

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Knowledge for the Commonwealth

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Situation Analysis Final Report

2004

CLARKE COUNTY UNIT

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Table of Contents

	Page Number
Introduction	3
Unit Profile	4-5
Community Perspectives	6-7
Priority Issues	8-10
Situation Analysis Survey	11-13
Key Informant Interview Questionnaire	14-15

Introduction

The Clarke County unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2004. The purpose of this analysis was to identify key issues facing the community and provide Extension staff with up-to-date information to use when developing educational programs for the community. The situation analysis process was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and involved the development of a Clarke County Unit Profile based on quantitative data. In addition, qualitative data was gathered from community members and residents. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed by the ELC and priority issues were identified.

The ELC met 9 times during the situation analysis process. At the first meeting, an overview of the situation analysis process was covered. An initial situation analysis plan was developed that included tasks and timelines for ELC members and VCE staff. Based on this, the first task was development of the unit profile. Using the data sets from the VCE Situation Analysis Resource website and the 2001 Clarke County Comprehensive Plan, ELC members and VCE staff met to analyze assigned pieces of the data sets. At the March 23rd meeting of the ELC, the team presented their findings from the data sets, and a unit profile was developed. A number of issues were identified from this look at the county.

Based on these findings, the ELC determined that the best way to gather perspectives from residents was to conduct focus group and key informant interviews with local groups and leaders in the community and to do a survey. During the April 14th meeting, focus groups and key informants were identified. At the May 20th ELC meeting, additional interview entities were discussed, interview teams for each individual or group interview were identified and guides and a survey were developed. The sub-groups conducted the interviews and distributed the surveys over the summer and early fall.

At the October 22nd meeting of the ELC, the results of the focus groups and key informant interviews were presented and discussed. During the November 17th ELC meeting, members prioritized the key issues identified in the survey and key informant and focus group interviews, including those that could be addressed with current VCE resources and those that were outside the scope of current VCE resources. At the December 7th ELC meeting, members reviewed a rough draft of the Situation Analysis report and made corrections and changes as were determined needed.

Unit Profile

Clarke County is located at the northern top of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is bordered to the north by West Virginia, to the west by Frederick County, to the south by Warren County and to the east by Fauquier and Loudoun Counties and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The county covers 174 square miles and encompasses a land area of 111,360 acres.

Nearly 40% of the land in Clarke County is suitable for some type of cultivated crop. Today Clarke County is primarily a rural county with agriculture remaining one of the main sources of income; however, land in agricultural use has declined by over 2,000 acres from 1997 to 2002 (Source: NASS, County Data 2002). Approximately 47,926 acres of the 111,360 acres in the County is planted in crops while 20,366 are used for grazing land. In 2002, Clarke County suffered a substantial loss of apple orchards. One of the largest orchards in Clarke County went out of business reducing the number of acres planted in orchards from 2,855 in 1997 to 2,093 acres in 2002. Clarke County has approximately 16,887 head of cattle and calves with this number being composed of 1,419 dairy cows, 8,801 beef cows and 6,667 beef calves. These numbers have decreased from 1997 when there were 17,575 head of cattle and calves in Clarke County. Northern Virginia has seen rapid growth in the equine industry. Clarke County is no exception. In 2001, there were over 4,000 head of horses in Clarke County.

Clarke County has a rich history with over 962 historic sites which date from the early 1700's. Clarke County was part of a major trade route for Native Americans as they passed through on the way to New York and Georgia. Under British rule, Clarke County was parceled out as grants in payment for services rendered to Lord Fairfax. The Civil War also played prominently in Clarke County's history. Several battles took place in the county, and troops were constantly passing through the area. More than 30% of the historic properties in the county have been placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

