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Arlington County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Summary of community issues and Extension office response

Priority Issue	Planned Unit Response
Financial Literacy	<p>Financial classes for adults, including budgeting, debt management, identity theft etc.</p> <p>Youth financial classes and financial simulations, including Kids Marketplace, Reality Store, life skills for teens and job preparedness.</p>
Food Insecurity	<p>Provide nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, budgeting for groceries, and food safety education with food pantries and affordable housing providers. Participate in Plot Against Hunger and provide gardening classes for lower income audiences</p>
Water Quality	<p>Stream monitoring, educate community in methods to reduce storm water runoff and prevent soil erosion</p>
Youth Social and Emotional Well-being	<p>Implement teen after school or weekend life readiness curriculum Launch Skills</p>



Introduction

The Arlington Unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension conducted its situation analysis by reviewing multiple sources of information to assemble the Unit Profile, including census data and the annual profile prepared by the Arlington County Urban Planner and Demographer staff.

In addition, our Extension Leadership Council (ELC) compiled and summarized local reports on priority issues affecting Arlington County. The ELC and Extension staff recognized that many local organizations conduct their own needs assessments and produce reports. These reports include CPHD Population and Demographic. Data, Arlington of Population Affairs Report, Social Needs Index Suite, Virginia Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Healthier Arlington. Past collection methods to determine the primary needs of Arlington residents were community surveys and key informant interviews. We found a bias in the former responses and discovered that those who participated already knew a lot about Extension programming. Reports and findings from other sources were used to review data from a broader audience. These additional supplemental reports assisted the ELC and staff in identifying priority issues.

Unit Profile

Arlington County is in northern Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC. Its proximity to the nation's capital makes it a bustling and thriving area, but also, one with a transient population where individuals and families who work for the military and other government agencies frequently move in and out of the county. At only approximately 26 square miles, increasing population requires careful stewardship of open space and natural resources. Arlington continues to support nationally recognized smart growth principles.

The population of Arlington as of January 1, 2023, is 237,300 was Arlington's population declined slightly in 2021 due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2021, the population has increased by about 1% each year. The population is projected to grow to 311,000 persons by 2050, representing a 31% growth. Arlington is one of the most densely populated counties in the United States with a density of 9,1723 persons per square mile as reported from 2020 data. This density is projected to increase in coming years. In terms of population land use, 53% of Arlington's residents live in built- up urban planning corridors. The planning corridors combined have a population density of 34 persons per acres, four times greater than non-corridor acre of nine person per acre.

One-person households comprise 39.8% of total households in Arlington. Of the total households in the County, 45.6% are families, of which 2.8% are female-headed household with children. The percentage of households without children is 79.2%. Arlington's household poverty status is 6.3% . About 70% of committed affordable units located within the urban planning corridors.

The largest population group by age is 25-34 years (22.3%), followed by the 35-44 years group (16.5%). Minors under the age of 19 make up 14.6% of the population. These statistics reflects trends of migration out of Arlington County.

Arlington consistently has the region's lowest unemployment rate, typically totaling only 2% . or less. Professional and technical services at 27.6% of workers provides the largest employment category. The other sectors of employment are services at 21.3% and the Government at 20.8%. Arlighton residents earn high incomes relative to the rest of Virginia and the nation. Recent median household income reported is \$128,145. A family of four needs to earn roughly \$84, 000 to be considered middle class. On a statewide level, Virginia has a middle income lower bound of \$54,245 and an upper bound of \$161,926. The Department of Health and Human Services and other social service providers continue to see post COVID-19 pandemic demands for housing, food, and utilities assistance. Arlington's biggest challenge is affordable housing.

Nationwide, Arlington tops the list of counties with the highest percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher. According to the 2023 annual profile released by the County, 76% of adults over the age of 25 held college degrees.

