



Amelia County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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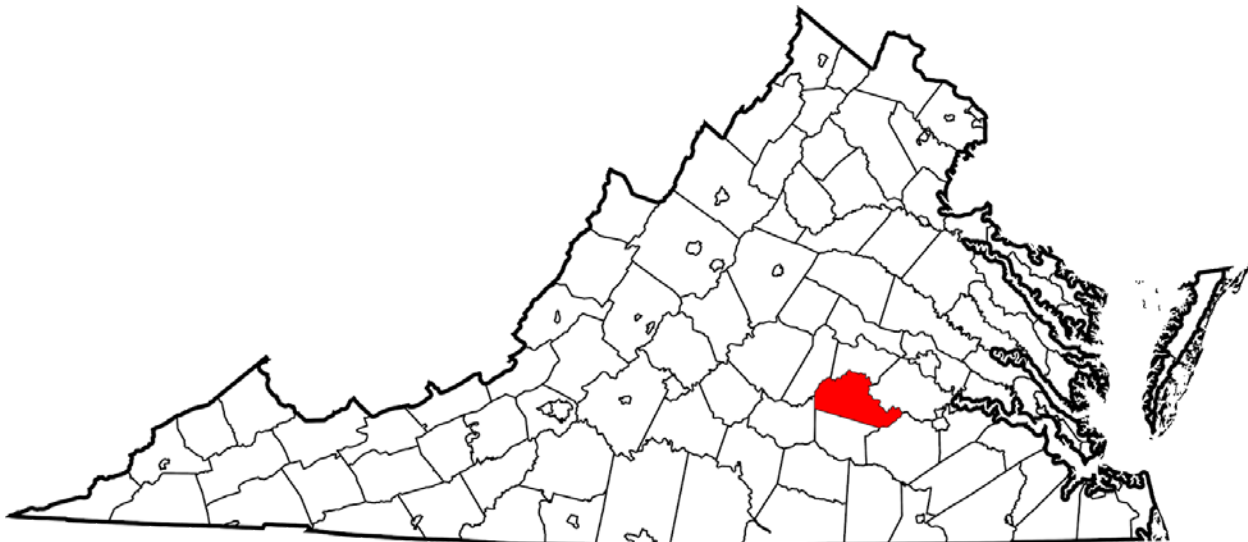
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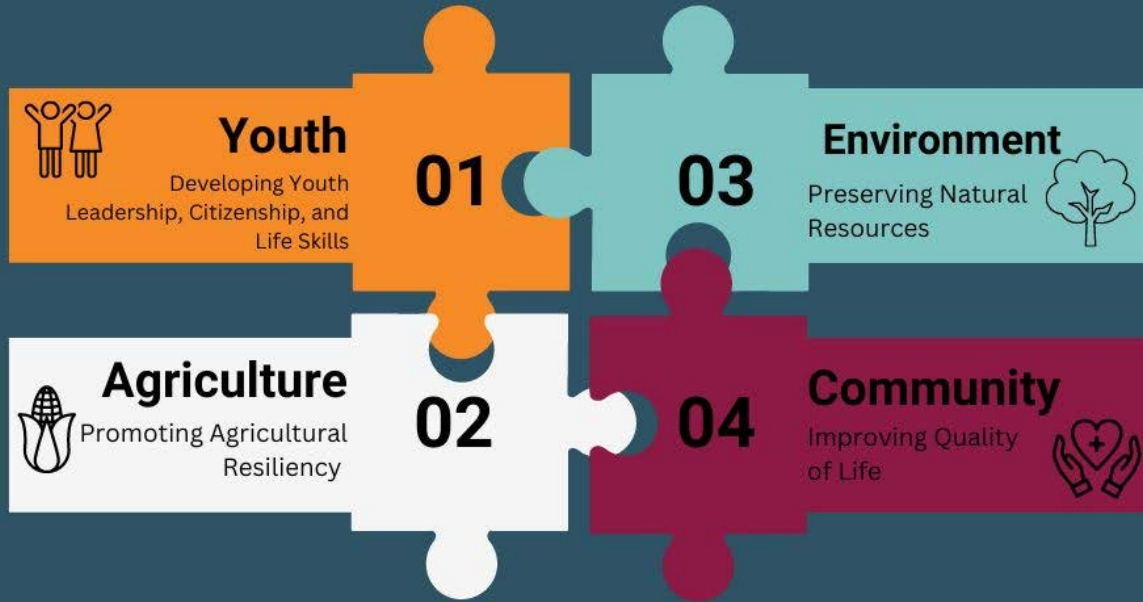
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Top 4 Priority Issues Identified by Amelia County Citizens



Introduction

Amelia County is located in the Piedmont Plateau of Virginia and is situated in the south-central portion of Virginia. Amelia County is bordered by Chesterfield, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Nottoway, Powhatan, and Prince Edward Counties. The city of Richmond is located 35 miles northeast of Amelia, and the county is bound on the north by the Appomattox River. The county seat is located in Amelia Court House.