There have been many changes in Clarke County, not the least of which is population density. The population of Clarke County increased from 12,101 to 12,652 from 1990 to 2000, which is a 4.5% increase. This is a slower growth rate than compared to the growth that has occurred in the past. The counties surrounding Clarke are experiencing major periods of growth thus increasing development pressure upon the county. Population density within Clarke County (per person per square mile) has increased from 68.5 in 1990 to 71.6 in 2000. This level of density remains considerably lower than the surrounding counties. The 60 miles to Washington D.C. and the Blue Ridge Mountains along the county's eastern border have somewhat shielded Clarke County in the past from urban development, but the pressure is increasing. Our neighboring county, Loudoun County, is one of the three fastest growing jurisdictions in the nation. Thus in order to maintain Clarke County's identity as an agricultural and historic area, the county has had to resort to land use planning. One method of such rural land preservation is sliding-scale zoning. This is accomplished by limiting the number of parcels that may be created, limiting the size of new parcels and keeping residual parcels as large as possible. Over 13,000 acres of the County has been placed in permanent open space easement.

Clarke County has a relatively young population. Approximately 76% of the community is under the age of 54. Approximately 15% of the population is 5-17 years old, 22% under the age of 22, 25% 25-44 years old, and 41% over age 45 years old. The median age of Clarke County

residents in 2000 was 40.6 years old. In 2000, there was nearly an even split 50/50 for the male:female ratio in the County.

Clarke County residents are fairly well educated with 82% of the population having obtained a High School Diploma or GED, and nearly 30% of the population possessing some form of college education. There has been a dramatic decrease among the population of 16 to 19 year olds who are high school drop outs, with a decrease from 18.8% in 1990 to 8.4% in 2000.

When race is considered in Clarke County, the majority (91%) of the residents are white while the minority ethnic population [African Americans/blacks (7%), Hispanic (1.6%), American Indian (0.2%), Asian (0.5%), Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.1%), Asian or Other Pacific Islander (0.6%), or some other race (0.6%)] makes up the difference and is very diverse in its composition. Nearly 96% of the residents of Clarke County speak only English. There has been a slight increase in the number of school age children who have difficulty speaking English from 0.4% in 1990 to 1.2% in 2000.

In the area of families, Clarke County is also in transition. The percentage of children under the age of 18 who live below the poverty line has decreased 1.4% from 1990 to 2000. Children raised in single parent homes is on the increase with 11.7% in 1990 and increased to 16.2% in 2000. Households composed of married-couple families' numbered 2,835 in 2000. There were 1,129 couples raising their own children. There were 229 households in which only a male was the householder; 137 single parent families in which only the husband was the primary caregiver present with the children. In 2000, there were approximately 457 households with a female householder and 241 single parent families in which the mother was the primary caregiver with children. Fifty-four families were composed of primary care provided by grandparents for children less than 18 years of age in 2000. In 1999, there were 72 households on public assistance which is a dramatic decrease from the 217 families on public assistance in 1989.

The percentage of people working outside the county has decreased from 61.3% in 1990 to 58% in 2000. The 58% of Clarke County residents who work outside the county spend an average commute time of 32.4 minutes to work per day.

Income levels have also changed in Clarke County. Adjusted Gross Income Per Capita was \$13,500 in 1990 and has increased to \$25,141 in 2000. Total Adjusted Gross Income Per Capita for the County has increased from \$163,489,860 in 1990 to \$318,078,850 in 2000.

In 2001, 275 people in Clarke County died due to heart disease complications, 30 people were hospitalized for hypertension and 76 people were hospitalized with diabetes. These numbers were above the regional average. Malignant Neoplasm significantly increased from 161.5 (rate per 100,000) in 1998 to 255.9 in 2002. Current national data estimates that 65% of U.S. adults are over weight or obese and that 15 % of children and adolescence are overweight or obese. Studies indicate that nationwide 35% of elementary school age youth do not eat fruit and 20% do not eat vegetables. From 2002-2003, there were 58 children in Clarke County receiving reduced lunches and 217 children receiving free lunches which is a 1-2% increase from 2001-2002.

