



## York County and the City of Poquoson 2023 Situation Analysis Report

*Authored by Megan Tierney ANR Agent/UC; Meghan Garrity Program Assistant*



Figure 1 View of York River, City of Poquoson Website

York County and the City of Poquoson are adjacent localities in Eastern Virginia, on Virginia's Peninsula. They are suburban and semi-rural communities bordered by the urban communities of Newport News and Hampton, the rural communities of Gloucester and James City County, and the suburban community of Williamsburg. Water, history and tourism are important to both communities. Bordered by the York River and the Chesapeake Bay, these communities have strong ties to the water, and are local destinations for seafood and fisheries. Yorktown and the surrounding communities include many revolutionary and civil war battlefields and Historic Yorktown provides a living history experience for tourists.

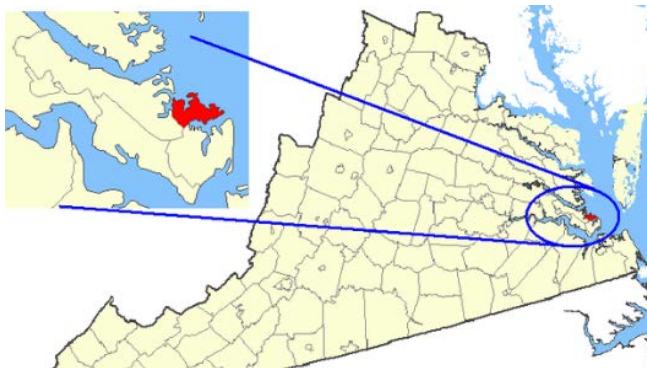


Figure 2 City of Poquoson geographical location. (VA Community Profile: Poquoson 2022)

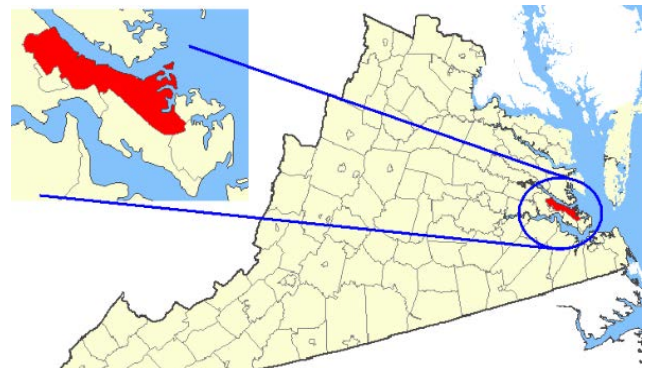


Figure 3. York County geographical location. (VA Community Profile: York 2022)

### Stakeholders Involved

- Residents and Key Leaders in York County and the City of Poquoson
- People that work in the City of Poquoson or York County and live outside the Localities
- City/County Government and multiple associated departments
- Local City/County School Boards
- Local Business/Churches

# Table of Contents

York County and the City of Poquoson.....	1
2023 Situation Analysis Report .....	1
Stakeholders Involved.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Summary Infographic .....	3
Introduction.....	4
Documentation Used/Sources:.....	4
Unit Profile.....	5
Community and Resident Perspectives.....	13
Comprehensive Plan Survey Results: .....	14
Community Issues.....	16
Future Programming to Address Community Issues .....	17
Environmental Awareness .....	17
Youth Engagement.....	18
Healthy Lifestyles .....	19
Room for improvement.....	19
References/Sources .....	21

# Summary Infographic

Figure 4 and Figure 5 provide a visual overview of the top 10 community identified issues in York County and the City of Poquoson. This data comes from the VCE York/Poquoson Resident Survey given to a number of stakeholders and residents in 2023. A more detailed explanation is in the Community and Resident Perspectives section on page 13.

## Top 10 Community-Identified Issues

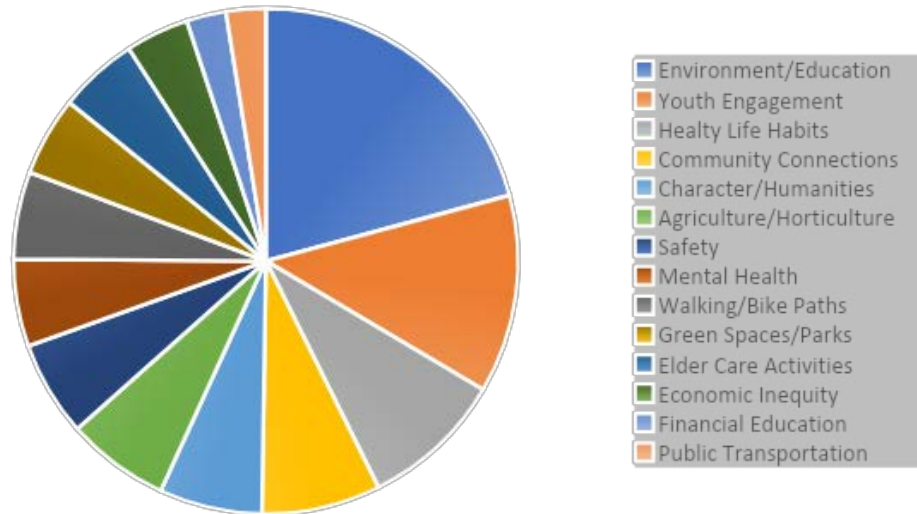


Figure 4. Pie Chart of Top 10 Community Identified Issues from VCE Resident Survey

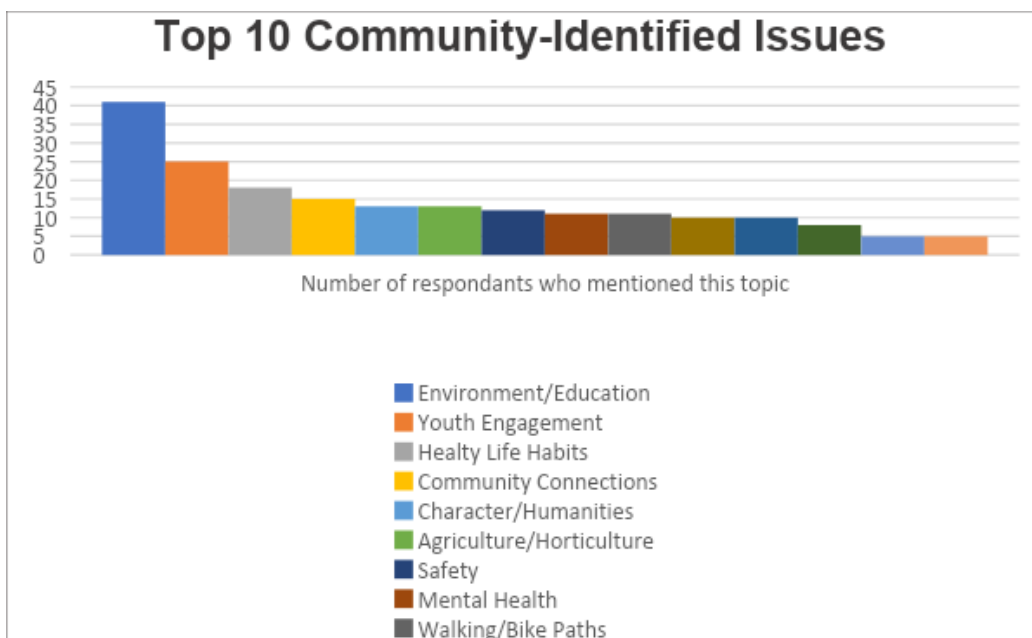


Figure 5. Bar Graph with number of mentions: Top 10 Community-Identified Issues from VCE Resident Survey