The Amelia Extension Leadership Council and Amelia Cooperative Extension conducted a comprehensive situation analysis throughout 2023. The ELC and Extension Staff analyzed the information collected, determined what issues fit in with the goals and mission of Virginia Cooperative Extension, and prioritized these issues. Information for the unit profile was a combination of data from the VCE Data Commons website, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the most recent Amelia County Community Profile.

Unit Profile

Demographics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Amelia County, Virginia had an estimated population of 13,455 people as of July 1, 2022. The county's median age is 46.3 years, with 50.72% males and 49.28% females. The racial composition of the county is predominantly White (77.3%), followed by Black or African American (19.3%), Two or More Races (2.1%), American Indian and Alaska Native (0.7%), Asian (0.6%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (0.1%). The percentage of Hispanic or Latino residents is 3.8%. Twenty four percent of the County's residents are under the age of 19, while 20% are senior citizens ages 65 and older.

Income

As of 2022, the median household income in Amelia County, VA, was \$63,438, compared to the state median income of \$85,873. The poverty rate in Amelia County was 11.1%, higher than the state of Virginia, which had an average of 10.6%.

Education

The Amelia County Public School system currently has 1,635 students enrolled in its 3 schools. Of those, 69% are White, 18% are Black, 7% are Hispanic/Latino, 0.1% are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 9% are 2 or more races. 41.7% of students are economically disadvantaged and eligible for the federal free and reduced meal program. 3.3% of students have limited English proficiency (LEP). 12.2% of students have some sort of disability. Graduation rate is 85-89%. The county has two private schools: Amelia Academy serves 149 students in grades PK-12, while Love Covenant Christian School serves 33 students in grades K-12. 85.5% of Amelia's population has a high school diploma, with 17.7% receiving a bachelor's degree or higher.

Employment

The top ten industries in the county, by employment, are government, local government, construction, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade, agriculture/forestry/fishing/hunting, wholesale, accommodation and food service, and professional, scientific, and technical services. Amelia County has 370 farms according to 2017 Ag Census data, down from 407 in 2012. 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.

From 2020 to 2021, employment in A

The average commute time for workers in 2021 was 38.1 minutes which is longer than the normal US worker of 26.8 minutes. Over eighty-five percent (85.9%) of Amelia County workers drove alone to work, followed by 6.53% who worked from home and 3.73% who carpooled to work. Additionally, 2.33% of the workforce in Amelia County have commutes in excess of 90 minutes. 3.50% of households in Amelia County do not have a vehicle available at home.

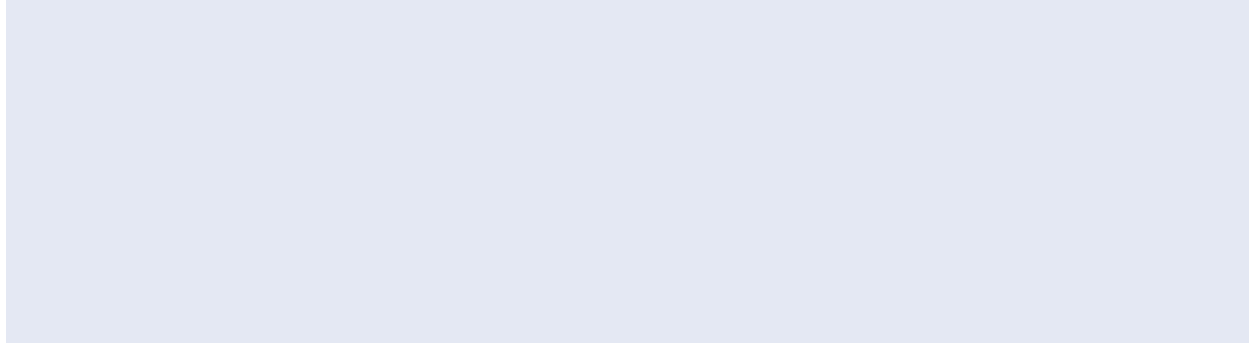


Figure 1 Number of households (log) using different commuting methods from 2013 - 2021. Data from: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/amelia-county-va/#housing>

Family

The county has a total of 5,827 housing units, with an owner-occupied housing unit rate of 82.9%. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$207,300, while the median gross rent is \$1,005. In the county, 85.3% of households report having a computer, while 77.2% have an internet broadband subscription.

