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Prince George 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Summary of community issues and Extension office response

Priority Issue	Planned Unit Response
Preservation of working farms	Maintain and develop new programming that focuses on profitable farm operations.
Increase opportunities for youth to become productive citizens	Provide leadership development opportunities in partnership with the Prince George School system
Education of non-farming public about agriculture awareness, food systems, and environmental concerns.	Continue to include these topics in current ANR and 4-H programming. Enhance relationship with Master Gardeners and partners to reach a wider audience.

Introduction

Virginia Cooperative Extension Prince George County conducted a situation analysis during the last year. The work involved the development of a Prince George County Unit Profile as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues and problems in the county. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed and priority issues identified.

The unit profile was developed from the VCE unit profile, USDA Census of Agriculture, VCE Data Commons, etc. A Qualtrics survey was used to gather community input. The Qualtrics survey was emailed to various contact list maintained by the Prince George office to include Master Gardeners, 4-H Camp parents and volunteers, and farmers or agribusiness interests. The survey link was also posted on our VCE website, the Prince George County website, Prince George County Facebook page, and the Prince George 4-H Facebook page. A paper version of the survey was distributed farmers at our annual Farmers Breakfast event.

Unit Profile

Prince George County is located in the central part of Virginia. It is approximately 25 miles Southeast of Richmond nestled into a geographic area southeast of Hopewell, east of Petersburg and the large military installation, Ft. Gregg-Adams, and bordered by the James River on the north.

Population, Age, Gender, and Ethnicity:

The data indicated that from 1981 – 1991 the population of Prince George County remained relatively stable between 25,000 and 26,000 residents. As of the 2002 census, population stood at 34,135 residents, a 31% increase over the base period. In 2007 the population was estimated at 36,080 residents, a 5% increase over 2002. The 2011 population estimate was 35,520 residents, a 2% decrease over the 4 year period. The July 2017 population was estimated at 37,809 residents or 6% greater than 2011. The estimated population for 2021 was 42,170 which is a 11.5% increase over 2017. When compared to the base period of 26,000 residents, Prince George has grown by 16,000+ residents or 62% growth in population.

All age ranges had some growth in population. The 40-44 year old age range had the most population increase at 32%. Youth (0-19 years of age) make up 25.1% of the population. 4-H age youth from 10-19 years of age account for 14.1% of the population or approximately 5,940 individuals.

Approximately 54% of the total population of Prince George County is male while 46% is female. The Caucasian population is 54% while the African American population is 30%. Asian and Hispanic populations represent 1.5% and 8.6% respectively of the total population. Native American, Pacific Islander, and multiple race groups constitute 5.9% of the entire population.

Housing & Health:

The data showed that from 2011 to 2017, the total number of housing units remained nearly constant with 12,015 to 12,479, respectively. Owner occupied housing units were at 68.2% in 2017. Prince George has experienced moderate growth in housing units especially single family and townhouse style housing. As of 2021 total housing units climbed to 13,239, a 6% increase. There have been gains in number of households earning \$60,000+ annually with the average household income increasing \$6,000 per year since 2019. The number of children raised in single parent households has increased to 29% and has increased steadily over the past 10 years.

In overall health rankings, Prince George ranks 36 out of 133 localities in the state. Household health data showed that the teenage birth rate changed positively, 24 per 1000 teens to 15 per 1000, from 2013 to 2017 respectively. The 2023 data show additional improvement in teenage birth rates at 12 per 1000 teens. Adult obesity rates have changed little at 36% compared to 35% obesity among adults in 2013 rankings. Overall, health rankings have changed little over the past 10 years related to poor health days, smoking, obesity, and physical activity.

Education:

Educational data from 2010 to 2017 showed that high school graduation rates have increased 7.6% from 82 to 89.6%. That statistic remains at 89% in 2023. Persons pursuing some level of college education increased from 46% in 2017 to 63% in 2023. The level of residents with a bachelor degree or higher is 24%.