The county is ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse. In the public school system 88 languages are spoken and students hail from 148 countries. Among Arlingtonians 28.8% speak a language other than English. The 5 largest ethnic groups in Arlington, VA are White (Non-Hispanic) (60.2%), Asian (Non-Hispanic) (10.2%), Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (9.09%), White (Hispanic) (6.96%), and Other (Hispanic) (4.6%).

Many low-income families experience food insecurity at some point during the month. The families cite health, medical, mental health, low wage jobs, high utility bills and credit cards as contributing factors to food unaffordability. In Arlington, the salary range for a Service Worker job is about \$15 to \$20 per hour. Over the course of the coronavirus pandemic, food insecurity numbers increased drastically. Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) is a strategic partner with Arlington VCE. AFAC's mission is to feed our neighbors in need by providing dignified access to nutritious supplemental groceries free-of-charge, which allows families to dedicate limited financial resources to other obligations, such as housing, utilities, medication, and other basic needs. Since 2017, living conditions have worsened for many disadvantage residents.

Community and Resident Perspectives

The Arlington Unit administered the statewide survey throughout the community. Arlingtonians responded that protecting air and water quality, strengthening local food systems, affordable housing, money management and youth social and emotional well-being were important issues to address. Compared to the state's results Arlingtonians were similar in the issues of protecting the environment, ensuring safe and high-quality food and addressing hunger. The Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth & Families, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and Healthier Arlington was used to collect data on youth. Food security statistics were obtained from the Arlington Food Assistant Center and the Arlington Food Security Task Force. The state report and the Arlington findings both agreed that youth issues are sensitive issues to report, address and best decide on programs to implement. There is strong consensus on state reporting and data from the Arlington survey that there is a need for more adults to get involved in mentoring and youth engagement.

Northeast District Data 5 Priority Issues (n=457)

1. Protecting water quality 77%
2. Ensuring safe, high-quality foods 71%
3. Ensuring safe food handling practices 68%
4. Protecting air quality 67%
5. Strengthening the local food system 66%

Water Quality

Arlington's streams are an important natural and recreational resource. However, development has significantly impacted the nearly 33 miles of perennial streams in the County. Most buildings and roads were built prior to regulations requiring stormwater be slowed down or treated, so runoff from these areas flows uncontrolled to streams. Roughly 42 percent of Arlington's land has been converted to impervious surfaces- rooftops, roads, sidewalks and buildings that don't allow water to soak into the ground. This is one of the key watershed management challenges that has a significant impact on stream health and Chesapeake Bay water quality.

Water Quality Programming

As a result of our urban environment, Arlington's streams are generally only in fair condition. Only about 42% of Arlington's land is permeable surface. Stormwater runoff that comes off of our roofs, roads, walks, and other impermeable surfaces, enters our streams and causes flash floods — significant increases of water that occur in a short period of time after a storm — and that carries sediment and other pollution.

Bacteria levels in Four Mile Run, like most urban streams, routinely exceed water quality standards considered safe for primary contact recreation like swimming, wading. Dog owners are also routinely advised via signage at popular spots, not to allow their pets to play in the water.

Agriculture Natural Resources (ANR) program volunteers from Master Naturalists serve as stream water monitors, conducting regular testing throughout Arlington watersheds and reporting results to county staff. Master Naturalist volunteers replant areas that have had invasive non-native plants removed, with native soil-holding water's edge plantings. ANR program Master Gardener volunteers convey best practices of reducing erosion and water pollution in every gardening class and demonstration garden. Extension Master Gardener volunteers provide education at weekly plant clinics and via a daily Help Desk. Education is provided on soil testing (to reduce unnecessary fertilizer applications), integrated pest management practices (to reduce wasteful pesticide applications), turf health and tree care to maintain healthy roots that take in water and limit erosion from stormwater, and urban landscape practices like rain gardens, terracing, drywells, and swale installations that are designed to keep rainwater from running off of the landscape.

