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Brunswick County 2023 Situation Analysis Report



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Table 1. Top Ten Priorities

Priority	High Effort	Very High Effort	Percentage (%)
Strengthening the Local Food System	25	33	82.9
Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills	20	37	81.4
Ensure safe high-quality foods	14	41	78.6
Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent food borne illness	17	37	77.1
Addressing Hunger issues	25	28	75.7
Building Health Families	22	31	75.7
Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth	15	37	74.3
Reducing Obesity	19	33	74.3
Helping Consumers make healthy food choices	18	34	74.3
Preventing Chronic Disease	18	34	74.3

Introduction

Brunswick County conducted a situation analysis this year, 2023. The situation analysis process was led by the Brunswick County Extension Leadership Council (BCELC) and involved an analysis of the Brunswick County Unit Profile. The unit profile included compiling Census Data, Comprehensive Plans of Brunswick County and the Town of Lawrenceville, along with the Demographic Data of the County. The unit profile also included gathering information from county residents on what they see as priorities for the county with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Survey provided by Virginia Tech. The BCELC members reviewed the data from all of the aforementioned information identified.

The BCELC, including Extension Agents, met six times during the situation analysis timeframe. At the first meeting in October of 2022, an overview of the situation analysis was covered. An initial situation analysis plan was developed that included tasks and timelines for BCELC members and Extension Agents. Utilizing the Unit Profile information by Virginia Cooperative Extension, BCELC members and Extension Agents previewed the provided survey and identified other resources that have potential information needed to get an accurate snapshot of Brunswick County. Issues were identified needing to be continued upon initial perusal of the 2018 Brunswick County Situation Analysis, some priorities have changed in degree of need. The items were prioritized as COVID-19 had changed the needs and delivery systems after the 2018 Brunswick County Situation Analysis and some will be incorporated into the 2023 Situation Analysis. Based on these issues the BCELC determined in the interest of time the best way to garner additional information from residents of Brunswick County. The decision to do small group discussion with specific groups across the county was decided to be an effective means of additional information gathering.

Timelines and Activities

- Meetings of Brunswick County ELC initial meeting for 2023 Situation Analysis Began: October 2022
- Assemble the Team of ELC Members, explain 2023 Situation Analysis, and discuss resources to review January-March 2023
- Determine new data collection methods, review survey, review Unit Profile from 2018 and update for 2023, marketing materials: March-May 2022
- Get Surveys out via newspaper, social media, flyers, paper surveys at designated local businesses: Late May-Late July 2023
- Input paper surveys, review Qualtrics survey rough data and discuss what to keep from 2018: August-September 2023
- Send in survey information to Virginia Tech for analysis : September 2023
- Determination of Priority Issues: October-November 2023
- Complete Situation Analysis: November-December 2023

Unit Profile

Brunswick County, founded in 1720, lies in south central Virginia north of the North Carolina border. Lawrenceville is the County Seat of Brunswick County, located 64 miles southwest of Richmond, VA and 75 miles Northeast of Raleigh, NC. Lawrenceville, Alberta, and Brodnax are the three incorporated towns in the county. The gently rolling and generally flat landscape of Brunswick County is home to farm and timber operations. There are several points of interest that include The Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail, Civil War Wilson-Kautz Raid Trail, The Tobacco Heritage Trail, three Nationally Recognized Trees, and two Scenic Rivers – Meherrin River, and Lake Gaston. These attractions are likely to appeal to outdoor enthusiasts, history buffs, and nature lovers visiting or living in Brunswick County.

According to the 2020 census there are 16,044 residents in Brunswick County. The number of residents has dropped 1,390 since 2010, an 8% change in population. The racial breakdown of the county is 55.03% African American, 40.06% Caucasian, 2.5% Hispanic or Latino, 0.5% Asian, 0.17% American Indian and Native Alaskan, 0% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, and 2.51% two or more races. There are 1,229 veterans in the county and 1.9% of the population is foreign born.