# Introduction

This Situational Analysis is a tool to bring together the current state of our localities (York County and the City of Poquoson) while identifying issues/needs which our VCE Office will utilize as a baseline for growing and creating our local programming. This report is based on multiple documents and sources as listed below as well as a seven-question citizen survey launched from the VCE office through the two localities and directly to key community stakeholders as listed above. The results from the VCE survey, consisting of fifty-six responses, directly correlated to the resident responses in both locality Comprehensive Plans; this validates the information presented in those plans. As part of the two localities, the VCE Office utilizes the official Comprehensive Plans which analyze the localities current state and bring in resident responses outlining issues/needs to create goals for future change. Both localities' plans include a resident survey. The City of Poquoson surveyed 4,100 residents and received a 28% response rate. York County conducted a 464 person telephone interview with 95% confidence interval and a margin of sampling error of 5%. Additionally they hosted resident participation group sessions, public meetings and youth surveys.

## Documentation Used/Sources:

- 2017 Census of Agriculture
- Bon Secours Executive Summary of Community Health Needs Assessment 2022-2023
- DCR: VA Coastal Resilience Master Plan
- Generate More Health ODU A Food Secure Community Action Plan Lackey, VA
- Hampton Roads Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (includes York County)
- Hampton Roads Sanitation District
- HRPDC: Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
- Newport News Waterworks
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Poquoson City Hazard Mitigation Plan
- The City of Poquoson Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038
- The York County Comprehensive Plan 2023: Charting the course to 2040
- VA Community Profiles: VA Employment Commission (LMI) for both York & Poquoson
- VCE Unit Profiles for both York & Poquoson
- VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Science)
- VCE York/Poquoson Resident Survey

# Unit Profile

Background on the Localities of York County and the City of Poquoson:

**History:** After a detailed review of the most current York County and Poquoson Comprehensive Plans (2023, 2018 respectively) as well as the sources listed above, we compiled the following descriptions of the localities. York County and the City of Poquoson are in a region known as Hampton Roads. They are surrounded by the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries as well as a large urban population. Poquoson, which was part of York County for over three centuries, became an independent town to keep their high school in its present location in order to maintain their community's investment. Poquoson was chartered as an independent town in 1952 and became a chartered city in 1975. Although Poquoson has a separate school system, some services are still shared with York County such as Court Services, Commonwealth Attorney, Social Services, the Sheriff's Department and Virginia Cooperative Extension. According to the York County Comprehensive Plan, York County is steeped in Historical sites and tourism as the former site of Fort York (1633) a port of entry for English Settlers. They showcase some of the actual battlefields used during the American Revolution, have an American Revolution Museum, York County Historical Museum, The Custom House, the Watermen's Museum along with the Colonial National Historical Park that are all part of their tourism sites.

**Military:** Throughout both the Poquoson and York County Comprehensive plans, the area's relationship with the military is highlighted. The Hampton Roads area is highly populated by Department of Defense bases and contractors. The surrounding area includes seven DOD bases, Fort Eustis, NASA Langley, Langley Air Force Base, Yorktown Naval Weapon Station, Fort Monroe, Norfolk Navy Base, and Fort Story Army Base. In addition, there is a major contractor for the DOD that employs 18,000 personnel called Huntington Ingalls Industries which is located in nearby Newport News and is the largest shipbuilding facility in the U.S.A. Approximately 60% of York County is federal, state or local government property. Poquoson's land mass is also 25% taken up by the Plum Tree Island National Wildlife Refuge, a former Air Force bombing range which still contains unexploded ordinances and is under the Federal Superfund Clean-up Program.

**Population, Demographics and Data:** York County's Comprehensive Plan identified a large projected population increase and the current population is on par with the increase for the entire state of VA at 7.5%. Poquoson's population has only increased by 2.6% and is projected to only slightly increase in the near future. York and Poquoson's Comprehensive plans both speak to the identified need to balance population with protection of the natural land services (Figure 6). The racial demographic makeup of the counties is primarily Caucasian. See Figures 7 and 8 below for visuals on the ratio and percentages of each race in the populations of Poquoson and York County.

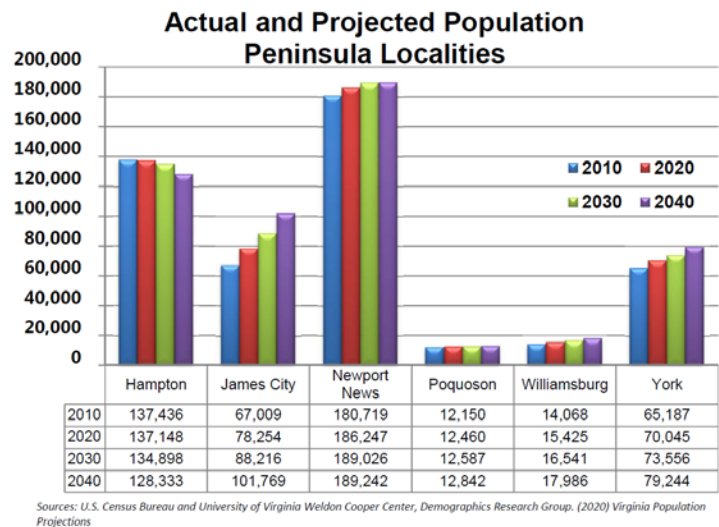


Figure 6. Peninsula population comparison. (York Comprehensive Plan, 2023)

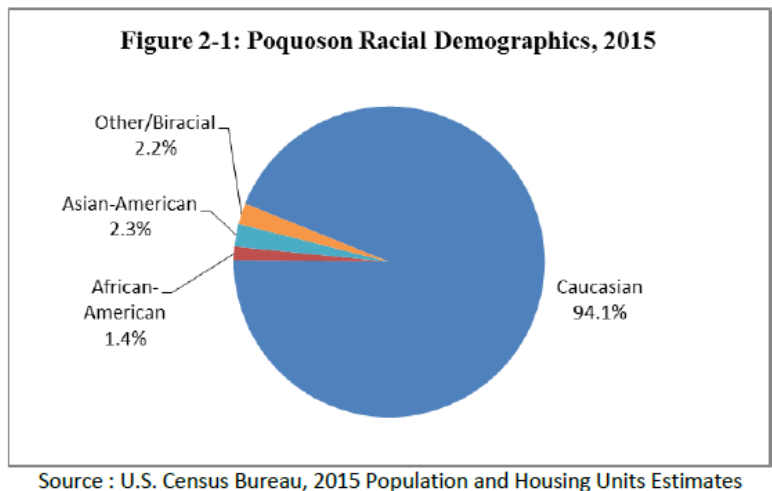


Figure 7. Poquoson racial demographics. (Poquoson Comprehensive Plan, 2018)

