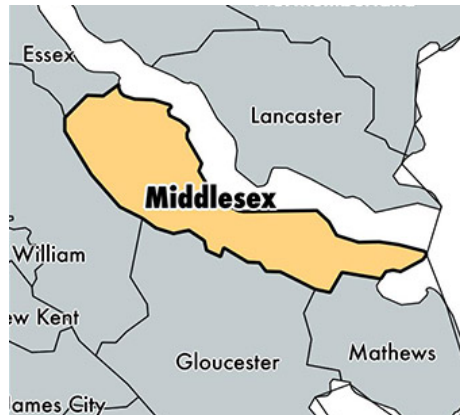




Situation Analysis Report



Virginia Cooperative Extension Middlesex County 2018

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Introduction

The Middlesex Extension office, along with the Middlesex County Extension Leadership Council (ELC), conducted a situation analysis, involving the implementation and collection of community input, for the calendar year of 2018. During this period, local Virginia Cooperative Extension faculty and staff received on-going training on the process of soliciting community input, aggregation of data, and how to best organize and distribute that data for our community members and stakeholders. A Qualtrics survey was developed and distributed to community members through a variety of channels, including the Middlesex Public School system, 4-H families, social media outlets, and Middlesex Partners in Progress, the local resource council. The results of the survey were compiled, with priority issues determined based on available local data and community feedback from the Qualtrics survey.

Unit Profile

Middlesex County is located in the six-county planning district known as the Middle Peninsula, which falls in the 10-county larger Three Rivers Health District. Middlesex County is bordered by Essex County in the northwest, King and Queen in the west, Gloucester in the south, and Mathews County in the southeast. The northern and northeast portions of Middlesex County are bordered by the Rappahannock River. Middlesex County has a land area of 130.31 square miles.

Census data estimates the population for Middlesex County was 10,679 in 2017, representing a decrease of roughly 2.6% from the 2010 census population of 10,959. This would also represent a decrease from approximately 84.1 people per square mile in 2010 to an estimated 82.0 people per square mile in 2017.

Age, Gender, Race

The current age distribution for Middlesex County, as of the most recent census data, 4.3% of the county population is under the age of 5, 15.9% of the population is under the age of 18 years, both lower than the state age distributions (6.0% and 22.1%, respectively), while 31.1% of Middlesex County residents are 65 and older, more than twice that of the state (15.0%). According to most recent census gender data, 48.6 percent of Middlesex residents are males, 51.4% are females. The racial makeup of the county was as follows: 80.0% White, 17.2% African American, 0.5% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.6% Hispanic or Latino, 0.4%

Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 1.9% two or more races. The biggest percentage increase racially/ethnically were Hispanics/Latinos, almost doubling since the 2010 census.

Education

In regards to education, based on most recent census data, 88% of the population (ages 25 and older) has completed high school, high school equivalent, or higher; however, only 22.1% of the population over the age of 25 has obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher, a decrease from the 2010 census (25.3%), and less than 60% of the post-secondary attainment rate of the Commonwealth of Virginia (37.6%).

Housing

In 2017, there were 7,103 housing units in Middlesex County, which is an increase of 233 since 2011. 80.9% of the housing units were occupied in 2017, an increase of almost 20% from 2011. The median value of owner-occupied housing units from 2003-2017 was \$248,400, a slight decrease from 2011 (\$254,700). Median gross rent in Middlesex, from 2013-2017, was \$793 per month.

Economic Status

According to the 2017 census data, the median household income in 2017 was \$50,483, with per capital income of \$29,871, both decreases from 2011 (\$53,615 and \$30,654, respectively), both considerably lower than the state median (\$68,766 and \$36,268, respectively). 13.6% of Middlesex residents currently live in poverty, noticeably higher than the 10.6% of combined Virginia residents. Additionally, roughly 25% of Middlesex children live in poverty, compared to 14% for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Unemployment

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 2.6% of Middlesex County residents were unemployed at the end of 2018, representing a steady decrease in unemployment rates since 2010, and a lower rate than the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Health

According to data from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the adult obesity rate for Middlesex County is 26%, slightly lower than the state obesity rate of 28%. The physical inactivity rate is 26%, slightly higher than the state rate of 20%. The diabetes rate in Middlesex

County is around 12%, higher than the state rate of 9.7%. 11% of the population are uninsured, a considerably decrease from 2013 (18%). There were 158.9 documented instances of sexually transmitted infections per 100k people in 2018, a rate much lower than in 2013 (292 per 100k), and quite a bit lower than Virginia's rate of 424.5 per 100k.

