creation of the Amelia Chamber of Commerce. This group is instrumental in the creation of business goals and support.

VCE supports ways to strengthen business partnerships that will serve to identify employee and employer workforce needs, currently through programs developed in cooperation with the Amelia Nottoway Vocational Technical Center.

Issue 4: Obesity and Chronic Disease. A priority issue affecting Amelia County. Diabetes prevalence in adults 20 and above was 11.8%, which has not had a significant change since 2015. Limited resources for recreational facilities and outdoor walking trails contributes to lower health outcomes for residents.

VCE has conducted Balanced Living with Diabetes programs to educate caregivers and persons with diabetes since 2014. First through the Baptist General Convention, then in 2018, VCE formed a partnership with Centra Southside Hospital to provide additional educational support for increased awareness of diabetes management and prevention services in Central District. Senior adults are presented with group based physical activity programs to enhance flexibility and strength. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/amelia-county-va/#health>