Agriculture operations hold the prominent position of Brunswick County's economy. Tobacco has remained the number one cash crop in the county in 2023; however, contracts have been and continue to be cut and changed. Up until now the acreage of tobacco planted in the county have surpassed the acreage planted prior to the 2004 Buyout, with the number of producers declining significantly. Forests cover over two-thirds of the County's land mass. Brunswick County is one of the top producing counties of timber and seems poised to remain in the top position of timber production in the Commonwealth. Some interesting facts about Brunswick County Farms, 69% have internet access via phone or computer, 7% sell directly to consumers, 30% hire on farm labor, and 96% are family owned.

Brunswick County Public Schools, the Community College, the private and public detention facilities, and the County Government remain the top employers in the County. In 2017, there were 242 farms operated in Brunswick County, this is a 22% loss of farms operating in Brunswick County. There are 782 businesses in the county, of those 249 have multiple employees and the remainder are sole proprietor or family businesses. This is a loss of 86 businesses since 2012, there is room for additional small businesses to be started and maintained in the county.

Some of the quick facts data pertaining to education report that the percent of people in the county over the age of 25 who graduated high school or higher is 76.6%, this is down .04%. Residents of the same age range with bachelor's degrees or higher are at 16%, and this is up 3.6% from the last census. In addition to the Brunswick County Public School System, there is Brunswick Academy the private school, and Southside Virginia Community College – Alberta Campus. Southside Virginia Community College has not only a two-year degree

program in varied disciplines, but works with the GED program, Dual Enrollment of high school students, and Old Dominion University Bachelor's Degree programs.

Health issues plague Brunswick County residents at higher rates of other parts of the Commonwealth. The issues include heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Adult obesity is a concern as well in Brunswick County; this contributes to health issues and can be linked to poor food choices and a sedentary lifestyle. In Health outcomes, such as length and quality of life, Brunswick is ranked 110th in Virginia. Brunswick County ranks 129th in Health Factors, which include Behaviors, Clinical Care, Social & Economics, and Physical Environment. Disabilities are prevalent in the county; in 2018-2022, 11.6 % of the population was disabled, which is down by 2% from the last census. There is also 10% of the population under 65 without health insurance; this is a three-point decrease over the previous census.

The population includes 4.4% of children under five years of age and youth under eighteen is 16%, both are well below the Commonwealth average. The youth numbers are getting lower in the county. The number of residents over the age of 65 is 22.5%, which is higher than the Commonwealth average and increasing since the last census. Brunswick County's families have a median income of \$52,678 per year, and the per capita income is \$26,491. The average commute for county resident is over 32miles. Most residents have to go outside of the county for employment.

This is a snapshot of Brunswick County residents' opportunity pertaining employment, health factors, education, and families.

Community Issues

The bulleted list below encompasses information from the Brunswick County Extension Situational Analysis Survey by participants answering the survey's open-ended question. We produced flyers with weblinks and QR Codes and placed around the County which included: Local Country stores, medical offices, Library, other local businesses. We strategically placed paper copies in local Town Offices, Library, and some local businesses. We placed information in the local newspaper and our Facebook page. In addition to the below listed comments, the majority of residents were somewhat familiar, familiar, or very familiar with Virginia Cooperative Extension – Brunswick County:

- Need more youth activities
- Food
- Food Supply
- I believe the one of the most pressing is empowering our youth. In today society the youth face many difficulty situations that my Generation did not have to face. The mental health crisis in our youth today has skyrocketed. They feel they have no one to turn to (or) to talk about the issues that they face. If we could give them some tools to help them cope and someone to listen to them maybe we can change our youth.
- Empowering Youth with more opportunities in each locality
- Provide more opportunities and activities for youth
- Youth (Teen Pregnancy)
- Youth (Overdose)
- Elderly (more benefits and assistance)
- 4-H YOUTH (Suicide)
- What: Poverty/Income Disparity Why: lower quality of life (health issues, social, mental, emotional and financial problems)
- Health (need more activities)
- Youth (Need more for youth to do)
- Not exactly sure