In 2002, there were 14 total teen pregnancies which is a very slight increase from 1998 with 72% of these pregnancies occurring among 18–19 year olds and 28% in 15–17 year olds. There was an 8.7% birth rate and a 10% death rate among Clarke County citizens in 2002.

Community and Resident Perspectives

Table 1: Community Survey Results	
Topic	Important Issue (ranking based on 72 respondents)
Quality of Education	51
Loss of Farm Income	45
Aging Farmers	43
Drugs and Alcohol – Youth	42
Loss of Farmland	39
Affordable Housing	38
Financial Security – Aging population	35
Limited Farm Income	35
Farm Profitability	35
Drugs and Alcohol Abuse- Family Issue	33
After School Child Care	32
Quality Child Care	32
Career Planning – Youth	31
Job Security	31
Care of Parent	27
Character Education - Youth	26
Nutrition and Wellness – Aging population	25
Lack of Jobs	25
Teen Pregnancy	24
Planning for the Future – Family Issue	23
Chronic Diseases	23
Water Quality	23
Personal Health Needs – Family Issue	22
Amount of Stress – Youth Issue	22

Community and Resident Perspective Continued

Table 2: Notes from Community Survey Question: “Of all the questions above, what do you feel are the three most important issues facing the citizens of Clarke County?”	
Topics of Community Needs/Issue	Ranking (based on number of responses)
Affordable Housing	1
Quality Education	2
Controlled Growth	3
Youth Drug and Alcohol Abuse	4
Transportation	5
Loss of Farmland	6
Childcare	7
Quality Educational Facilities	8

Table 3: Notes from Key Informant and Focus Group Interview Question: “In your view, what needs/problems with community are not being addressed, but need to be addressed in the future?”	
Topics of Community Needs/Issue	Ranking (based on number of responses)
Population Growth	1
Industry/Jobs	2
School space- bigger schools	3
Increase shopping options in the county	4
Activities for youth	5
Before and after school childcare	6

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspectives from our survey, key informant interviews and focus group interviews, the Extension Leadership Council identified the following top priority issues for Clarke County, Virginia.

Issue 1: Controlled Growth/Development and Loss of Farmland

Managing the population growth/development and the loss of farmland was identified as the main issue facing Clarke County. Top concerns expressed by the citizens included:

- Balance between agriculture and growth; loss of farmland to development
- Too many houses too quickly; caving to developers
- Are on fringe of metropolitan area; need to look to other communities in similar situation and access how they are controlling growth and development while maintaining rural atmosphere.
- Keeping housing cost affordable
- Aging farmers and loss of farm income which leads to sale of farms

This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources. Additional efforts need to be explored to better address this issue. The Extension Leadership Council does feel that Extension can provide education regarding the value of farmland and how to get money from land without selling it. The following entities were also identified by the Clarke ELC as to who should help address this issue: county government, county economic development committee, state government, Virginia Outdoor Foundation, conservation and private organizations and the Farm Bureau.

Issue 2: Farm Profitability

Farm Profitability was identified as the 2nd most important issue in Clarke County. Major concerns expressed by residents included the disparity between farm and non-farm incomes, the need for alternative marketing techniques, the increased aging farmer population and reality that the next generation is not going into farming. As a result of these factors, farms are being sold, often to developers to the dismay of many residents.

This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources. Additional efforts need to be explored to address this issue. In addition to Extension addressing this issue, the Extension Leadership Council also identified the county government as an entity to assist with this issue.

Issue 3: Quality Education

The quality of education for county youth was identified as the 3rd most critical issue in Clarke County. Although the general consensus was that Clarke County does have a quality public education system, the following concerns were expressed:

- Facilities – more space is needed as population continues to increase; too many classrooms are trailers
- Vocational education needs
- Loss of teachers to counties that pay higher salaries

This issue is outside the scope of VCE to address. Groups identified to address this issue included the local school board, board of supervisors, local government and state government.