Agriculture:

The USDA Census of Agriculture data available is from the 2017 Census. The most recent Census was conducted in winter 2023 and data will not be available until February 2024. Agricultural data indicate that the number of farms in Prince George County has remained steady from 2012 to 2017 (167 vs 164). Total farmland acres have remained steady at 39,630 vs 36,659 acres in 2012. The number of farms from 1 acre to 9 acres have increased (11 to 22) while farms from 10 to 49 acres, 50 to 179 acres, and 180 to 499 acres, have fallen 9%, 3%, 41%, respectively. The 500 to 999 acres category has remained the same at 10 farms. The number of farms over 1000+ acres has doubled from 6 to 12. The majority of farms (87%) have farm sales of less than \$50,000. The biggest changes have been in farms with \$25,000 – 99,000 in sales. This group has fallen 50% from 22 operations to 11. The majority of this farmland has been added to larger farm operations. Most farms listed by the Census are small, part time operations.

The 2017 Census data showed the market value of agricultural products sold was \$9.285 million. Crop and vegetable production accounted for 94.5% of farm gross sales (\$8.772 million) with the remainder from livestock production (\$513,000) which is primarily beef cattle. Corn, soybeans, and wheat are the primary crops by acreage and value. Additional crops include cotton, peanuts, vegetables, and hay.

Employment:

The largest employer in Prince George is the US Department of Defense due to Army base Ft. Gregg-Adams being located in the county. The next largest employer is the County of Prince George when local government and the school system is combined. The third largest is Delhaize America Distribution and Transportation, which owns the Food Lion brand of grocery stores. Their regional distribution and trucking center is located here. The US Federal Corrections Center and Riverside Regional Jail would rank 4th overall as employers and also house a considerable number of residents. The remainder of the large employers are metal fabricating services, warehousing and distribution, retail stores, and service businesses such as restaurants/hotels, banks, automotive sales/repairs, and construction. Approximately 43% of residents work for a federal, state, or local government entity. The next largest sectors are warehousing/transportation (13%), accommodation and food services (8%), and retail trade (6.6%).

Community and Resident Perspectives

Our survey received limited community responses. The written comments focused on agriculture and youth. A summary of the comments follows.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Preservation of working farms

Public education/awareness of agriculture importance

Training for public in horticulture practices

Strengthening the local food supply

Use of best management practices in agriculture and by homeowners to mitigate environmental impacts

Youth

Empowering youth

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Involve youth in horticulture and agriculture education

Developing leadership skills

Community Issues

Issue 1: Preservation of working farms

Preservation of working farms is slightly different than farmland preservation. Preserving farmland from housing development does not necessarily keep the farm in a productive working state. Working farms contribute to the local economy by buying and selling goods and may offer employment opportunities.

Preservation of working farms is partially addressed with VCE resources. Current agriculture programs focus on production and profitability to sustain farm operations. Additional resources geared toward beginning or new farmers, farm succession to the next generation, and agriculture awareness could be developed to broaden the programs offered to the community.

Issue 2: Increase opportunities for youth to become productive citizens

Youth need additional opportunities to engage in leadership skills. Youth awareness in environmental education, food systems, and job skills were common comments.

Youth opportunities are partially addressed with VCE resources. Current youth programs in camping, teen leadership, digital media production, and agriculture are fulfilling some of these needs. VCE cannot meet needs such as part-time employment, business internships, or formal courses in technical fields. Partnerships with local businesses, Prince George schools, and VCE may be able to enhance these opportunities.

Issue 3: Education of non-farming public about agriculture awareness, food systems, and environmental concerns.

Public education in these areas are partially addressed with VCE resources. The Master Gardener program provides outreach on horticultural topics that cover a wide range of food and environmental concerns. The ANR program works broadly on agriculture awareness and environmental concerns through many different avenues. Food systems is mostly approached through individual work with farmers.

Future Programming to Address Community Issues

The Prince George unit will address these issues by evaluating these needs against our annual plan of work. ANR and 4-H programs are already heavily invested in each of these areas with current programming. Strengthening partnerships with the Prince County School system, James River Soil and Water Conservation District, and Prince George Farm Bureau may be able to provide additional resources and provide opportunities to reach wider audiences. The use of VCE volunteers in 4-H and the Master Gardener program to deliver additional programs and refocus current programs will be explored.

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