- Build up the economy, bring in businesses so our residents won't have to go out of the county to purchase items and lower the property and real estate taxes. Empowering our youth and providing recreational activities.
- Addressing poverty and strengthening the school system, (public and private). Better pay
- VCE already does a good job. Not sure how to define- community issue. 1st thing i can think of is the huge amount of litter on county roads - not sure VCE can address that.
- Equal opportunities for youth throughout the community
- Empowering the youth, I feel that the program can help many of our families to increase motivation with our youth.
- Improving public health, as Brunswick County has poor health rankings and has limited access to physical activity opportunities. Our locality has high obesity rates, a high diabetes prevalence, along with other health-related factors.
- Empowering our youth. Our youth are our future.
- Improving public health
- Not enough besing (staff does not know what this is or means)
- Virginia Farmers Agricultural needs
- Helping the elderly to learn how to budget and use computers. Community exercising
- Don't have a(n) opinion at this
- Empowering all youth in all communities it serves. Youth who do not plan to attend college needs to know that there are other viable alternatives available.
- Children need more opportunities to learn where their food and natural medicines come from
- Empowering our youth through education. I don't have school age children, but I have seen the results of some of our graduates and they don't seem to be as knowledgeable about basics as they could be. Perhaps VCE can be of value by taking a look at curriculum at all levels and seeing how it can be improved
- Idk
- Empowering youth. There is a great need of positive youth activities.
- The most pressing problem in Brunswick County is unemployment.
- All day childcare in the summer for school age kids! Brunswick County has very limited resources on all day camps and activities that run all summer. Even before and after school care is scarce. You literally have to go into other counties for summer camps and other forms of child care.
- Food deserts
- Educating the public on healthy choices, and their availability. Our community doesn't eat the healthiest.
- I am answering this with an incomplete picture of what VCE actually does. Someone must facilitate a whole government approach to these serious issues. There are many unaligned well-intentioned groups attempting to solve these important issues. VCE could best serve the community by working on correcting these issues through facilitating and aiding in the organization of these groups. Providing the tools, setting the goals and holding the members accountable. COMMUNICATION
- Food (listed twice)
- Preserving our natural resources, support for farm families and promoting self-sufficiency in residents
- Jobs
- need programs for youth and teenagers need training and job training for youth need jobs for everyone
- Health Issues Disease in the area
- Empowering youth. This area does not provide our youth with many avenues to pursue or explore interests or hobbies.
- Food Supply
- Classes to help parents, improving reading skills for all children. More emphasis on gaining access to cultural experiences since so many kids in Brunswick County have limited access. Farming is a very important component to our economy. More involvement of parents in the schools.
- Shrinking number of farmers
- Improving public health due to Brunswick's health ratings

- Rules or laws if enacted for climate change without due course and input from agriculture will not ensure protections for the family farm
- Accessible internet service for all citizens-the internet is increasingly becoming the main medium of communication.
- Our youth, getting and keeping them involved in all the aforementioned while keeping them in our area. Without future generations being truly involved we will continue to fall short on many areas.
- Things for kids to do
- Economic Development of Agriculture businesses
- In Brunswick County, there are no activity for children. I know over the last couple of years much money has been provided to Brunswick County. The question is where did it go. Audit needed! The income of residents here are low. Why the county wants to continue ripping residents off. The board raised taxes, which are outrageously high. The same board have the nerve to deny residents a county-wide program designed to give disability people a percentage discount on property taxes. Brunswick County, need stores to provide the residents with clothing, services to elderly, food, etc. Every other surrounding county has grown besides Brunswick County. Money has been provided but where is it. The people in charge of Brunswick County Finances need replacing with honest younger people who want to see growth. The residents need a community Walmart, a shoe show, McDonald's, Dollar Tree, City Trend. Nobody should have to travel to another county to buy every day needs. That's embarrassing!
- The need to show Improvement to our counties agricultural-wise humanly wise knowledge wise
- Public Health

Future Programming to Address Community Issues

Priority Issues

The following information reported from the Brunswick County Extension Situational Analysis Survey Summary. The results were given to the BCLEEC members are some of the headings were combined for ease of agent programming and reporting.