From 2017-2021, there were 5,190 households in Amelia, 72.6% living in a house and 27.3% living in an apartment. Types of families included: 75% married-couple; 17% female householder, no spouse/partner present; 7% male householder, no spouse/partner present; and 2% cohabitating couple.

Agriculture

Amelia County is home to 370 farms with an average farm size of 278 acres, according to the 2017 Agricultural Census. This is a 9% decrease in the number of farms and 28% increase in average farm size since 2012. The county has 102,690 agricultural acres with a market value of over \$86.6 million in agricultural products sold yearly. The yearly market value has decreased by 13% since 2012. In Amelia, 59% of the farms are between 10 - 179 acres, and 94% of the farms are family farms. The demographic of farmers in Amelia are primarily white (91.6%), male (66%), and between the ages of 35 - 61 (55.8%). Approximately 35% of the farmers in the county are considered new and beginning farmers.

The top commodity in the county is livestock, being led by poultry and egg production. Amelia County was 6th in the state in 2017 for poultry production, with over \$63 million in sales and over 2.6 million broiler and meat chickens in the county. The second largest livestock commodity in the county is milk from cows, with over \$8.4 million in sales, and cattle and calves at \$5.4 million in sales. For crops, the total in sales according to the 2017 Agricultural Census was just over \$9.4 million, led by grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas, and tobacco.

Forestry

Forestry also has high economic value in Amelia County. In 2020 – 2021 the value of timber harvested in Amelia was \$7.8 – 7.3 million, with the majority coming from pine sawtimber stumpage and pine stumpage value. Approximately 49% of the land in Amelia County is covered in trees.

Health

There are two healthcare providers, one rehabilitation and nursing facility, one dentist, and one end stage renal disease facility in the county. Citizens need to leave the county to access specialists, hospitals, and other health

services. The county is designated as a medically underserved area (MUA) by the Health Resources & Services Administration.

The population of Amelia lives in Census tracts with a low economic opportunity profile. These factors are responsible for influencing access to jobs, labor participation rates, and the distribution of income within a community, all of which create barriers to health opportunities. In 2021–2022, 7.8% of the population in Amelia County did not have health insurance.

According to the food accessibility indicator, which measures the proportion of the low-income population living within 1 mile of a large grocery store in urban areas (or 10 miles in rural areas), Amelia County was rated as a 3. 8.7% of the population was food insecure (2022) and 6.15% did not live close to a grocery store.

Approximately 35% of adults have a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30 kg/m. According to DataUSA.io, the trend for developing chronic disease such as diabetes was 10.6%.

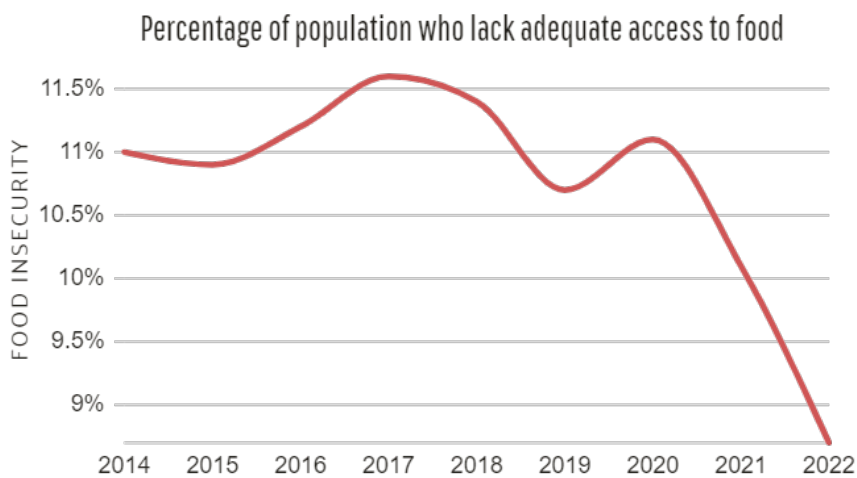


Figure 2 Percentage of the population in Amelia County lacking adequate access to food. Data from: https://datausa.io/profile/geo/amelia-county-va?dietAndExerciseOptions=indicator_4

Community and Resident Perspectives

Based on the information established in the Unit Profile, staff and Extension Leadership Council members worked to develop surveys that would reflect unbiased opinions of the citizens in Amelia County. The surveys were distributed to residents through a multitude of platforms: social media; publications in the local newspaper; newsletters; and handed out to constituents attending programs as well as consumers and producers at the local farmers market.