York County Population by Race and Hispanic Origin				
	2000		2020	
Population by Race	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	56,297	100.0%	70,045	100.0%
White alone	45,038	80.0%	48,251	68.9%
Black or African American alone	7,533	13.4%	8,930	12.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	195	0.3%	258	0.4%
Asian alone	1,829	3.2%	4,297	6.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	65	0.1%	140	0.2%
Some other race alone	509	0.9%	1,482	2.1%
Two or more races	1,128	2.0%	6,687	9.5%
Population by Hispanic or Latino Origin	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total:	56,297	100.0%	70,045	100.0%
Not Hispanic or Latino	54,788	97.3%	64,909	92.7%
Hispanic or Latino	1,509	2.7%	5,136	7.3%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Figure 8. York County racial demographics. (York Comprehensive Plan, 2023)

**Health Care:** Both York and Poquoson are served by two major health care systems, Sentara and Riverside, and are located within a ten-mile proximity to both localities in the adjacent cities of Hampton and Newport News

each having a general hospital. There are two other hospitals located in Newport News that also serve the localities, the Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughter (CHKD) and the Mary Immaculate Hospital under Bon Secours. The VA Department of Health is located in Newport News and serves the larger Peninsula Health District including York and Poquoson. The Colonial Services Board in Williamsburg also serves the larger peninsula including York and Poquoson for services in mental health, cognitive impairment and substance abuse care. In a Bon Secours Executive Summary for its Community Health Needs Assessment 2022-2025 it lists the most prevalent issues in Hampton Roads as determined through a community survey, community focus groups and through data sources such as Metopio, GHRC Connects. Org, RWJF County Health Rankings and the VA Department of Health on the state of health on the peninsula. Figure 9 below highlights the needs listed in the Bon Secours assessment.

### Significant health needs

1. Diabetes
2. Heart Disease
3. Violence in the Community
4. Substance Use Disorders
5. Physical Inactivity
6. Cancer
7. Adult Obesity
8. Sexually Transmitted Infections
9. Workforce Development

### Prioritized Health Needs

1. Healthcare Access – Mental and Behavioral Health, including Substance Use Disorders
2. Healthcare Access – Chronic Conditions
3. Neighborhood and Built Environment – Violence in the Community
4. Economic Stability - Workforce Development

Figure 9. Significant and Prioritized Health Needs, Peninsula. (Bon Secours, Health Needs Assessment)

**Population Age:** Both localities note that their population is aging in place and they are seeing a loss of the twenty to thirty-nine age range of young professionals (See Figure 10). They are looking at strategies to mitigate this identified need by creating urban environments with walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, which will serve as a bridge to attract the younger population to the existing amenities. The York Comprehensive Plan describes the current positive attractions within York County: *“With a well-educated citizenry, a highly regarded school system, relatively low tax rates, a pleasant living environment, and proximity to institutions of higher education and other regional assets (e.g., The College of William & Mary, Christopher Newport University, Hampton University, Thomas Nelson Community College, the National Center for State Courts, the National Institute of Aerospace, the Thomas Jefferson National Laboratory, the NASA Langley Research Center, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science), York County offers many attributes that will enable it to take advantage of these emerging opportunities and further enhance the climate for new business creation, including both the stimulation of small entrepreneurial endeavors and the expansion of existing businesses. Capitalizing on these assets, the County can work to enhance economic development and redevelopment opportunities....”* (York Comprehensive Plan 2023, pg. 48)

	Poquoson city	York County	Virginia	United States
Under 5 years	538	3,812	509,625	20,201,362
5 to 9 years	754	4,745	511,849	20,348,657
10 to 14 years	993	5,241	511,246	20,677,194
15 to 19 years	1,009	5,182	550,965	22,040,343
20 to 24 years	520	3,606	572,091	21,585,999
25 to 29 years	447	3,413	564,342	21,101,849
30 to 34 years	535	3,393	526,077	19,962,099
35 to 39 years	712	3,862	540,063	20,179,642
40 to 44 years	864	4,838	568,865	20,890,964
45 to 49 years	1,176	6,030	621,155	22,708,591
50 to 54 years	1,018	5,533	592,845	22,298,125
55 to 59 years	861	4,181	512,595	19,664,805
60 to 64 years	832	3,694	442,369	16,817,924
65 to 69 years	646	2,801	320,302	12,435,263
70 to 74 years	489	1,950	229,502	9,278,166
75 to 79 years	350	1,466	173,929	7,317,795
80 to 84 years	217	954	130,801	5,743,327
85 years and over	189	763	122,403	5,493,433
	12,150	65,464	8,001,024	308,745,538

Source: 2010 Census.

Figure 10. Population by age York/Poquoson comparison (York/Poquoson Unit Profiles, 2023)

**Education:** Education for the population eighteen years and older in both localities follows similar trends. Poquoson and York County share the largest trends in the same categories with the populations having graduated high school or received a GED and attended some college. In Poquoson, this trend is slightly higher with exactly 50% of the population having graduated high school or received a GED and attended some college, whereas York County sits at 46%. The data in York County show that 48% of the population earned some level of post-high school degree. This number is slightly lower in Poquoson at 42%. See Figure 11 for a visual comparison of the locations. The numbers are highest in the following categories: Some college, high school/GED, and bachelor's degree. Poquoson follows the trends of Virginia with the largest group having graduated high school/GED while York is above average, with the largest number of residents having attended "some college". This can be attributed to the highly ranked school systems and relatively affluent households. See Figure 13 on the next page for an overview on median household income. There are a number of residents in both counties who have less than a high school education accounting for 6% in York County and 7% in Poquoson. This is worth noting as a potential gap in access, etc. for the planning stages of this report. Figure 12 shows a chart comparison of the amount of residents and their education level as compared to Virginia and the United States.

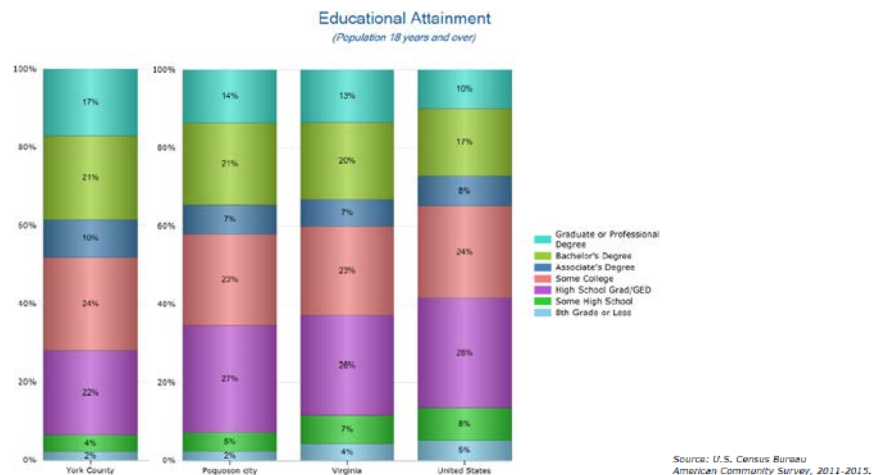


Figure 11. Educational Attainment comparison York/Poquoson. (York/Poquoson Unit Profiles, 2023)