Agriculture

The 2012 agriculture census data shows 19,185 acres of land used for farming, an 8% increase from 2007 (17,709 acres). There are a total of 73 farms in Middlesex County, with an average farm size of 263 acres. More than 30 of those farms, however, are under 50 acres in size. The market value of products sold in 2012 were estimated to be \$11.26 million (\$10.42 from crop sales, \$0.84 from livestock sales), an 80% increase from 2007. 2017 data from USDA estimated 6,400 acres of corn were planted, with 5,580 acres harvested, and a production of 823,000 bushels. An estimated 8,000 acres of soybean were planted, with 7,900 acres harvested, and a production of 266,000 bushels. An estimated 3,100 acres of wheat were planted, with 3,020 acres harvested, and a production of 197,000 bushels. Additionally, there are approximately 900 cattle and calves in Middlesex County.

Community and Resident Perspectives

In order to solicit community feedback, a Qualtrics survey was developed and distributed to community members through a variety of channels and organizations. The survey focused on five core areas: housing issues, issues facing youth, issues facing families, environmental issues, and issues concerning agriculture and gardening. The survey also provided room for community members to comment on perceived needs outside of those five areas. A total of 31 survey responses were recorded.

Housing

The survey asked for the perceived importance of three different issues involving housing – lack of affordable housing for families, lack of affordable housing for senior citizens, and need for additional facilities for homeless persons. Lack of affordable housing for families was perceived to be the most important issue of the three with more than 80% of survey responses considering it “very important.” Housing for senior citizens and homeless persons may have been perceived as a lesser need with Bay Aging providing services for seniors in the 10-county

region (headquartered in Urbanna in Middlesex), and the perceived lack of a homeless population.

Issues Facing Youth

The survey asked for the perceived importance of eight different issues facing youth – need for positive youth activities and character development, need for mentoring programs, need for leadership opportunities, need for life skills development, need for workplace readiness training, need for service learning opportunities, need for healthy living programs, need for hands-on STEM programs. Two specific youth-related issues were identified as the most important from the survey results: need for life skills development, and need for workplace readiness training.

Issues Facing Families

The survey asked for the perceived importance of six different issues facing families – opioid/drug issues affecting youth and families, chronic disease and obesity issues, need for financial education programs, child development and need for parenting classes, need for workplace training programs, and need for healthy living programs. Two specific family-related issues were identified as the most important from the survey results: need for financial education programs, and the issue of chronic diseases and obesity.

Environmental Issues

The survey asked for the perceived importance of five different environmental issues – erosion/coastal flooding issues, land use issues, water-shed related water quality issues, well water/drinking water issues, and development issues. The issue perceived to be the most important in this area was well water/drinking water issues.

Issues Concerning Agriculture & Gardening

The survey asked for the perceived importance of seven different environmental issues – need for programming to expand agribusiness and entrepreneurship, need for programming to support increased crop profitability, lack of community gardens and farmers market, sustainable agriculture, support for home gardeners, horticultural support, food safety and preservation. The issue perceived to be the most important in this area was food safety and preservation.

Other Issues

A number of additional issues were brought up in the survey responses, including lack of jobs, lack of transportation, climate change, poverty issues, and services for the elderly. Of those, the only issue brought up in multiple surveys was transportation.

Priority Issues

Following the aggregation of survey data and review of census information, the following top priority issues were identified for Middlesex County. Under each issue you will find further data and local information regarding that issue, and how/if Virginia Cooperative Extension is currently working to address that issue.

Issue 1: Lack of Affordable Housing for Families

Lack of affordable housing for families was identified as the most important issue overall from community survey feedback, and much of the most recent census data points to this being a concern. In 2017, the median gross monthly rent was \$793, roughly 31.9% of the median monthly per capita income (\$2,489). The median monthly housing ownership cost for a mortgage holder in Middlesex County was \$1,564 in 2017, roughly 37.2% of the median monthly household income (\$4,207). This is problematic as both median ratios are well above the financial recommendation for housing ratio (housing expenses/gross income) of 28% or less, even without factoring in utilities for rental expenses. Additionally, there are only a small handful of Section 8 vouchers in the county to address this need, with a long waiting list for vouchers. While this core issue is outside the purview of Virginia Cooperative Extension, we are partnering with a number of organizations addressing this issue, such as the Department of Social Service's Rapid Rehousing Program and Habitat for Humanity, to provide financial management education and coaching to their clients. However, particularly for low-to-moderate income families that do not qualify for those services, there still exists a gap of service for this community issue.