Arlington/Alexandria Extension ANR Agent represents Extension on the Potomac Watershed Roundtable and provides advisory services that supports land-use decision making of the Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture.

Arlington County Watersheds



Figure 1 Map of Arlington County, VA Watersheds

Youth Social and Emotional Wellbeing

20% of all youth say they talk to “no one” if they are stressed. 30% of 7th-12th graders say they “almost never” talk to their parents about the things that matter most to them. The 2019 Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families (APCYP) survey reported that 30 % of high school students who spend six or more hours on a device per day were more likely to also say that they frequently feel sad or hopeless compared to students who are on a screen fewer than six hours per day (16%).(1) Of those who reported feelings of sadness or hopelessness only 1/3 received the help they needed. This relationship is likely due to an interplay off factors. Youth who are

depressed or frequently sad may spend more time online. Conversely, youth who spend more time online may engage in fewer activities such as exercising, clubs, sports, or spending time outside.

2019 Survey APCYF Data

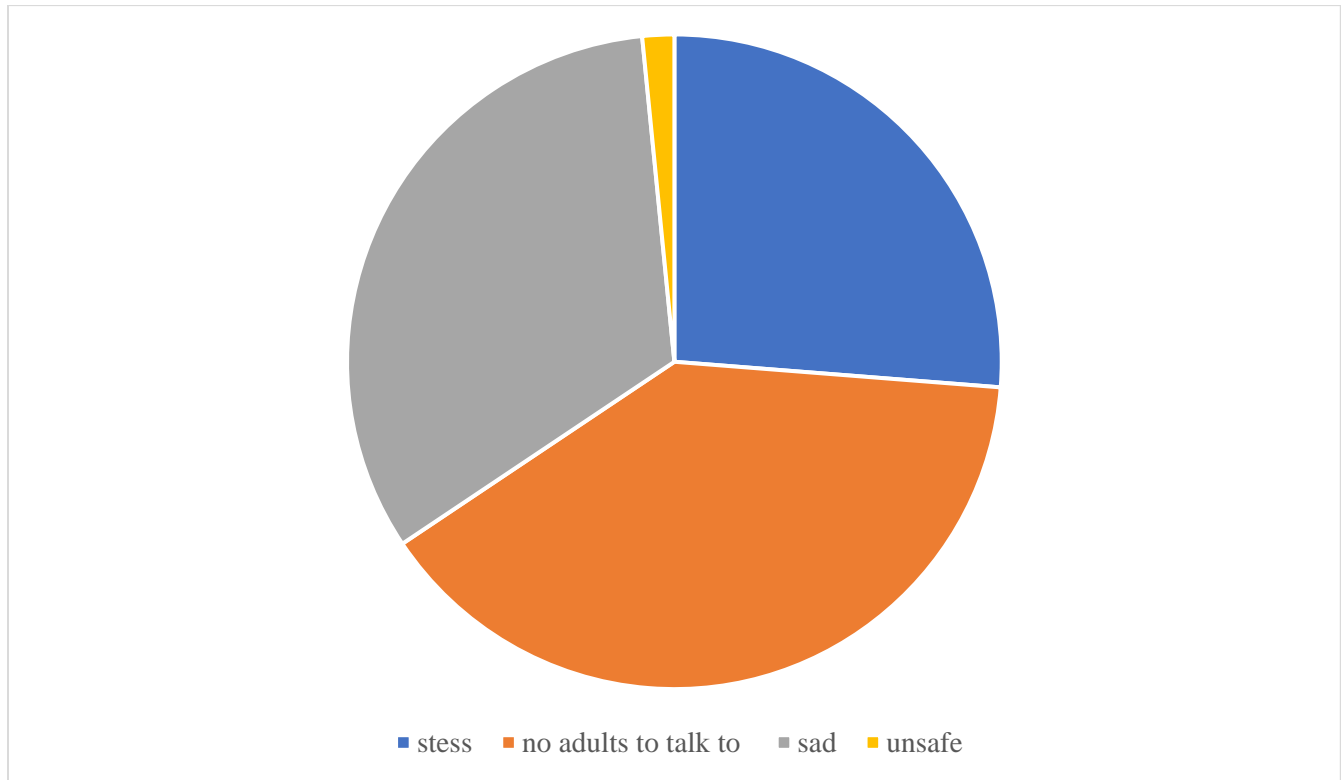


Figure 2 Youth responses to emotional feelings

4-H Programming Sense of Belonging

Youth development along with social and emotional well-being was not one of Arlington’s top priorities identified in the situation analysis survey. However, the Arlington Extension Leadership Council felt strongly that youth mental well-being is a priority issue. Out of school time activities with the support of adult volunteers has struggled due to low recruitment along with the position cut by Parks and Recreation of programs Teen Coordinator in 2018. Parks and Recreation recognized the adverse impact this decision had on teen participation in out of school activities. A new Teen Coordinator was appointed by Parks and Recreation in May of 2023 to revive after school and weekend acivities for teens. 4-H partners with Parks and Recreation teen programs through participation in Teen Late Night which is held twice monthly at reaction centers throughout the County on Saturdays. Second, afternoon drop programs held in during the summer.

Amid the abundance of information on the internet, there is a major gap in the skillsets of today’s teens. High school students lack the practical life skills to thrive in the 21st century. To lead successful lives, young adults need a range of essential skills, such as how to use a credit card or handle conflict with a roommate. Launch Skills is a curriculum developed by faculty at South Dakota State and North Dakota State University. The curriculum features 