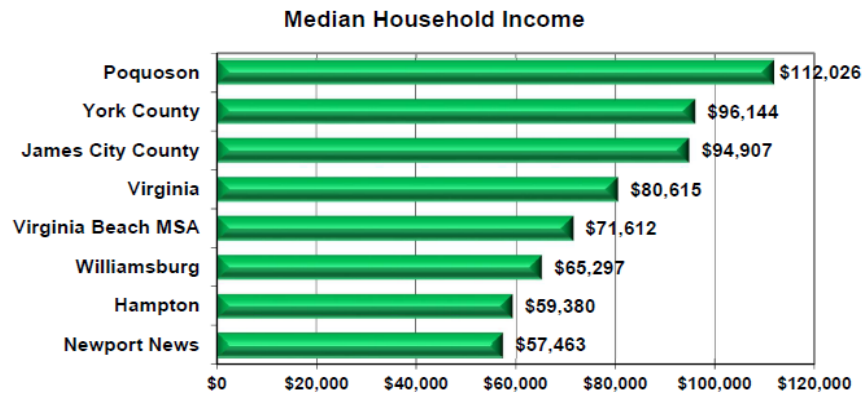


	Poquoson city	York County	Virginia	United States
8th Grade or Less	220	1,096	275,329	12,639,425
Some High School	455	2,112	464,075	20,093,117
High School Grad/GED	2,546	10,828	1,633,105	68,044,371
Some College	2,174	11,967	1,457,887	57,431,237
Associate's Degree	693	4,837	440,219	18,586,866
Bachelor's Degree	1,960	10,717	1,258,661	42,027,629
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,264	8,540	862,686	24,008,551
	9,312	50,097	6,391,962	242,831,196

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
American Community Survey, 2011-2015.

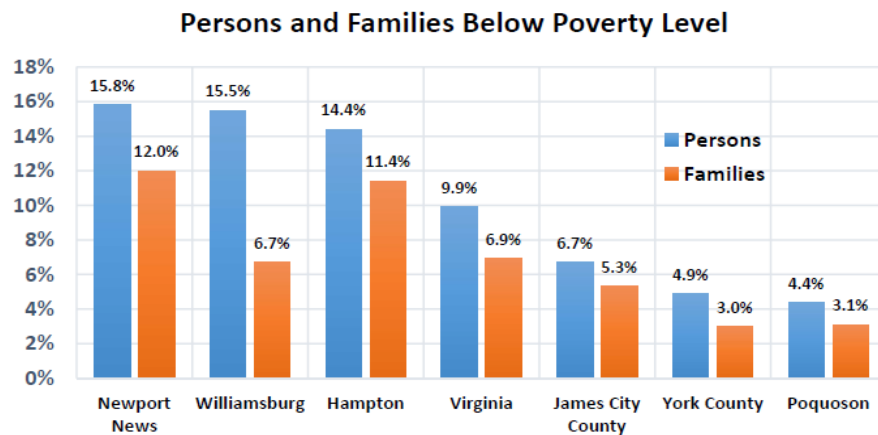
Figure 12. Education level York/Poquoson comparison (York/Poquoson Unit Profiles, 2023)

**Income:** Figures 13 and 14 highlight the median household income throughout the greater Hampton Roads area. In Figure 13, a key takeaway is the income for Poquoson and York County. Compared to nearby localities, their constituents have the highest average household income. These are also well above the state median household incomes. When comparing this data to Figure 14, Poquoson and York County also have the lowest poverty levels for the area.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Survey, 2017-2021

Figure 13. Median household income Peninsula comparison. (York Comprehensive Plan, 2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Survey, 2017-2021

Figure 14. Percentage of persons and families below poverty level: Peninsula comparison (York Comprehensive Plan, 2023)

**Food Security:** It is of note that a specific area of York County near the Naval Weapons Station has been identified as a Food Desert. *“Lackey is a small community of approximately 4,900 people in York County, which was ranked fifth in Virginia in 2020 by the County Health Rankings for health outcomes, and now ranks ninth (2023). Slightly more than 13% of the population in York County is Black, yet 50% of residents in Lackey are Black. The average life expectancy in Lackey is 75.5 years, the lowest in all of York County, a difference of almost eight years to the census tract with the highest life expectancy just a few miles down the road (USALEEP, 2019). The Culture of Health observed in Lackey is characterized by a concentration of housing choice voucher program communities, redlined and isolated neighborhoods, lack of food sources, low vehicle ownership, insufficient sidewalks and bike lanes, and a free clinic to serve local neighbors. The contrast of this area to those nearby demonstrates clear disparity and inequity.”* (Hoglund, 2023, pg. 2). This action plan outlines a plan to make York County the first completely food secure County in VA. See the demographic and racial makeup of both localities in Figure 7 and Figure 8 above.

**Future Planning:** The future addition of a regional fiber network ring to Hampton Roads will offer Higher Education and DOD entities access to accelerated services in the near future. This could be an incentive for the young professional demographic as well as the local workforce. *“The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC), which is made up of all the local governments in the region, began construction of a regional fiber network ring in 2021. This network will leverage Virginia Beach’s digital port, which houses transatlantic fiber cables, to deliver unprecedented bandwidth to the region. The HRPDC plans to construct the connectivity ring in four phases, beginning by creating a Southside ring. Phase II will entail the creation of a ring through the Peninsula and Gloucester. The Southside ring will be connected to the Peninsula and Gloucester ring in Phase III, and the final phase will connect the rural areas (Surry, Smithfield, Isle of Wight, Southampton, and Franklin). The Peninsula connectivity ring is planned to connect institutions of higher education (e.g. Hampton University, Christopher Newport University, Thomas Nelson Community College, and the College of William & Mary), research laboratories (e.g. NASA Langley and the Jefferson Lab), hospitals, and other heavy data users. Internet service providers will be able to lease bandwidth from this middle-mile fiber backbone to deliver high quality service to businesses and residents as well.”* (York Comp. Plan 2023, pg. 33).

*“Tourism plays a major role in the local and regional economy; however, the Williamsburg area hospitality and hotel market has stagnated in recent years, even before the COVID-19 outbreak. This is a problem that transcends jurisdictional boundaries and can best be addressed through inter-jurisdictional cooperation through such groups as the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance. One fast-growing sector of the tourism industry that offers great potential is sports tourism. Hosting sports tournaments and events brings visitors to the region who boost the economy by staying in local motels and eating in local restaurants. In an effort to advance sports tourism in the greater Williamsburg area, York County joined with the City of Williamsburg and James City County in 2021 to form the Historic Triangle Recreational Facilities Authority (HTRFA), the purpose of which is to oversee the construction and management of regional recreational facilities as part of the redevelopment of more than 160 acres alongside the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center. Motels on Bypass Road and elsewhere in the upper County would certainly benefit from such a facility.”* (York Comp. Plan 2023, pg. 49).