Issue 2: Need for Financial Education Programs

Need for financial education programs was identified as the second most important issue overall from community survey feedback. With per capita and household income well below the state median, and poverty levels above that of the Commonwealth of Virginia (data in unit profile section), combined with a lack of affordable housing creating a financial burden,

financial education programs are particularly important for Middlesex residents. Additionally, education related to identity theft has become a larger concern nationally, with 15.4 million Americans becoming victims of identity theft in 2016. This is of particular concern for Middlesex County given their aging population, a demographic highly vulnerable to identity theft. Virginia Cooperative Extension currently offers financial education programs for a variety of topics, including personal finance management and identity theft prevention, with personal finance workshop being offered regularly throughout the year in partnership with Hands Across Middlesex and the Middlesex Public Libraries.

Issue 3: Workplace Readiness and Life Skills Trainings for Youth

The need for workplace readiness and life skills trainings for youth were identified as the two most important issues facing youth from community feedback. With roughly 25% of the youth population in Middlesex living in poverty, and post-secondary education attainment much lower than state levels (data in unit profile section), workplace readiness is of particular importance. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) currently has resources related to resume building and interview preparation, however, requests for these programs have been limited. This could be in part due to other community programs providing these services, often with a more broad array of resources (such as vocational and technical training at Rappahannock Community College, often with financial support), and in part a lack of knowledge of these programs being available with VCE. Additionally, VCE regularly provides hands-on food preparation and nutrition classes for youth, as a way of contributing to youth life skills. However, youth-related education has been limited given the recent vacancy of a 4-H Extension Agent.

Issue 4: Chronic Disease and Obesity

Chronic disease and obesity was identified as the second most important issue facing families in Middlesex County from community feedback. More than a quarter of the adult population is obese, 26% of the adult population are physically inactive, and the prevalence of diabetes is more than 20% higher than the state level (more data in unit profile section). Virginia Cooperative Extension offers educational nutrition programs, as well as hands on healthy food-preparation programs for both youth and adults, including a “Food Pharmacy” partnership with the Northern Neck-Middlesex Free Health Clinic and Healthy Harvest Food Bank to provide nutrition education and food-preparation training to limited-resource households with type-2 diabetes and other chronic diseases.

Issue 5: Well Water/Drinking Water Quality

Well water/drinking water quality was identified as the most important environmental issue from community survey feedback. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality estimates that between 60-80% of Middlesex households have well water as their primary source of household water. The most recent round of well water clinics in Middlesex have shown some concerning data: more than half of samples were positive for total coliform bacteria, with 12.5% showing a presence of E. coli. 1 in 8 samples also showed water acidic enough to draw metals from household piping, creating concerns for lead and copper ingestion for households with lead or copper pipes and components. Additionally, numerous samples indicated high levels of total dissolved solids, pH levels above 8.5, and high sodium levels, often an indicator of salt water intrusion in aquifers used for household drinking water. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) has previously offered well water clinics bi-annually in Middlesex, testing 14 different contaminants, and providing financial support for low-income households. Starting in 2019, given the data and survey-driven concerns, and the addition of an Agriculture and Natural Resource Agent in the region trained to provide these clinics (along with the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent currently providing these clinics), VCE will offer clinics annually in Middlesex and the surrounding region.

Issue 6: Food Safety and Food Preservation

Food Safety and Food Preservation were identified as the most important issues concerning agriculture and gardening in Middlesex County from community survey feedback. Nationally, the CDC estimates that 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) become ill from foodborne illnesses each year, with over 120,000 becoming hospitalized, and roughly 3,000 dying. Unfortunately, local data is very limited, however, there were multiple recorded cases of Salmonella in Middlesex in the most recent data available from the Virginia Department of Health. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) currently offers free food safety training for organizations not required to have a formal food handler license, while other local organizations, such as Rappahannock Community College, provide ServSafe trainings for food handlers requiring that formal training. However, there is a gap in food safety training for producers, in part due to a recent vacancy of a local Agriculture and Natural Resource Extension Agent. VCE also provides free canning education and demonstrations for community members interested in that form of food preservation.

Issue 7: Transportation

Transportation was identified by multiple community members as an important unmet need in Middlesex County. Currently, Bay Transit is meeting some of these need, however, they are limited in resources, only having two buses available to serve the over 10,000 residents in Middlesex. The most recent census data shows an average commute time of over 28 minutes, with more than 80% of residents driving alone, creating a financial burden that could be addressed with expanded public transportation. Additionally, with the aging population in Middlesex, public transportation is vital for seniors unable to drive themselves. While potentially a considerable local need, this issue falls outside of the purview of Virginia Cooperative Extension as an educational program.