Issue 4: Quality Child Care

The quality of child care for youth before, during and after school was identified as the 4th most important issue in Clarke County. Issues identified by citizens included the need for more options for early morning and after school childcare, particularly due to many parents commuting east to Leesburg and the Washington, D.C. area for work.

This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources. Additional efforts need to be explored to address this issue. Other organizations identified by the Extension Leadership Council to address this issue were local and county governments, schools, Parks & Recreation and Social Services.

Issue 5: Character Education (Youth)

Character Education for youth was determined to be the 5th most important issue in Clarke County. The main concerns with this topic included morality issues, anger management and ethics. Character Education is taught in public schools, but no set Character Education program like Character Counts! has been adopted by the school system.

This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources; however, additional efforts need to be explored to address this issue. Two school counselors did attend a Character Counts! Training program in December 2004, and with their help, the 4-H Extension Agent plans to encourage the Character Counts! program be adopted by the school system and incorporated into the community. Other organizations identified by the Extension Leadership Council to address this issue were churches, schools, parents and the Sheriff's Department.

Issue 6: Elder Care

Care for the elderly was 6th among the top priorities concerns for Clarke County residents. Primary issues included:

- Full and part time home care
- Transportation
- Housing facilities
- Adult day care
- Affordable prescriptions and shopping options
- Care of aging parents

This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources. Additional efforts need to be explored to address this issue. Other organizations identified by the Extension Leadership Council to address this issue were Social Services, Private Industry, AARP, Senior Center, Shenandoah Area Agency on Aging and Valley Health Systems.

Issue 7: Affordable Housing

Identified as the 7th ranked top priority by Clarke County residents' was affordable housing. The following issues were identified:

- Land and housing prices have increased dramatically in the last 5 years
- Only very expensive homes are being built in new housing developments
- The “average” person cannot afford to buy a home in county

This issue is out of the scope of VCE to address. Organizations identified by the Extension Leadership Council to address this issue were county government, state government, federal government, Help With Housing, Habitat for Humanity and Loaning Institutions.

Issue 8: Nutrition and Wellness

Nutrition and wellness was identified to be the 9th top priority identified by the citizens of Clarke County. Areas of concern with this topic, which included both youth and adults, included heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, cancer and lack of fitness (particularly regarding youth). Data reviewed while developing the unit profile also helped to support this topic as one of the top concerns in Clarke County.

This issue is currently being addressed with VCE resources. No further action is needed. Other organizations identified by the Extension Leadership Council to address this issue were Social Services, Health Department, Valley Health Systems and AARP.

Issue 9: Financial Security (Elderly Population)

The issue identified as the 10th priority was Financial Security of aging adults. This issue was selected as a priority based on:

- Increased long-term health care costs
- Poor planning and money management (no retirement plan)
- Increased taxes
- Increased general health care costs (i.e. prescriptions)

This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources. Additional efforts need to be explored to better address this issue. Other organizations identified by the Extension Leadership Council to address this issue were financial institutions and Social Services.

Three other issues ranked as high priorities were activities for youth, aging farmers, and drugs and alcohol issues concerning youth.

Clarke County Situation Analysis Survey 2004

Survey Instructions

Below is a list of demographic groups with issue statements. Please indicate to what extent you think each issue is currently important to that group by circling the appropriate number.

Aging - 1. To what extent do you think the issues listed below are a concern for individuals in Clarke County over the age of 55?

Issue	Important Issue	Moderate Issue	Minimal Issue	Not an Issue	Don't Know
1. Dimensional Alzheimer's Disease	5	4	3	2	1
2. Nutrition and Wellness	5	4	3	2	1
3. Adult Day Care	5	4	3	2	1
4. Literacy	5	4	3	2	1
5. Care of dependent children/grandchild	5	4	3	2	1
6. Care of Parent	5	4	3	2	1
7. Financial Security	5	4	3	2	1
8. Social Activities	5	4	3	2	1
9. Transportation	5	4	3	2	1
10. Chronic Diseases	5	4	3	2	1
11. Other _____	5	4	3	2	1

Youth Development - 2. To what extent do you think the topics listed below are an issue facing Clarke County's youth?