**Environment:** York County and the City of Poquoson’s climate is influenced by proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, and they typically enjoy mild winters and warm, humid summers. The average annual temperature ranges from a low of approximately 50 degrees Fahrenheit to a high of approximately 70 degrees Fahrenheit. January is the coldest month on average, while July is the hottest. Average annual precipitation is about forty-five to fifty inches and does not vary significantly from month to month and is well distributed throughout the year, with the wettest months typically coming in the summer. *“Because of their climate and geography, York County and the*

*other counties and cities in southeastern Virginia are vulnerable to a variety of weather-related natural hazards that threaten the safety of residents and have the potential to damage or destroy both public and private property as well as disrupt the local economy and overall quality of life. These include but are not limited to tropical and coastal storms, winter storms, flooding, tornados, coastal erosion, wildfires, drought, and extreme heat.” (York Comp. Plan 2023, p. 57)*

York County is encompassed by 235 miles of tidal shoreline and has many sections that are within seven to ten feet of sea-level. The City of Poquoson is surrounded by 168 miles of shoreline and 51% of its landmass is wetlands. Most land in Poquoson is within seven feet of sea-level. York County currently has 5,000 acres of leased oyster beds. Both localities are coastal communities that were molded by their surrounding bodies of water and are dependent on them as a vital resource. They have a large connection to the seafood industry through fisheries and retail of seafood products. Poquoson formerly a fishing village, connecting more to crabs and oysters while York has a large scallop industry. They rely on their connection to the Chesapeake Bay to support their local economy, tourism, history, recreation, and ecosystems. *“The numerous benefits of being a coastal community do, however, come with a set of challenges. Given the largely flat and low-lying coastal topography throughout the region, complications from severe storms, flooding, and shoreline erosion have long adversely affected the County and Hampton Roads. The threat of these costal challenges is expected to grow as a result of projected relative sea level rise (SLR), more intense severe storms, and changing precipitation patterns. SLR also introduces the problem of significant loss of land and property to open water gradually over the next 80 years.” (York Comprehensive Plan 2023, pg. 81)*

*“The Hampton Roads Region has the fastest rising sea levels on the east coast and nationwide is second only to New Orleans, Louisiana. This is attributable to the relative SLR, which accounts for additional factors beyond global SLR. Global SLR is the overall increase in the quantity or volume of water in the oceans, which is caused primarily by glacier melt. Land subsidence from sediment compaction and the extraction of subsurface liquids, such as water, is also contributing to SLR in Hampton Roads. Lastly, changes in oceanic circulation are also causing relatively higher sea levels in the area. The Gulf Stream is slowing down as the entrance of fresh water into the ocean creates an imbalance, allowing more water to remain in the Mid-Atlantic.” (York Comprehensive Plan 2023, pg. 81).* Currently the sea-level rise in Yorktown, as measured by NOAA, is gaining at an average rate of 4.9 millimeters per year which is equivalent to an increase of 1.61 feet over a 100-year period. Visit these NOAA websites for a visual on storm surge data and projected sea level rise.

Storm Surge Data Lookup Tool – NOAA <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/nationalsurge/>

Sea Level Rise Interactive Map – NOAA <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/>

Below are some highlights of issues mentioned in the Comprehensive Plans under environmental concepts:

- Both Localities are under MS4 Permits and are required to do Stormwater education and mitigation
- Both Localities are in the Chesapeake Bay and are required to meet a pollution diet called TMDL
- Both localities note the value of wetland/SAV function as a filter to improve water quality (plants performing a service) and the need to protect them as well as the need to increase and maintain living shorelines that can move with sea-level rise.
- York County is under a Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (Climate) finalized in 2022 with Hampton, Newport News, Williamsburg and James City County Pg. 57 York Comp. Plan (Required by the State)
- Poquoson has its own Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, last updated 2014 (Pg. 5-3 Poq. Comp. Plan) (Required by State)
- York County Board of Supervisors listed one of its main strategies as Environmental Stewardship and focus on Resilience

- Drinking water sources – Contracted through NN WaterWorks utilizing mostly surface level waters with most of the surface level waters in York County. There are also other additional sources mentioned, they also utilize local aquifers as a source for water.
- Air quality (vehicle emissions) regional issue being watched
- Land Subsidence in the Hampton Roads Region is being reversed through HRSD's SWIFT program by injecting wastewater, treated to meet drinking water standards, back into the Potomac Aquifer in Suffolk and York County wells. This is raising the underwater lakes that support land height. This is a priority as local industry was allowed to over use the water source and almost depleted it. The urgency is to raise land and to prevent the aquifer from becoming permanently dysfunctional.

# Community and Resident Perspectives

The York/Poquoson VCE Community Survey launched in 2023, (7 Questions) N=55 and translated the qualitative data in the form of the survey question responses into quantitative data by counting the times an issue was repeated throughout the responses to all the questions. The following questions were utilized for our survey:

- Do you work or live in York County or the City of Poquoson?
- Voluntary Demographics?
- As a citizen of York County and the City of Poquoson is there anything you think our organization should address to improve the wellbeing of residents in those localities?
- What are the greatest concerns about youth in your community?
- What are the greatest concerns about adults in your community?
- Do you have social, economic, environmental or health concerns about your community and if so, what are they?

The survey was distributed through the York County marketing team and the City of Poquoson Marketing person to the public over a period of 2 months. It was also individually emailed out to Key Community Departments and Leaders including; Community Services, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, Planning, Environmental Services, Public Works, the City Manager's office, The County Board of Supervisors office, the local school boards, local business and Churches, the York/Poquoson Master Gardener's and the Peninsula Chapter of the VA Master Naturalists.

The results of the survey showed that most commonly mentioned issues were in order (#= times issue mentioned):

41: Environment/Education including mention of soil, stewardship, water quality, chemicals, climate;  
Adult/Youth

25: Youth Engagement; Youth Education/Activities after school and during summer

18: Healthy Life Habits/eating/physical activity/work life balance; Adult/Youth

15: Community Connections

13: Education around compassion/humanity/character; Adult/Youth

13: Agriculture/ Horticulture (Food Growing), Value of plants, trees

12: Safety from Violence/Drug Abuse/Weapons

11: Mental Health; Adult/Youth

11: Walk/Bike Paths

10: More Green Space/Parks (preserve/less development)

10: Elder Care Activities

8: Economic inequity; affordable housing, economic hardship

5: Financial Education; Adult/Youth

5: Public Transportation

# Comprehensive Plan Survey Results:

As our department is part of York County and the City of Poquoson in funding and in roles and responsibilities we also included the results from their Comprehensive Plan Resident Surveys below.

York County survey/focus groups (N = 464) in the following results (York Comprehensive Plan, 2018-2041 pgs. 6-7). Figure 15 below is catered to the use of county facilities, where residents ranked the importance of building or expanding various public facilities.