Community Issues

Priority Issue #1: Developing Youth Leadership, Citizenship, and Life Skills

Priority issues identified under youth development included youth leadership, career development, financial management, citizenship, and other life skills. Additionally, a need for increased adult mentorship for youth was identified. There is a need to provide in-school enrichment programs to area schools promoting and improving leadership and life skills within Amelia County public, private, and home-schools. Comments included statements such as “...empowering youth is the most important of the goals listed above. Young people are faced with so many choices and challenges and they may not know of the opportunities available to them.”

This issue is currently being addressed by VCE in Amelia County public and private schools through 4-H programming in and out of school, however, more opportunities for youth to engage and develop life skills such as financial literacy, leadership, and positive adult mentorship, and positive relationship building must be prioritized.

Percentage of all Amelia County respondents selecting high or very high effort is needed for this issue.
86% Teaching Youth Good Money Habits
79% Helping Youth Develop Leadership, Citizenship, and Other Life Skills
79% Getting More Adults Involved in Mentoring Youth
64% Teaching Healthy Relationship Skills to Teens

Priority Issue #2: Promoting Agricultural Resiliency

Agriculture is the backbone of Amelia County, and protecting agricultural resiliency through sustainability and profitability remain a top priority for Amelia County. Priority issues identified under agricultural resiliency include agricultural sustainability, strengthening the local food system, and controlling invasive pests (plants, animals, insects). Community comments included statements on needs such as “food supply and supporting agriculture,” and “strengthening the local ag producer community.” There is a great need in this area, especially in a changing agricultural landscape within the county with the local shutdown of Tyson in 2023. Resiliency, profitability, and sustainability of the farm and forestland in Amelia county effect not only the producers, but the county as a whole.

Agricultural resiliency is interwoven with many other areas of need, and as such Extension will address this issue through a multi-program area approach. This priority issue includes topics such as controlling invasive pests, strengthening the local food system, promoting alternative agriculture, assisting farm and forestland owners in production and profitability, improving agricultural literacy, pesticide education, and preserving farm and forestland in the county. These areas will be addressed by VCE through educational programs and community workshops, promoting community gardens and local farmers' markets, and continuing to connect and inform the community on local production. Programs on farm transition and farm business management will also be offered to assist Amelia county producers in transitioning to the next generation and to preserve farm and forestland.

This issue is interwoven with issues #3 on topics such as protecting water quality and improving agriculture and natural resources literacy, and #4 on topics such as enhancing food security and reducing food waste.

Percentage of all Amelia County respondents selecting high or very high effort is needed for this issue.
86% Controlling Invasive Pests (Plants, Animals, Insects)
71% Strengthening the Local Food System
71% Promoting Alternative Agriculture
64% Assisting Farmers and Forest Landowners in Production and Profitability
64% Promoting Agricultural, Natural Resources, and Environmental Literacy
57% Preserving Farm and Forest Land

Priority Issue #3: Protecting Natural Resources

Amelia County is bordered by the Appomattox River, with many smaller rivers and creeks flowing into it. The entire county is part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, which is of primary concern for nutrient runoff and water quality throughout the majority of the state. This priority issue will address the needs of the natural resources in the county through education and programming surrounding the protection of water quality, management of natural resources within the county, and increasing natural resources and environmental literacy. Educating residents and landowners on topics such as water quality and conservation, soil conservation, forest management, and habitat management will help address this issue. Additionally, Amelia Cooperative Extension will continue to partner with other programs such as the Piedmont Soil and Water District, Natural Resources Conservation Services, the James River Buffer Association, Quail Forever, and the Department of Wildlife Resources to provide consistent and quality information to address natural resources concerns and mitigation.

Percentage of all Amelia County respondents selecting high or very high effort is needed for this issue.
64% Protecting Water Quality
64% Managing Natural Habitats and Resources
64% Promoting Agricultural, Natural Resources, and Environmental Literacy

Priority Issue #4: Improving Quality of Life

While youth development ranked amongst the highest need for Amelia County, many skills for adult citizens ranked amongst the top 10 identified needs as well. Priority issues identified under enhancing the overall quality of life can be met through effective management of personal finances, facilitating civic engagement, food safety and preservation practices, adopting measures to prevent chronic diseases, and preservation of the family. VCE addresses these key aspects so that individuals can make informed decisions that contribute to their well-being and long-term health.