Issue	Important Issue	Moderate Issue	Minimal Issue	Not an Issue	Don't Know
1. Teen Pregnancy	5	4	3	2	1
2. Lack of Jobs	5	4	3	2	1
3. Amount of Stress	5	4	3	2	1
4. Anger Management	5	4	3	2	1
5. Mentoring	5	4	3	2	1
6. Nutrition and Wellness	5	4	3	2	1
7. Character Education	5	4	3	2	1
8. Community sports teams	5	4	3	2	1
9. Lack of extra-curricular activities	5	4	3	2	1
10. Drugs and alcohol	5	4	3	2	1
11. After school care	5	4	3	2	1
12. Lack of transportation	5	4	3	2	1
13. Career Planning	5	4	3	2	1
14. Tutoring/literacy	5	4	3	2	1
15. Other _____	5	4	3	2	1

Youth Development (Continued) - 3. What do you see as the primary reason school-age children do not participate in youth activities outside of the school?

Issue	Important Issue	Moderate Issue	Minimal Issue	Not an Issue	Don't Know
1. Transportation	5	4	3	2	1
2. Lack of Interest	5	4	3	2	1
3. Parents do not have the time to deliver and pick up their child	5	4	3	2	1
4. Cost	5	4	3	2	1
5. Too many other activities	5	4	3	2	1
6. Other _____	5	4	3	2	1

Agriculture – 4. To what extent do you think the issues listed below are a concern for individuals of Clarke County's Agricultural Community?

Issue	Important Issue	Moderate Issue	Minimal Issue	Not an Issue	Don't Know
1. Loss of Farm Income	5	4	3	2	1
2. Aging Farmers	5	4	3	2	1
3. Limited Income	5	4	3	2	1
4. Lack of Markets	5	4	3	2	1
5. Loss of Farm Land	5	4	3	2	1
6. Water Quality	5	4	3	2	1
7. Animal Health	5	4	3	2	1
8. Pesticide Safety	5	4	3	2	1
9. Farm Profitability	5	4	3	2	1
10. Farm Security (terrorism)	5	4	3	2	1
11. Non-traditional Crops and Livestock	5	4	3	2	1
12. Leasing land for hunting and/or fishing	5	4	3	2	1
13. Other _____	5	4	3	2	1

Agricultural Issues - 5. In your opinion, what will be necessary for agriculture to continue to be an important part of the economy in Clarke County?

Issue	Important Issue	Moderate Issue	Minimal Issue	Not an Issue	Don't Know
1. Farmer's Market	5	4	3	2	1
2. Development of Agri-tourism	5	4	3	2	1
3. Improved marketing opportunities	5	4	3	2	1
4. Increased interest in farming	5	4	3	2	1
5. Other _____	5	4	3	2	1

Family Issues - 6. To what extent do you think the issues listed below are a concern of Clarke County’s Families?

Issue	Important Issue	Moderate Issue	Minimal Issue	Not an Issue	Don’t Know
1. Job Security	5	4	3	2	1
2. Literacy	5	4	3	2	1
3. Counseling	5	4	3	2	1
4. After School Child Care	5	4	3	2	1
5. Drug and Alcohol Abuse	5	4	3	2	1
6. Affordable Housing	5	4	3	2	1
7. Financial Planning	5	4	3	2	1
8. Parenting Skills	5	4	3	2	1
9. Planning for the Future	5	4	3	2	1
10. Personal Health Needs	5	4	3	2	1
11. Quality Child Care	5	4	3	2	1
12. Quality Education	5	4	3	2	1
13. Money Management	5	4	3	2	1
14. Food Safety	5	4	3	2	1
15. Adult Nutrition	5	4	3	2	1
16. Youth Nutrition	5	4	3	2	1
17. Indoor air quality (mold and mildew, radon, lead in the home, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
18. Other _____	5	4	3	2	1