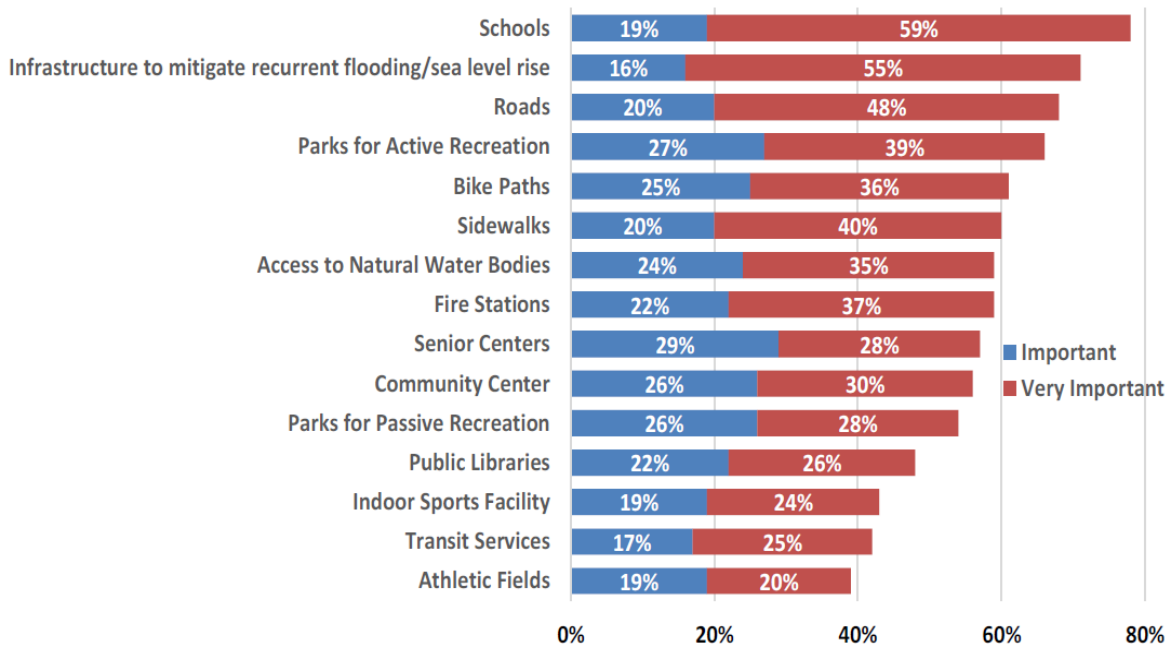


Figure 15. Importance of building or expanding various public facilities as identified by the community. (York Comprehensive Plan 2023)

The data presented from the York County resident survey correlates with the VCE office survey noting similarities in importance of: infrastructure focused on flooding, parks for recreation (active and passive), bike paths/sidewalks, access to natural bodies of water, senior centers, community centers and transit services.

Additionally, in an unpublished survey conducted by the York County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee’s Youth Commission, youth at York High School (N=186) provided their perspectives on county developments (York County Comprehensive Plan, p. 9). The survey used the same questions and format as the York County resident survey. The key takeaways from this survey, in regards to youth perspectives, are the importance of walkability in the area, infrastructure to address sea level rise and concerns about overdevelopment. Additionally, survey respondents recognized the importance of infrastructure to mitigate flooding and sea level rise, access to bodies of water, bike lanes and sidewalks. These directly correlate to and support the results of the county and VCE surveys.

The City of Poquoson conducted a citizen opinion survey for their Comprehensive Plan 2018. They categorized their responses in these main themes; Development Aesthetics, Smart Growth, Shopping and Business, Housing and Residential Development, Storm Flooding and Sea-Level Rise, Conservation and the Environment (City of Poquoson 2017 Citizen Survey, pgs. 5-6).

Some of the key takeaways from that survey are the importance of green spaces and safe infrastructure including bike paths etc. as more than fifty percent of respondents agreed to its importance. Eighty percent of the

respondents agree that Poquoson should promote living shorelines and preserve tidal wetlands as a buffer against flooding. Fifty-nine percent agree residential and commercial development should not be allowed in areas that are susceptible to flooding. Residents want to keep a small town feel with greenspaces, small locally owned businesses and some agriculture while drawing in a younger population. See Figure 16 to see response data from the City of Poquoson’s Citizen Survey (2017). Over fifty percent of citizens agree that the city should work on preserving the land and greenspaces.

Conservation and the Environment:	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Didn't Answer
1. Clear-cutting of woodlands should not be allowed in Poquoson.	632 49%	311 24%	177 14%	97 7%	68 5%	17 1%
2. Poquoson should incentivize private landowners to plant trees and preserve woodlands.	496 38%	412 32%	244 19%	78 6%	53 4%	19 1%
3. Poquoson should coordinate more efforts to clean up trash along local waterways and shorelines.	462 35%	511 39%	246 19%	41 3%	17 1%	25 2%
4. Poquoson should champion the preservation and restoration of shellfish populations in local waters.	655 50%	422 32%	166 13%	17 1%	21 2%	20 2%
5. Poquoson should encourage using natural methods to control mosquitos, such as dragonflies and bats.	662 51%	347 27%	181 14%	54 4%	39 3%	18 1%

Figure 16. Poquoson community feedback on Environment. (City of Poquoson 2017 Citizen Survey)

State VCE Survey Results 2023: As presented by VCE State Level Faculty, Figure 17 identifies the top 10 issues that need high effort from VCE.

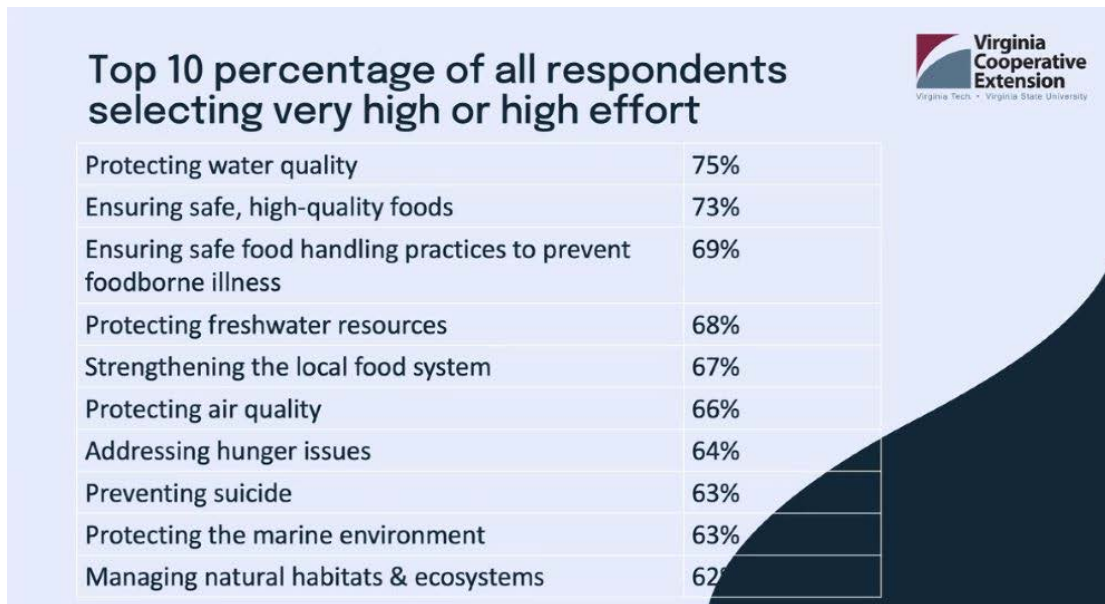


Figure 17. Top 10 percentage of all respondents identifying high effort needed in various causes. (VCE State Situational Analysis Data Presentation 2023)

Half of the issues that rated top ten in the VCE State Survey corresponded with our top issue of Environmental Awareness and personal empowerment towards solutions under that issue. Our other top two issues including Healthy Living and Youth Engagement did not make this list.