100 lessons in the areas of holistic wellness, academic success, financial literacy, and career exploration, the aim is to prepare students for a successful launch post-graduation. How do you improve your sleep hygiene? How do you ask for your help? How does compound interest even work? This curriculum will address both social and emotions skill sets for life readiness to Arlington teens. Program delivery will occur in partnership with Parks and Recreation Centers, after school sites and local churches.

Food Insecurity and Financial Literacy

According to data from the Arlington Community Foundation, 30% of Arlington's 2023 Area Median Income is \$45,630 for a household of 4, which is about 150% of the federal poverty level. This is a more accurate reflection of poverty in our community. Just over 10% of Arlington's population is at or below this level.

The zip code with the highest number of individuals in poverty is 22204, with the Buckingham, Northwest Aurora Highlands, Arlington Mill, and Northwest Douglas Park neighborhoods having the highest poverty. Carlin Springs Elementary School has the highest free and reduced lunch.

A recent study by the Community Foundation of Northern Virginia states that a third of residents in South Arlington (34%) cannot regularly afford their basic needs, including rent and utilities, food, medical costs, and personal items. If you include the cost of childcare, the rate increases to 52%.

The Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) served 5,397, between July to September 2023, with an average of 3,272 households each week in September 2023. According to AFAC staff, that number has increased since the data was last reported. AFAC had 140,635 total household visits between July 2022 to July 2023— a 30% increase over the previous year. In a report conducted by AFAC, 13.5% of AFAC clients reported receiving food from additional food pantries. Our Lady Queen of Peach Church served an average of 678 households per week in August and September 2023.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Virginians also take on more debt than the typical U.S. household. For example, Virginia is among the top ten states with the highest level of household debt. According to a report by Yahoo! Finance, the average Virginian held a debt of \$74,110 in 2022. Mortgage debt and student debt add to the household debt in the state. A similar report by National Business Capital states that Virginia is in the top 5 of US States Most Impacted by Household Debt. At the national level, the 2021 Consumer Financial Literacy and Preparedness Survey by Harris Poll found that 75% of adults would benefit from advice and answers to everyday financial questions and 62% are currently worried about their personal finances.