Business, Economics and the Environment

7. Name three types of businesses or industry that you would like to see locate in Clarke County.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

8. Of all the questions above, what do you feel are the **three** most important issues facing the citizens of Clarke County?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Demographic Information (Optional)

9. Your age: ___ 18-24 ___ 25-30 ___ 31-40 ___ 41-50 ___ 51-60 ___ 61-70 ___ 70+

10. Gender ___ Male ___ Female

11. What is your nationality? ___ White ___ Black ___ Hispanic ___ Asian ___ Native American ___ Other

12. Do you work in Clarke County? ___ Yes ___ No

13. If you answered No to #12, do you commute to another county to work? ___ Yes ___ No

Key Informant/ Focus Group Interview Guide

Good evening and welcome to our meeting tonight. My name is _____. I represent the Clarke County Extension Leadership Council. Thank you for taking the time for talking with me/us about what you feel are the most important needs/problems within the community. It is very important for Virginia Cooperative Extension to understand the needs/problems within the community from the perspective of key leaders like yourself. For over 80 years, Virginia Cooperative Extension has provided programs for farmers, individuals, families and youth in Clarke County. Although the structure has changed over the years, Extension's commitment to addressing community needs has remained the same. Because community needs and goals change through the years, the Clarke County Extension Leadership Council is in the process of conducting a situation analysis to find out what are the current issues affecting county residents. This is why we are here tonight, to receive your input in order to have a cross section of information from community members. The insights you provide can be used by Virginia Cooperative Extension to develop and provide education to families in this community. If certain needs/problems identified by the group are ones Virginia Cooperative Extension cannot address, then information will be passed along to the entity that can address that need.

We will start our meeting by giving you a survey that we would like for you to take several minutes to fill out. Once you are finished with the survey, we will begin the interview.

(Pass out survey and give 10 minutes or so for participants to complete.)

Before we begin the interview, I want you to know there are no particular answers we are looking for. There are no right or wrong answers. We encourage you to feel free to share your opinion even if it is different from someone else's. We are also just as interested in hearing negative comments as well as positive.

Before we begin, let me suggest a few things that will make our time together productive. Please speak up and we ask that one person speak at a time. There is a tendency in discussions for some persons to talk more than others. It is important that we hear from each of you. Therefore, if one is sharing a bit more than others, I will ask that we give others an opportunity to share, and I will ask some that may not be sharing what their thoughts are.

In order to make sure we do not miss anything, _____ will be taking notes. They will be writing only the comments made and no names will be associated with any comments made now or in later reports. My role is to ask the questions and keep the discussion going. Are there any questions..... if there are no questions, let us begin.

I will be asking about 5 questions.

(If a group does not know each other, please go around and have everyone introduce themselves and maybe what experiences, if any, they have had with Virginia Cooperative Extension.)

1. Tell me about the organization you are affiliated with, what kind of things does it do?
Probe: What are its responsibilities?

Probe: Who are the clients? Who does it serve?

Probe: What is your role?

2. In your opinion, what are the major needs/problems that your organization is currently trying to address?

Probe: How do you address that?

3. In your view, what needs/problems with the community are not being addressed? What is not being addressed, but needs to be addressed in the future?

Probe: What is being done that you like? Dislike?

Probe: Do you think there are any particular needs/problems involving youth, young adults, homeowners, farm families, parents, or the aging population?

Probe: Do you think there are any particular needs/problems involving health, education, growth, economics, transportation, housing, or agriculture?

4. What do you think might be done to address the needs/problems in the community in the future?
5. A final question, who do you think might be involved in addressing these needs/problems with the community?

This is all the prepared questions we have to ask you. Are there other comments you would like to make?

Again, thank you for taking time to join our discussion. This ends our session. Have a safe trip home.