Food insecurity affects 8.7% of the population of Amelia County. Enhancing food security and reducing food waste is addressed by VCE through educational programs and community workshops on preserving seasonal produce and by promoting community gardens and local farmers' markets. Interdisciplinary programming will be developed further to foster partnerships with local agricultural producers and community groups. These partnerships will be beneficial to increasing the availability of resources and access to sustainability programs.

Percentage of all Amelia County respondents selecting high or very high effort is needed for this issue.
71% Teaching People to Manage their Money
64% Helping Communities Improve their Quality of Life
64% Teaching People to Protect Themselves from Identity Theft, Frauds, And Scams
64% Strengthening Parenting Skills

Future Programming to Address Community Issues

Amelia Cooperative Extension understands the community's needs as a result of the data collected through the situation analysis, the ELC, and our interactions with the citizens and stakeholders in the county on a daily basis. We will continue to build upon the foundation the youth in the county receive with 4-H programming focused on

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education curriculum, programs to help develop financial literacy such as Real Money Real World, and leadership development activities such as club leadership roles, entrepreneurial Special Interest (SPIN) clubs, and other hands-on educational opportunities. Additionally, extension will recruit and train teen and adult volunteers to lead clubs, activities, and programs that will provide mentorship and educational experiences for youth in the county.

Amelia Cooperative Extension will continue to support the producers and landowners of the county to build resiliency across these industries. There is opportunity to increase programming in the county, which can include efforts to address farm profitability, income diversification, farm preservation and succession planning, and more. Local food system needs will be met through programming spanning from new enterprise development, marketing and market development, to consumer education as it relates to local foods, including food preservation and community gardens.

Invasive pest management is an issue that affects farms of all sizes, as well as home- and land-owners in Amelia County. VCE will continue to work with crop, livestock, and specialty producers and industry groups to improve practices that impact pest and fertility management strategies through programming, research projects, and technical support. Furthermore, continuing to implement programming and sharing information with homeowners

and land owners on safe, effective, and timely pest management through community groups, news outlets, and other media sources. All of these topic areas will be supported by developing community partnerships that will serve to foster support for the industry, increase citizen and consumer education, and reduce misinformation and misrepresentation of agricultural practices.

To address natural resources issues, we will continue to build partnerships and promote outreach in schools, at local and state programming, and through one on one consultations with homeowners, landowners, and farmers in the county. Amelia Cooperative Extension will continue to educate on related topics including soil testing and nutrient application, pond and surface water management, and cover crop and pasture practices to protect soil resources. Amelia Cooperative Extension will continue to work closely with landowners, producers, and stakeholders to share information about best management practices and cost-share programs available through the soil and water district, the Natural Resources Conservation Services, the James River Buffer Association, and the Virginia Department of Forestry.

VCE is currently addressing personal finance needs through online self-guided courses and individual financial management coaching provided by trained Master Volunteers and extension agents. The VCE Economic and Community Program team offers training to Extension Agents and volunteers on adult and youth financial simulations to encourage financial literacy programs that help the public protect themselves against identity theft, fraud, and scams. Examples include the Poverty Simulation, Reality Store, and Real Money Real World. Locally, the Amelia VCE office can provide early childhood resources in finance with programs such as Money on the Bookshelf. All of these resources are available to Amelia County Public and Private Schools, Home School groups, and local community organizations.

Food insecurity affects households in different ways. Limited access to grocery stores and healthy food options contributes to obesity and health issues for all age groups. In Amelia, adult obesity rose to its highest levels in 2020. Noticeably, there was a rise in diabetes among the population. Since 2020, the diabetes rates in Amelia have dropped from 14.9% to 10.6% in 2022. VCE will continue to promote preventive healthcare programs. VCE currently provides chronic disease prevention and diabetes support programs in partnership with Centra Southside Community Hospital, Piedmont Senior Resource Center, and Virginia State University. Local Community Colleges should be included as a resource for interns to support chronic disease and diabetes programs. Virginia Cooperative Extension offers regional and local Master Volunteer training programs. These volunteers are trained to provide much-needed support to VCE in the delivery of financial management, and food security programs such as food preservation.

All efforts made by Amelia Cooperative Extension in the priority areas identified will be supported by continuing to develop new and existing community partnerships that will serve to extend our outreach in the community, improve the quality and access of educational programming, and serve the needs of the community.

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