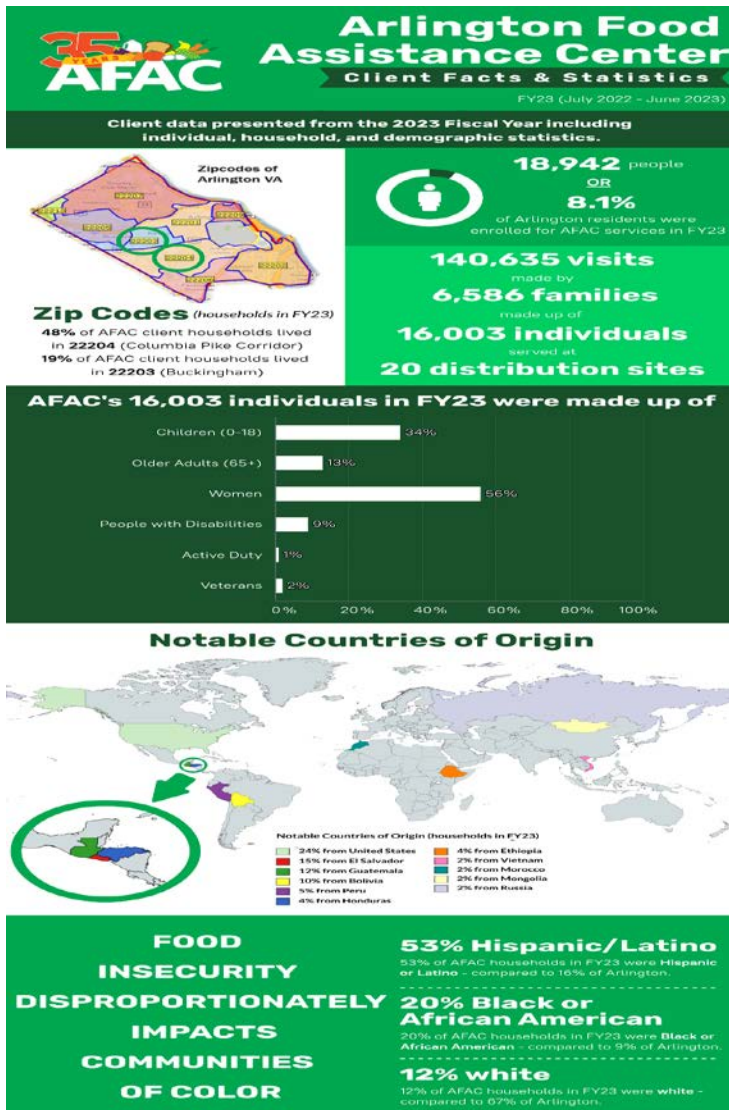


Figure 3 Arlington Food Assistant Center Statistics

Nutrition Education and Financial Literacy Programming

Master Food Volunteers (MFV) are trained in basic nutrition, meal planning, budgeting, cooking techniques, food safety, and working with diverse audiences. MFVs assist with health fair displays; conduct food demonstrations, including at farmers' markets and food pantries; teach cooking and nutrition classes, and participate in Plot Against Hunger produce bagging. 80 volunteers have participated over the years, partnering with AFAC, Our Lady Queen of Peace; Arlington Department of Parks and Recreation; Arlington Public Schools; and affordable housing providers. Master Financial Education Volunteers provide financial education, coaching, and resources on budgeting (including budgeting for groceries), SNAP, debt management, and savings strategies. Together, in 2022, these volunteers provided around 600 hours to Arlington and Alexandria programs and will continue providing nutrition and financial education.

Community Issues

The Arlington Unit identified community issues based on the results from the statewide survey, Arlington Community Foundation survey and the 2019 Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families (APCYP) survey. For the upcoming year, a priority issue for our unit is water quality, combined is food insecurity and financial literacy for the 30% of Arlington residents, with a median income of \$45,630 for a household of 4, which is about 150% of the federal poverty level.