Youth Development

The majority of responses pertained to Youth Activities/Extra Curricular, and Youth Developing Leadership, Citizenship, and other life skills, along with Mental Health, suicide prevention, and building healthy relationship skills. Many of these responses include programming aspects of healthy lifestyles, camp, demonstrations/presentations, STEAM, day camps, in school, after school, community clubs, project clubs, and volunteer/parenting skills.

Currently the 4-H Youth Development Agent is working to teach curriculum to youth in schools, after school, summer events, etc. The in school, after school, community clubs, project clubs etc. are a way to get the educational programming formally/informally to youth and adults. These curricula include health, nutrition, leadership, STEAM, and others. There is a need to develop adult mentors for youth and the Teen Leadership program is currently striving to address this issue.

The BCELCC is in agreement with the major headings of the top priorities cited by the surveys. The members are very interested in the many educational opportunities and formal/informal programs to educate Youth and Volunteers.

The Agent will continue to do the current programming. There will be additional partnerships explored and established. Additional programs will include youth leadership development, additional life skills programs, youth to attend more district, state, national events.

Agriculture and Wildlife

Most responses pertained to strengthening local food systems; ensure safe, high quality food supply; assisting farmer and forest owners in production and profitability; water quality; and agriculture, natural resources, and environmental literacy. Agriculture is important to Brunswick County. Many of these responses include programming aspects of healthy lifestyles, agriculture programs for the producers, public, and youth, land and water use.

Currently the Agriculture Agent is working to provide educational programming formally/informally to youth and adults. These curricula include animal health, livestock production, pesticide education, pond management, and best management programs including Beef Quality Assurance, Pork Quality Assurance Plus, Transport Quality Assurance, and Youth for the Quality Care of Animals, etc.

Household Well Water Testing educational program is every other year. The Agent is partnering with Brunswick County Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee to educate the public, youth and adults, about where their food and fiber comes from at appropriate community events.

The BCEL C is in agreement with the major headings of the top three priorities cited by the surveys. The members are very interested in the many educational opportunities and formal/informal programs to educate agriculture producers, public, and youth.

The Agent will continue to do the current programming. There will be additional partnerships explored and established. Additional programs will include working with area agents on forestry and farm estate planning, value added agriculture products, and sound pest management, etc. There will be additional networks strengthened to provide educational programs on marketing and vegetable production.

Finances/Financial Management and Economic Development

Most of the responses pertained to promoting small businesses; agritourism; helping residents become more energy efficient in their homes, farms, and businesses; teaching people to manage their money; and preserving in farm and forest land. Other responses included building capacities of community nonprofits.

Networks have been established and maintained with the Southern Virginia Food Hub, Brunswick County Economic Development, and Brunswick County Industrial Development Authority. One of the recent programs is the Brunswick County Agriculture project, this is completing a public/private partnership on building a packing facility.

The BCEL C is in agreement with the major headings of the top priorities cited by the surveys. The members are very interested in the many educational opportunities and formal/informal programs to educate Youth and Volunteers.

The Agent will continue to do the current programming. There will be additional partnerships explored and established. Additional programs will include grain marketing, estate planning, land leasing, and small business information for residents.

Strengthening Families and Aging Population

The majority of responses pertained to ensuring safe food handling practice to prevent foodborne illness; building healthy families; reducing obesity; help consumers make healthy food choices; and preventing chronic disease. Many of these responses include programming aspects of nutrition, exercise, cooking skills, healthy foods, and parenting skills.

There is currently no SNAP-Ed Program Assistant or Family Consumer Sciences Agent housed in or serving the Brunswick County. Since these topics were in the top ten of needs in the county, hopefully this will help get one or the both jobs filled in the future.

The BCELCC is in agreement with the major headings of the top four priorities cited by the surveys. The members are very interested in the many educational opportunities and formal/informal programs to educate Youth and Volunteers.

References

2017 Census of Agriculture

2020 Quick Facts, Brunswick County, Virginia, United States, Census Data

Comprehensive Plan of Brunswick County, Virginia, 2037

Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Lawrenceville, Virginia, 2017-2037

Unit Profile, Demographic Summary, 2018

2023 VCE Qualtrics Survey

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