# Community Issues

After reviewing our resident survey and the surveys from the most recent York County and City of Poquoson Comprehensive Plans we identified three main issues that our Local VCE Office can work toward making an impact on, as summarized below:

1. Environmental Awareness: Situational awareness and personal empowerment towards solutions
2. Youth Engagement: After school and summer programs
3. Disease Prevention: Healthy Lifestyle Prescription: Food, Exercise, Mental Health and work/life balance

Environmental Awareness, the number one issue listed above, was identified from the VCE Resident Survey through resident and key resident leaders' responses. Those responses included a broad picture of environmental needs with the lead concern identified as water quality. Personal empowerment towards solutions falls under the noted need for people to make educated decisions about their impact on the environment and their personal ability to improve on it. Both comprehensive plans outline county and city initiatives towards reducing environmental impact and improving water quality.

Youth Engagement, the number two issue listed above, was identified from resident voices in the VCE Resident Survey on the need to engage youth in civic opportunities, after school and summer programming, and creating healthy and safe opportunities for growth outside of the classroom. Community concerns centered on the availability of youth programming and a need for an investment in safe, recreational activities.

Disease Prevention, the third issue listed above, was identified in both resident surveys from Poquoson and York, as well as in the VCE survey and the community assessment for Hampton Roads by Bon Secours. Bon Secours lists prioritized health needs in Hampton Roads as mental and behavioral health, chronic conditions, violence in the community and economic stability. Additionally, common themes from the surveys focused on: mental health, obesity, addiction, physical fitness, access to outdoors, quality of life, nutrition education, compassion toward self and others, and access to healthy, affordable food. The need to empower residents in making healthy living decisions is a major concern.

These identified needs will be used as the foundation for program planning through the VCE York/Poquoson office. In the program planning process, the office will focus on resource availability, access, and education in order to create inclusive programming for all residents of York County and the City of Poquoson.



## Future Programming to Address Community Issues

The VCE York/Poquoson office is equipped to address each of the community needs, but only one in a full capacity. There is currently one Full-Time ANR/Horticulture Agent, a Part-Time Program Assistant, and an Administrative and Fiscal Assistant (AFA). Unfortunately, most of the programming for this locality will focus solely on the first need of Environmental Awareness. Programs supporting the second and third needs of Youth Engagement and Disease Prevention/Healthy Lifestyle will be small, and only superficial, as there are a number of resources needed by the locality to create and implement beneficial programming.

Fortunately, the small, but mighty office has a number of resources readily available. Most notable, there is an extensive, well-oiled Master Gardener volunteer network. Many of the volunteers have a number of hours and years dedicated to the Master Gardener program overall, including passion projects such as the 4-H Schoolyard Habitats outreach program that provides and maintains an outdoor nature-classroom in almost every school and the establishment of two learning gardens to showcase best horticulture practices. Other resources include: research-based educational materials, VT/State/National databases, technology (computers, audio/visual equipment, etc.), 4-H curriculum, and programming supplies (watershed models, tools, print material, etc.).

From the available resources, the office can best address the top identified need by utilizing the current ANR agent, and the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteer networks. Current and planned programming areas to address the community issues are below. Some established programs will be maintained in the locality, but there is the ability to create new programs to address identified gaps.

## Environmental Awareness

The VCE York/Poquoson office plans to focus public education on the proper use of pesticides and fertilizers in the watershed area. VCE plays a major role in providing the latest research-based information to the general public through individual consultation and public programming. The Master Gardener program and local chapter of the Master Naturalists play a vital role in educating and engaging the public. Through these volunteers, VCE is most successful at relaying sustainable landscape management information to the general public.

Some focus areas of this programming are education on nature and science, proper chemical use, watershed understanding, and health implications of individual actions. The goal is to provide the general public with environmental education, experiential learning and skills which all together are used to make an impact on their community. The focus areas directly support resident concerns on the need for environmental education, and the city, county and resident concerns around water quality and sea level.

The Master Gardener program is ready to support environmental education efforts from the VCE office. Residents who participate in this program are trained on environmental awareness and stewardship, who then share this information and skills with their neighbors and peers. The participants receive 50 hours of training and education and give back 20 hours per year in community service. Currently, their programming directly focuses on increasing environmental awareness in the community through the following programs. These programs have positive impacts on addressing this need and because of this impact, the office plans to maintain them.

- Citizen Help Desk—Serves to give residents a connection to research based answers to their home landscape issues from someone not trying to sell them something.
- MG Tree Stewards, Tree Calls—April-October trained volunteers visit residents to help them asses their tree health issues.
- MG Healthy Virginia Lawns—Trained MGs visit residents to help them understand how to maintain a (groundcover) lawn to protect soil and reduce stormwater and pollution carried in it, through lawn care practices.
- MG Water Stewards-Homeowner Stormwater Assessment—During Healthy VA Lawns visits trained MGs go through a Stormwater practices checklist with homeowners to help them utilize the practices that fit their property to reduce their stormwater impact on the community.

- Outreach booths and Events—BugFest, Pollinator Day, Poquoson Seafood Festival, and Yorktown Market Days—have information and educational games for all ages to learn about their environmental impact on their community.
- Library talks—A partnership with York and Poquoson Libraries to bring educational programs to the public based around healthy landscape practices.
- Pesticide Safety Training—Is part of the core curriculum for Master Gardeners in training and is also done with industry professionals by the ANR Agent for those who maintain VDACS Category licenses for spraying Restricted Use Chemicals as Continuing Education helping them better protect themselves and the environment in their practices.

The Peninsula Chapter of the Master Naturalists is also ready to address this need. The ANR Agent serves as the chapter advisor for this group. The participants in this program are also trained on environmental awareness and stewardship. They receive fifty hours of initial training and dedicate forty hours of volunteering each year to the Peninsula localities. The Master Naturalists are based on citizen science as connected to state and local needs. Currently, this existing programming is available and the office intends to keep these programs as they address the top need of the community.

- Water Quality Testing—Done through a grant with DEQ and reported back to DEQ as well as the localities to identify issues attributing to the impairments.
- Illicit Outfall Identification—Done for localities by PVMN volunteers via kayak notating any outfalls so Counties and Cities can check to see if they are legitimate.
- Public Education, Outreach and Events—Booths and events that showcase practices that reduce environmental impact.

In addition to the continuation of current programming, the office would like to see the following. These will require education, coordination of event planning and volunteers, as well as feedback from the public.

With Poquoson and York County comprehensive plans as guides to focus educational efforts, these are some specific ideas. In Poquoson, there is a need for education to focus on the importance of groundwater and quality, watersheds, and homeowner retention/detention pond maintenance. In York County, there is a need for education to focus on sea level rise, environmental stewardship, coastal resiliency, SAV (submerged aquatic vegetation), shellfish habitat health and nonpoint source pollution. Programs will focus on enhancing public awareness in the importance of coastal ecosystems, and environmental conservation and preservation. Not all topics are exclusive to one locality over the other, but instead are directly identified areas of improvement for public education. This VCE office can directly support these initiatives.

## Youth Engagement

The ANR agent has the ability to gear programming toward youth education. These programs are not to engage the youth through civic involvement, but to educate on agriculture, natural resources and environmental horticulture. This is a limitation that can be alleviated through the hiring of a full-time 4-H agent. See the below section on identified areas of improvement.

Current programming, however, does exist. These programs include the 4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach, Youth Pollinator Day (Fairies and Garden Friends) and Youth programs in the garden at the York Learning Garden. There are some lasting 4-H clubs and programs from the previous years that serve directly to support youth in the area. These are the 4-H Shooting Club and 4-H Junior Summer Camp. Opportunities with a future-developed 4-H program can support community concerns on providing non-sport programming, year-round civic engagement opportunities, connections to elders, and mentor/internship opportunities. The office plans to continue these programs.