The 4-H Agent will prioritize youth social and emotional well-being with the implementation 4-H evidence based Mental Health Workshop geared towards 10th, 11 and 12 graders. of the Launch Skills curriculum to address the 20% to 30% of youth who reported from the (APCYP) that they have no adult to talk.



Future Programming to Address Community Issues

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Improving residents water quality concerns involves educating the community in best practices to reduce storm water runoff and prevent soil erosion. Under the guidance of the Agriculture and Natural Resource Agent (ANR), and the Master Naturalist of Northern Virginia, stream monitoring will be scheduled more frequently. The ANR agent will request additional funds from the County to purchase case lots of 250 strips at a cost between \$750 - \$825.00 for monitoring of Arlington's streams each year. Master Naturalist volunteers will provide free public workshops in environmental stewardship at local libraries, community centers, County Fair, schools, and churches. Educational materials will be provided to residents upon request. The ANR Agent and Master Naturalist will make available to residents the latest research from land grant universities concerning best practices. Residents will receive advice on suitable native species to plant to mitigate soil erosion and improve water quality. The impact of consistent stream monitoring, community outreach, capturing storm water run, reducing soil erosion will help restore streams and water quality for recreational use.

Family and Consumer Science

Family and Consumer Science (FCS) programming utilizes volunteers to teach budgeting strategies and meal planning. Helping residents put together food shopping lists prior to visiting a grocery store or farmer's market often reduces impulse buying and choosing healthier foods. Money management strategies offers hope to families to live on a budget. Eating healthy is one step towards the prevention of chronic illnesses. FCS will partner with public health services, food banks and churches to offer classes in meal planning, cooking healthy and diabetes prevention. Second, FCS and volunteers will assist in food collection efforts to donate food to local pantries. Third, FCS will obtain resources from the United States Department of Agriculture, Eat Smart Move and Virginia Tech's Cooperative Extension publications database. Most of these resources can be obtain free of charge with the exception of food purchases for cooking classes. Finally, to fund community programs, FCS will request \$1000.00 a year for food purchases.

4-H Positive Youth Development

Launch Skill is an evidence-based program that focuses on social emotional wellness. 4-H plans to partner with teen programs located at Parks and Recreation Centers in the County. Launch Skills programs will be offered during the summer, spring break, and after school programs during the academic year. Launch skills provides teens with an opportunity to engage with a caring adult while addressing a series of topics to learn effective communication and build self-confidence. The request for additional resources includes: meeting space at various recreation centers in the County, snacks, water, 4-H vetted adult volunteers, three additional Launch Skills curriculum books for adult volunteers, and access to copier machine. Cost to run the program yearly is estimated at \$400.00.

References

Potomac Watershed Roundtable <http://www.potomacroundtable.org/>

City of Alexandria Stormwater Management <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Stormwater> Utility Fee, Flood Management, Water Quality

Information about Arlington County Stormwater Utility Fee, MS4 Stormwater Permit and Stream Monitoring <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Sustainability-and-Environment/Stormwater>

Arlington County Natural Resources Management Plan <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Natural-Resources-Management-Plan>

Alexandria City Natural Resources Management Plan <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/NRMPFinalDraftJanuary2019.pdf>

Arlington Community Foundation: <https://www.arlcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Updated-Poverty-in-Arlington-2023-final-PDF.pdf>

Report: More than half of South Arlington families struggle to afford basic needs: <https://www.arlnow.com/2023/09/01/report-more-than-half-of-south-arlington-families-struggle-to-afford-basic-needs/>

Arlington County Food Security Strategic Plan 2023 Annual Report: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/departments/documents/dhs/food-security/fsc-annual-report-2023-final.pdf>

The U.S. States Most Impacted By Household Debt 2023: <https://www.nationalbusinesscapital.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/National-Business-Capital-U.S.-States-Most-Impacted-By-Household-Debt-2023.pdf>

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