The office does have capacity to make some impact on youth engagement through education, but the need cannot be met in full with the current staffing. Creating 4-H programs with the proper personnel is a goal of this office.

The staff would like to see a thriving organization with many community clubs, military clubs and Cloverbud groups that can specifically support the direct needs identified by the public. Some examples are the use of 4-H curriculum such as Character Counts, Healthy Living/Health Rocks, and Leadership. These clubs and groups can work with elders, engage civilly, gain experience on boards and commissions and have an opportunity for year-round involvement outside of school and sports.

## **Healthy Lifestyles**

This need is currently being targeted specifically by the office through its Community Gardens at Charles Brown Park and the Mac Reynolds Sport Complex as well as through the connection to learning gardens. Both of the community gardens are a space for residents to grow healthy, culturally-appropriate food and the learning gardens serve as spaces to engage with nature. This year, the office had the opportunity to pilot a 4-H program curriculum in collaboration with the PARCI lab. This program, called Flourishing in the Garden, focuses on connecting physical body, mental space and healthy food. The 4-H program assistant worked directly with a low-income housing community in the Lackey area, where twelve youths participated.

Without an FCS agent or related position, the office is limited to resources available. Although this is the case, the office would like to further utilize the PARCI lab and their Healthy People Healthy Communities program team to create a complete lifestyle approach to health and education including growing food, working with recipes, mental health, and physical activity by evaluating specific vetted markers for change. These programs target youth and adults in the York/Poquoson communities.

There remains a need to address community identified issues such as safe recreation, mental health, obesity, self-respect, positive relationships, and access to healthy, fresh, affordable food. Some 4-H programming can focus on this currently, but the office would like to see more community education around human diseases and their connection to healthy lifestyles.

## **Room for improvement**

### **Current – Program Assistant**

This position focuses primarily on 4-H in a dual county office with no 4-H agent. The position is built to assist directly under the agent, but in this locality the individual is tasked with presuming the roles and responsibilities of an agent with minimal resources. The position needs more resources and education on 4-H, availability of funding for travel and training, foundation of information for basic 4-H functions such as 4-H Online, camping processes, social media, chartering process and file/data storage, and reporting documents. This is especially pertinent in a county/city that does not host 4-H Junior Summer Camp in a cluster. Without having an agent overhead, there are issues with reporting, documenting, fund development and risk management. At minimum, the position needs to have the basic training of a 4-H (or FCS/ANR) agent, or a direct, identified mentor (this second option is also an issue as it adds on more responsibility to a mentor agent).

### **4-H Agent**

In order to see large, long-term impacts from these identified needs and their associated programs, the office will need a number of additional resources. The main resource is the strong need for a Full-Time 4-H agent, who can focus on the second identified need of Youth Engagement. This individual, and human resource, can address all three top identified needs on the youth level across two localities. The agent will be able to handle the main 4-H Junior Summer Camp program, while initiating contact with the schools and community to create clubs.

### **FCS Program Assistant**

Family and Consumer Sciences is the area in Cooperative Extension that focuses on healthy living. In order to focus programming in that identified area of need, the VCE York/Poquoson office will need at least an FCS Program Assistant that can focus educational efforts on healthy living concepts including disease prevention,

healthy eating, exercise, mental health, balancing finances, etc. An FCS affiliate will have better access to educational resources and funding through grants at the state level as well as volunteer programs such as the Master Food and Finance volunteers.

## References/Sources

- Bon Secours. 2023. *2022 Community Health Needs Assessment*. Bon Secours Hampton Roads. <https://www.bonsecours.com/about-us/community-commitment/community-health-needs-assessment>
- City of Poquoson. 2015. *Hazard Mitigation Plan*. City of Poquoson, Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee. <https://www.ci.poquoson.va.us/DocumentCenter/View/681/Hazardous-Mitigation-Plan-2015-Update?bidId=>
- City of Poquoson. 2018. *The City of Poquoson Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038*. City of Poquoson, Department of Community Development <https://www.ci.poquoson.va.us/DocumentCenter/View/1494/Comprehensive-Plan-2018-2038>
- City of Poquoson. 2019. *City of Poquoson 2017 Citizen's Survey Summary Report*. City of Poquoson, Department of Community Development. <https://www.ci.poquoson.va.us/DocumentCenter/View/1557/2017-Citizen-Survey-Report>
- City of Poquoson. 2023. *Poquoson Virginia*. Accessed October 2023. <https://www.ci.poquoson.va.us/27/Government>
- Hampton Roads Sanitation District. (n.d.) *Sustainable Water Initiative For Tomorrow (SWIFT)*. Accessed October 2023. <https://www.hrsd.com/swift>
- Houglund, Leslie. (2023). *Draft: Generate More Health ODU A Food Secure Community Action Plan Lackey, VA*. Accessed October 2023 <https://generatemorehealth.com/>
- HRPDC (Hampton Roads Planning District Commission). 2021. *Water Resources Reports*. Accessed October 2023. <https://www.hrpdcva.gov/departments/documents/water-resources/cat/3>
- HRPDC Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. 2022. *Hampton Roads Hazard Mitigation Plan*. <https://www.hrpdcva.gov/uploads/docs/Hampton%20Roads%20Hazard%20Mitigation%20Plan%202022%20FINAL.pdf>
- Labor Market Information. 2023a. *Virginia Community Profiles Poquoson City*. Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information and Analytics Division. <https://viriniaworks.com/docs/Local-Area-Profiles/5104000735.pdf>
- Labor Market Information. 2023b. *Virginia Community Profiles York County*. Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information and Analytics Division. <https://viriniaworks.com/docs/Local-Area-Profiles/5104000199.pdf>
- NOAA. 2023. *Shoreline Surge and Sea Level Rise Mapping*. Accessed October 2023. <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/>
- Office of Governor Ralph. S. Northam. 2021. *Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan*. Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Conservation and Recreation. <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/crmp/plan>
- U.S Census Bureau. 2017. *Census of Agriculture County Profile – York County*. [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online\\_Resources/County\\_Profiles/Virginia/cp51199.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Virginia/cp51199.pdf)
- VCE Unit Profiles for both York & Poquoson individually provided by VCE/VT

VCE. 2023. York/Poquoson Resident Survey (N = 55). VCE, Office of York/Poquoson. Qualtrics Survey.

VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Science). 2023. Shoreline Change Data. Accessed, October 2023.  
[https://www.vims.edu/research/units/programs/ssp/gis\\_maps/index.php](https://www.vims.edu/research/units/programs/ssp/gis_maps/index.php)

Waterworks Department. 2022. *Annual Water Quality Report: Lower Peninsula System*. City of Newport News, Department of Waterworks. <https://www.nnva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/353/Water-Quality-Report-PDF?bidId>

York County Planning Commission. 2023. *The York County Comprehensive Plan: Charting the course to 2040*.  
<https://www.yorkcounty.gov/2541/2040-Comprehensive-Plan>

Visit Virginia Cooperative Extension: [ext.vt.edu](http://ext.vt.edu)

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

2024

VCE-596-107NP (VCE-1175-107NP)